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Association

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NEWSLETTER

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Membership of the English Catholic History Association

is open to all who are interested in furthering its aims.

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Feedback, comments and articles for publication are **always** welcome

Please send contributions to the Newsletter Editor: Mrs Sheila Mawhood, at the address on page 3. And send them by email please and, if possible saved with file extension of .doc in Word, and photos in .jpg format.

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NEWS & NOTES

- Happy New Year to all members and friends of the ECHA. I hope that you all had a very enjoyable and happy Christmas as well.
As I explained in my recent email to those of you with electronic addresses, the December 2017 issue of the ECHA is late because we on the committee still had a lot to do with our plans for the first half of 2018. Truth be told, we still have much to do but the March Newsletter will have booking forms and a wealth of info regarding visits and talks that will be coming up.
- And on the subject of the committee, we are delighted to have two new committee members on board. Mrs Audrey Atter and Dr Giles Mercer “signed up” at our AGM in Bath in October. They both bring much experience to your small committee. Audrey is already heavily involved the Catholic History Group in Winchester. And Giles (see below) presented one of the papers at our AGM in Bath – where he lives. He is also the author of the recently published highly acclaimed biography of Bishop Brownlow.
- And on the subject of other Catholic History organisations. We often join forces with other groups. Every June ECHA members attend the English Catholic History day in York and we often join the Midlands Catholic History Society. In fact, I went along to their visit in Oxford to Blackfriars and then on to Campion Hall in September last year. That was a marvellous day and I hope that you will come to these other events as well as to the ones that we on the committee of the ECHA organise.
- The Winchester Catholic History Group, founded in 1996, meets in the Pastoral Centre, St Peter's Church, Jewry Street, Winchester on the first Monday of the month, usually but not always at 7.30 p.m. Visitors are welcome to attend lectures for a £5 entrance fee. On the back cover I had produced details of their meeting which in March. Please refer to the Winchester website for further details
www.hampshiredownswinchester.org/
- **Can you help?** Here is a request for info which we have received on our website. *During the first three decades following the reform of the calendar by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, did the English Recusants mark liturgical feasts and record dates according to the reformed calendar, or were they constrained to continue following the Julian Calendar? I ask this because in looking at the records and correspondence of the English martyrs it isn't clear which calendar is being used. Has anyone published*

a study regarding this? Thank you and God bless you. If you can shed any light, could you please contact Angela Hodges our Secretary. Her details are on page 3.

- And another. **"Can you please help?" Here is one sent via our website from a lady in Australia**
"I am researching the Hartwell family which was started in the medieval village of Hartwell in Northamptonshire. Records show that Simon de Hartwell gave land to the church and so supported the church in Hartwell and Roade. I am trying to find information related to this family and the medieval chapel that was in Hartwell. The family took the name de Hartwell (from Hartwell) after arriving in England with William the Conqueror. I am trying to find the family (their name) that these original family members came from. I would appreciate help with this research. I live in Australia and have to rely on internet contacts. With thanks in anticipation," If you can help, could you please contact Angela Hodges our Secretary? Her details are on page 3.
- **An ECHA pilgrimage?** It was suggested at our recent committee meeting that some of you might be interested in going on an organised Pilgrimage to Spain, to Santiago de Compostela and Salamanca., If you are interested could you please contact Angela Hodges our Secretary. Her details are on page 3.
- Finally a note from our Treasurer. I have enclosed a subscription renewal form for those of you who pay annually. Vincent adds "a number of subscribers who pay by standing order are still paying at the old (2015) rate. Please check to see that the correct subscription is being paid and inform your bank of the increased amount now if you have not already done so. Do not complete a new standing order mandate.

VISIT REPORTS

Saturday 21 October. Day Conference and AGM at St John the Evangelist Church in Bath.

Our morning speaker was Dr Giles Mercer

St Alphege: Saint of Bath and Saint for our Times - Dr Giles Mercer

Introducing his talk, Dr Mercer said that Alphege is truly a saint for Bath, having been born nearby and having served as Abbot of Bath Abbey. The present-day Catholic church in Oldfield Park, Bath is dedicated to him.

Dr Mercer said that his talk would be in three parts, covering the Anglo-Saxon church, the life and death of St Alphege, and the effect of his life. He explained that the Anglo-Saxon church is his special interest and that he is convinced that the church in earlier times has effects today.

There is less emphasis today, among students of English Catholic history, on the Anglo-Saxon church. However, that period was studied by Lingard early in the nineteenth century (his results published in 1806 and 1819) and has been studied again by more recent scholars, e.g. James Campbell, who argues that actions in the six centuries before 1066 laid the foundations for much of present day structures.

The priority of the Anglo-Saxon church was the conversion of everyone to Christianity. Anglo-Saxon missionaries preached conversion to all, not only in this country but also on the Continent. Far from being isolated in this island, the Church maintained much contact with Christian life on the Continent and in Rome. The Church was fortunate in being free of schisms or splits. The Anglo-Saxon Church emphasised Christian ideas of monarchy and many Church leaders were trusted advisers to the kings of their times. The Church pioneered the setting up of a system of dioceses and parishes – Theodore of Tarsus (c602 – 690), Archbishop of Canterbury, really organized the church in England in his time. There was a large number of monasteries (for men and women) in Anglo-Saxon England and there are many outstanding monks from this period, especially among the Benedictines. The tenth century saw a great flowering of Christian life and scholarship, of liturgy and liturgical music.

As a result of earlier Viking invasions, most English kingdoms had been captured by the Danes, except Wessex under Alfred. Many Vikings had settled in England and had converted to Christianity. However, renewed Viking raids in the tenth century gave rise to a climate of fear in the country. Ethelred (reigned 978 – 1016) faced serious new Danish raids, especially into Essex, in 991. Attempting to “buy off” the invaders, he handed over large sums of money, the so-called Danegeld. This was ineffective and only led to more raids. Alphege the monk certainly lived in grim times.

Alphege was born in 954 in the village of Weston near Bath. Osbern of Christ Church, Oxford wrote his "Life of Alphege" in 1070, but the details we now have of Alphege's early life may be coloured by later writers. Alphege felt called to the contemplative life and went to Deerhurst Monastery near Tewkesbury, of which house he was elected Abbot while still young. At some stage he left Deerhurst; the reasons are not clear but it must have taken some courage. He went to Glastonbury Abbey, which had, at that time, been reformed by Abbot Dunstan. In 980 Alphege returned to Bath as Abbot of Bath Abbey. After a short time he moved to a site outside Bath hoping for a solitary life, but crowds flocked to him. He was persuaded by Dunstan to come back to Bath Abbey as Abbot. Dunstan saw Alphege as an ally in his campaigns of reform and, in 984, persuaded the king to appoint Alphege as Bishop of Winchester, a diocese greatly developed by Alphege while he was there. Alphege was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1006, going to Kent, a county at that time in the front line against the Vikings. Whilst there, Alphege converted and baptised a prominent Danish invader, Olaf. In September, 1011 Danish Viking invaders besieged Canterbury for two weeks. They were let into the city by a traitor, burned the cathedral and took a large number of prisoners, including Alphege. They demanded a huge ransom for the prisoners and then a further ransom for Alphege himself. Alphege was firm that the king should not pay this and so, on 19th April, 1012, he was killed by the Danes. His body was taken to St Paul's in London for burial, and this became a place of pilgrimage. In 1023 Alphege's relics were taken back to Canterbury by King Canute and Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, confirmed that Alphege was to be regarded as a martyr.

The death of Alphege helped reconciliation between the locals and the invaders and in the eventual conversion of the invaders. A cult of Alphege started immediately. He was a local saint and a national hero and was honoured nationally as such until the destruction of his shrine in the sixteenth century.

Bernard Polack

After lunch, our Patron Dom Geoffrey presented his paper.

Dom Geoffrey Scott OSB has been Abbot of Douai since 1998. He also acts as Librarian and Archivist and teaches Church history at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford. Currently he is also President of the Catholic Archives Society.

LIFTING THE VEIL - Rt. Rev. Dom Geoffrey Scott, OSB, Abbot of Douai.

Nuns' portraiture between the 17th and early nineteenth centuries.

At first glance, the subject of nuns' portraiture from the post-Reformation period to the era of Catholic Emancipation might not seem to be that rich a source for the study of Catholic history. However, this splendidly illustrated talk by Abbot Geoffrey Scott opened up new windows into aspects of English Catholic religious life and demonstrated the value of portraiture as a source of information and a mirror reflecting the changing climate in which English Catholicism continued to flourish.

The subject has occupied the researches of Abbot Geoffrey over a considerable period of time during which he has amassed a staggering record of fifteen thousand items.

Female religious portraiture, although far less common than male, was nevertheless more in evidence before the Reformation than after. The explanations for the post-Reformation paucity are various but significant among these would be the fact that so many religious orders were enclosed and, inevitably, the social status and prominence of women did not match that of male religious and so captured far less attention. In England the flaunting of 'popishness' anywhere, let alone portraiture, would have been ill-advised. As a result, much of the material that provided the illustrations for this talk had its origins in continental Europe. Similarly the social position of the subjects was almost entirely of the choir nuns rather than the lay nuns who performed the less agreeable tasks of convent life. The names of many of the subjects providing illustrations for the talk read like a roll call of the Catholic recusant great and the good – Throckmorton, Clifford, descendants of Thomas More.

What was it that prompted the creation of much of this art work? Commissions were generally from either the religious communities themselves or from the nuns' families – to acknowledge the leadership of the head of the community, to mark the taking of final vows, to commemorate the life of a nun who may have died at a young age. In seventeenth century England dolls and miniatures were increasingly popular as objects of devotion but also, and touchingly, for family memory of a daughter who would never be seen again once departed for religious life on the continent.

The devotional character of these portraits had its most striking model in the portraits of St Teresa of Avila and the Carmelite convent at Antwerp provided a number of portraits painted in a similar vein.

While the seventeenth century provided portraits reflecting the faith and devotions of Catholic religious communities and families, by the eighteenth century, reflective of a growing climate of scepticism, nuns increasingly figured in satirical painting. One characteristic illustration of this was the so-called 'Lady Abbess of Antwerp' whose voluptuous appearance strongly suggests a profession that had nothing to do with the taking of final vows.

The other side of eighteenth century enlightened thinking was the modest move towards some forms of religious toleration, eg. the Catholic Relief Acts; out of this, the artistic representation of *popishness* might have gained greater acceptance among an English audience. But it was two other developments that were emphatically to reinforce this development. Firstly, the impact of the French Revolution and the persecution of the clergy that triggered a sympathetic reaction. Secondly, the growth of the Romantic movement some of whose roots lay in the medievalist/gothic revival of the early nineteenth century. The emancipation of Catholics in 1829 may have owed more to political expediency than to enlightenment or romanticism but it provided the backdrop to a transformed English portrayal of nuns as contemplative figures and performers of good works.

This brief summary cannot do justice to the subject. The recent work on women religious abroad in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - Caroline Bowden & James E. Kelly, eds, **The English Convents in Exile, 1600-1800. Communities, Culture and Identity**, Ashgate Publishing Ltd – is recommended as a scholarly source worthy of exploration.

Vincent Burke

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor, ref: **THE DORCHESTER MARTYRS**

“Historic England (formerly English Heritage) has recently awarded heritage protection to 1,041 monuments, places and buildings throughout the country. In covering this story, *The Daily Telegraph*, after a short paragraph mentioning only two other places, devoted much space (nearly 13 column inches) to the grave in Merseyside of a **horse**, Blackie, which had served in most of the major battles of the First World War, had been brought back to England after the war and had died in 1942 at the age of 37.

However, another newspaper, which I saw by chance, in covering the same story, showed a picture of three standing statues, apparently life-sized, of two men and one woman. These were described as the Dorchester Martyrs, erected to commemorate the Catholics of Dorset who had been executed, for their religion, in penal times.

Can anyone tell us more about these statues – exactly where they are, and when, why and by whom they had been erected?”

Bernard Polack

Bernard, our Deputy Chairman can be contacted via details on page 3

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I have had a further note from Bernard. **Can you please help?**

About two or three years ago, the Catholic Truth Society published a booklet entitled **Praying the Psalms** by Pope Benedict XVI, described as follows “*The Psalms are the prayers par excellence of every Christian.. Pope Benedict meditates on seven psalms which closely relate to the experience and aspirations of Jesus and brings out their meaning for us.*”

“I should like to obtain a copy of this booklet, as a present for a person who has a great devotion to the Psalms, but it is out of print and unobtainable. Does any of our readers have a copy and could give me a photocopy of it?”

Bernard Polack

Bernard, our Deputy Chairman can be contacted via details on page 3

BOOKS AND WEBSITES

NEW CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY BOOKLETS

With their autumn mini-catalogue, the Catholic Truth Society announced a new set of booklets, saying “We are particularly excited to announce **CTS Onefifties**. 2018 marks 150 years since CTS began, and to mark the occasion we have searched through our extensive archive to bring to you some of the gems of CTS publishing. CTS Onefifties will take you on a journey through the rich history of the past 150 years.”. A list was given of the first 25 titles to be re-published in this way.

I have written to the CTS to say that one title that surely deserves re-publishing is *Martyrs of England & Wales : 1535 – 1680 : A Chronological List*, published in 1960, and that a note should be added to list those martyrs who have been canonised since that date. That booklet has been a valuable work of reference for me on many occasions since I joined our Association.

Two titles in the list of the first 25 CTS Onefifties to be published caught my eye as being of historical interest, one of general Catholic history and one of specifically English Catholic history.

Medieval Christianity by Christopher Dawson, originally published 1935, with updated bibliography, 1961. The booklet has 46 pages + a bibliography of 38 titles.

Christopher Dawson (1889 – 1970), a convert from Anglicanism, was a historian of religion and culture. In his first sentence, he tells us “The subject of this study is the thousand years of religious development from the fall of the Roman Empire in the west to the Reformation.”. A summary of the booklet is given in a note at the back headed Background “In a broad survey of a thousand years of religious history, Christopher Dawson stresses the non-European roots of mediaeval Christendom, but also its flourishing in lands beyond the frontiers of classical civilisation. This marriage of Mediterranean and near-Eastern culture with the barbarian peoples of the North was fruitful in myriad ways: classical culture was preserved, the rule of law established (in theory at least) and the expression of Christianity in theology, philosophy, literature and architecture flourished. Social norms benefitted from Christian influence, and the great monasteries became oases of learning and a power in the land. He traces with care the fascinating development of the Roman liturgy. Above all, Dawson explains how for a time the whole creative and social current of Europe was infused with Christianity, and its

monuments – literary, architectural, legal and social – all form part of the patrimony both of Christendom and of world civilisation.”.

The section headings give an idea of the structure of the booklet:

East and West

The Main Phases of the Mediaeval Christian Development

The Patristic Age and the Church in the West

The Dark Ages and the Conversion of the Barbarians

Mediaeval Christendom and the Revival of Western Culture

Monasticism

The Papacy

Heresy and the Inquisition

Liturgy and Worship

In the section on heresy, he devotes three pages to the Cathars. This booklet is obviously the work of a great student of history but its usefulness to the non-specialist reader is affected by one limitation – a lack of dates. Many early Church Fathers, Popes, Kings and Emperors are mentioned by name but their dates are not given.

The Gunpowder Plot by Herbert Thurston SJ, originally published 1929. The booklet has 50 pages. A description of the author and of his approach to the subject is given in a note at the back headed Background “In the half century he lived at the Jesuit house in Farm Street (spending his days in the British Library), Herbert Thurston (1856 – 1939) gained a reputation for exacting and severe scholarship in a wide range of mostly historical subjects. His largest project was a wholesale revision of *Butler’s Lives of the Saints*. He was especially concerned not to allow religious zeal or wishful thinking to overshadow historical facts; these, he was confident, would make the Church’s case without any need for special pleading. CTS, in 1897, had published a pamphlet on the Gunpowder Plot by Thurston’s Jesuit confrere John Gerard; this claimed the Plot had been from the start set up by government agents to discredit Catholics. Thurston, and others, reckoned this unfounded and fanciful. Thurston’s text is notionally based on Gerard’s, but silently discards his wilder theories. It is an excellent example of Thurston’s dry, copious and learned style.”

The author introduces his booklet as follows: “It is frequently asserted by certain writers that the Gunpowder Plot was the work of Catholics as a body, and was approved and countenanced by the heads of their Church, and by Catholic princes

abroad. This is quite untrue, and there is no excuse for such a statement. Whatever the plot really was, only a small handful of Catholics, thirteen in all, were found to have been concerned in it. The rest of the Catholic body not only took no part in their designs, but manifested the greatest indignation against them.”.

The first 12 pages of the booklet describe the planning, physical preparations, uncovering and immediate aftermath of the plot. The remaining pages review, in great detail, the trials of the conspirators and of others, especially among the Jesuits, thought to have been involved. The author says “The object which beyond all others the prosecution had at heart was to implicate the priests, for if their complicity in such a dastardly attempt to exterminate King, Lords, and Commons could be clearly established, the policy proscribing all Romanist ecclesiastics would be justified in the eyes of the whole world.”. Footnotes give references to other books, or state papers, that the author has consulted. It may be that more is known now than in 1929, but from a deep and exhaustive study of all the material that he could find (and he was obviously a very diligent researcher) Fr Thurston has given, in booklet form, a thorough treatment of this perpetually interesting subject.

Bernard Polack

CTS Oneffities are just £1.50 each, or you can order the full collection for just £30. Here is a link to the CTS website - <http://www.ctsbooks.org/oneffities/>

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We were contacted by the author Liz Davenport regarding her recently published e-book **Woodchester A Gothic Vision: The Story of William Leigh, Benjamin Bucknall and the Building of Woodchester Mansion.**

The Mansion, which was built by the wealthy Catholic convert William Leigh. Leigh also contributed greatly to the development of the Dominican order at Woodchester. The Kindle Edition of the book is available from Amazon for £7-50. Here is a link. <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B077VSF1J3> We had an ECHA visit to Woodchester last year, so this may fill in a few gaps

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And here is a message from John and Lindsay Mullaney

“More news about Reading Abbey may be of interest to the members. I have started a new website called Reading Abbey History:

<https://www.readingabbeyhistory.com/>

*One item that may be of particular interest is the work Lindsay and I have been doing at Doai Abbey on a book called the **Apostolatus Benedictinorum**, published in 1626, just as the reign of Charles 1 began. The book is about the history of the Benedictine order in England. Abbot Geoffrey Scott of Douai asked that we should find out what was said about Reading.*

The website also has quite a bit about the art, architecture and music of the Abbey. I am continually working on it and getting more info from various sources all the time. If any members wish to make comments or add to our knowledge I would be very happy to hear from them. Please feel free to give my email address Best wishes

John and Lindsay jgmullaney@aol.com,”

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I have heard from our website administrator. Lynne Hunter Johnston, who you will recall is now living abroad but is still doing wondrous things with our website. Lynne has posted 2 new podcasts. One, the AGM talk from **Dr Giles Mercer - St Alphege, Saint of Bath and Saint for our Times**. It runs for 64 minutes. The other, **Fr Richard Finn OP: The English Dominican Province**. This was recorded at the meeting in Oxford where a number of us from the ECHA joined the Midlands Catholic History Association at Blackfriars then Campion Hall in Oxford last year. This podcast runs for 46 minutes

2018 PROGRAMME

MARCH: Monday 5th. Winchester, Hampshire. *Recent Excavations at the Medieval Hospital of St Mary Magdalen, Winchester.* Dr Simon Roffey, University of Winchester. Please refer to the Winchester Catholic History Group website for further details www.hampshiredownswinchester.org/

APRIL: Provisional Arundel Castle , West Sussex. Confirmation and further details to follow in March newsletter

MAY: Saturday 5th Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire at St Teresa's Church.

Booking form and details to follow in March newsletter

JUNE: Details to follow

JULY: Details to follow

AUGUST: Details to follow

SEPTEMBER: Saturday 22nd. Winchester, Hampshire

OCTOBER: Day Conference and AGM. Details to follow