

**English
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NEWS & NOTES

Greetings and salutations to all of our ECHA members and friends. I hope that this finds you well and that the weather has warmed up in your neck of the woods. It is lovely to see the early summer flowers out.

I am delighted to tell you that we have a new ECHA regional co-ordinator. Anthony Kloszek lives in Manchester and volunteered to take on the mantle of co-ordinator for Lancaster, Salford, Liverpool & Hallam. We are especially happy to welcome Anthony on board as the North West is an area of the country where there are many places of great interest to Catholics and hopefully, before long, with Anthony's help, we will be heading that way for a meeting or two. Anthony has already made himself known to the local university chaplaincy teams and hopes to be able to work alongside them in the future with the view to involving younger people in the ECHA. Please join us in wishing Anthony well and stand by for news from the North West of England in future issues of the newsletter.

We had some good feedback from the March newsletter concerning our publicising news and events being organised by other organisations such as the Catholic Archives Society and the Catholic Record Society. We intend to bring you more news from them and also from the Winchester Catholic History Group and others in future editions of the newsletter.

We had a very good attendance at the talk on **St Augustine and St Bede and the Gregorian Mission** in Princes Risborough last month. The largest crowd I have ever seen. It was an excellent presentation given to us by Dr Richard Shaw. I will be bringing you a visit report in the September newsletter. But in the interim, if you already have a copy of **The Ecclesiastical History of the English People** by The Venerable Bede, read it again. If you don't have this publication, Dr Shaw beseeches you to buy it. Or borrow it. But don't steal it.

Did you see the Pugin monstrance that turned up on the Antiques Road Show (ARS)? The magnificent piece had an *overall architectural feel*, said the expert who noted the *very gothic pointed roof on the top set with cabochon or rounded cut garnets* and the *wonderful hexagonal or hexafoil leaf-shaped base*, all of which were details that are typical of Pugin's designs. The monstrance had been brought along only for an expert's valuation before it went back into the safe at a Catholic church in Lancashire. Apparently Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin had gone into partnership with a silversmith in Birmingham named John Hardman. They described themselves as 'medieval metalworkers'. The monstrance had been commissioned by a local Catholic property owner (in 1848) at the considerable cost of £65. The ARS expert gave its current value as somewhere between £15,000 and £25,000. *It's a magnificent work of art*, he said. *It's been a great privilege to see it.* Hopefully it comes out of the safe for Benediction and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament every now and again.

Arrangements for this year's Day Conference and AGM on Saturday 19th October are nearly complete, so I am able to give you some details in this edition of the newsletter. The booking form and the usual AGM stuff will follow in your September issue. You might be surprised to see that the event this year will be at St Monica's Church in Hoxton which is in the East End of London. This is one of many historic churches in London and we like to break new ground with the venues of our meetings. We are also very fortunate to have obtained an excellent speaker for you too. Joan Maynard has published a number of books which include the history of this parish and an account of the Augustinian Friars in London. You will be able to buy a copy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DAY CONFERENCE. WEDNESDAY JULY 3 2019

The **MIDLAND CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY** has organised a day at St James' Church, Reading and ECHA members and friends are cordially invited to attend.. There will be two illustrated talks, with a short guided tour of the Abbey ruins.

Programme:

10:15 - 10.30 Arrival and coffee at St James' church

10:45 prompt MORNING TALK

Reading Abbey: From Foundation Charter to recent research.

The Foundation Charter of Reading Abbey compared to those of other Cluniac and Benedictine monasteries. Lindsay Mullaney.

Recent architectural and archaeological evidence, including newly published documents concerning the annual commemorative liturgies for Henry I. John Mullaney

12.00 MASS IN ST JAMES' CHURCH

12.30 – 1.00 LUNCH.

Because of the limited time available please bring a sandwich lunch.

Hot/cold drinks will be available

1.00 GUIDED TOUR OF THE ABBEY RUINS

2.30 AFTERNOON TALK

The Turbulent Lifetime of Thomas Vachell. Tony Hadland.

(Thomas Vachell was MP for Reading between the 1530s and 1550s)

3.30 TEA AND DEPARTURE

For non-members the cost for the day will be £10.00 or £5.00 if you wish only to come to either the morning or afternoon session. Payment may be made on the day itself but to help with seating and refreshments, please let us know if you intend to come, jgmullaney@aol.com or phone 0118 9470478. If paying by cheque, please make it out to *The Midland Catholic History Society*.

Parking is very limited, but if you need a special accessible place, please let us know. The nearest parking is Queen's Road Car Park (<http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/11734/Queens-Road-car-park>).

Reading Borough Council, who now run this car park say that it is open, despite an NCP website message stating that it is closed. However, it is quite expensive. We are exploring alternative sites.

For those not wishing to go to Mass, this will offer the opportunity for a longer lunch break and maybe a visit to the Abbey Ruins or to the new display at Reading Museum.

FURTHER INFORMATION.

The speakers and their topics.

MORNING TALK. The talk will last about an hour and will comprise two parts. It is an outline of the last year's work by Lindsay and John Mullaney.

Lindsay Mullaney's research has involved looking at the foundation charters of various Benedictine monasteries from the 10th to the 12th centuries. One other source is a largely unknown book published in 1626, the "Benedictine Apostolate in England", (*Apostolatus Benedictinorum in Anglia*). This is a detailed, but partisan, history of the Benedictines in England from Saxon times. It was written in Flanders by Augustine Baker, a Benedictine scholar.

Lindsay has used these sources to make a comparative study of the foundation charter of Reading Abbey with those of other Benedictine monasteries. Her talk places the Reading charter in its wider context and helps us further understand the early days of Reading's abbey and the intention of both its founder, Henry I, and of the monks who came to Reading in the 12th century.

John Mullaney has been examining aspects of the liturgical life of the Abbey, including material from the archives at Douai Abbey, west of Reading. He combines this with architectural and archaeological evidence demonstrating what life in Reading Abbey was like, especially in the first 200 years after its foundation.

John looks at how Professor Brian Kemp's newly published research, concerning the liturgy for the annual, and indeed monthly, commemoration of Henry's death, helps to give us a deeper and more accurate insight into the daily life of Reading Abbey. (*Reading Abbey Records a new miscellany*, B Kemp. £12.50. Berkshire Record Office).

GUIDED TOUR OF THE ABBEY RUINS

Unlike other tours of the Ruins, this will focus on those parts which tell us something about the liturgical life of the Abbey and the spirituality of monastic life. We will look at those sections of the standing remains that tell us how they would have been used and what it would have been like to be a monk, pilgrim or visitor to the Abbey in the 12 and 13th centuries.

AFTERNOON TALK

The Turbulent Lifetime of Thomas Vachell

Thomas Vachell was the heir of an old Reading gentry family; his wife was a Reade from Abingdon. Thomas's father suppressed the hugely wealthy Reading Abbey, yet Thomas doggedly stuck to 'the old faith'. His story spans five monarchs and four changes of religion. He became the most fined recusant in Oxfordshire, his wealth was seized in a government raid and, as a result of 'swimming against the tide', he fell out with his wife. Thomas Vachell's story illustrates some of the huge changes England went through in the Tudor and early Stuart era.

About Tony Hadland

Born 1949 in Reading, Tony is a retired chartered building surveyor, information scientist, operational risk manager, museum administrator and freelance broadcaster. He has been an author for nearly forty years and today specialises in Thames Valley recusancy, genealogy and bicycle history. He was chairman of the Oxfordshire Local History Association for seven years, and has been the Oxfordshire Family History Society's vice chairman and journal editor. In 1992 he published *Thames Valley Papists*,* a history of recusancy in the Thames Valley, and in 2004 the Mapledurham Estate published a second edition. He frequently presents illustrated talks on recusancy and is currently editing a volume for the Oxfordshire Record Society on the registers of the Oxford Catholic Mission. (*Available from St James' Church and from the author. Price £9.95)

Note from Sheila the Editor: I wonder if any of you saw an article in The Times last week regarding the ancient Reading Abbey site?

Much of the story was devoted to Oscar Wilde's poem **The Ballad of**

Reading Gaol but the article also mentioned plans for selling the site for housing. I brought this to the attention of John Mullaney and this is what he said in reply.

“The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) closed Reading Gaol several years ago, thinking they would be able to make a quick sale. They appear to have overlooked the fact that much of the prison is listed and the whole site is of national historic interest. They therefore had to commission archaeological work on their area. MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) were engaged to undertake this work.

The MoJ are partners with the Hidden Abbey Project (HAP) along with the other major landowners. These are Reading Borough Council (RBC) and the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth. The land is not jointly owned; each of these groups owns outright a separate section of the ancient Abbey site. The MoJ’s section includes the area which was once the apse of the Abbey church chancel, the Lady Chapel, attached to this, and the area to the east of the main Abbey buildings which probably comprised the infirmary and lay brothers’ quarters, with a possible chapel.

However, RBC is the planning authority, so any development would have to go through them. RBC wants to have the prison site for town use, probably as a cultural venue, though some of it could be sold off for housing.

The Ministry of Justice has consistently prevaricated about publishing the archaeological report, and has even given misleading information about MOLA’s findings. On one occasion, at a HAP meeting, the MoJ’s representative said that nothing of significance had been found, whereas a member of the HAP committee had obtained pictures of skeletons in one of MOLA’s trenches. The MoJ have had to retract this claim about ‘nothing significant’ being found. However, they have still not published the report and HAP still await the findings.

This has been going on for several years and we in Reading are, to say the least, fed up with the Government’s handling of the whole situation.

It should be noted that there are two serious errors in the Times’ report. The first is the statement that it was once the grandest abbey in the country. It was undoubtedly very important but Canterbury, York, Durham

and several other former Abbey cities would certainly have something to say about this. Secondly, the inset map shows what it claims to be Henry's burial place. It was certainly in this area, namely the Abbey chancel, but there is no proof that it was exactly where the map shows, far from it. As ever one should take anything written in newspapers with a whole salt mine.

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JULY Saturday 6th: Hinsley Room, Westminster Cathedral Morpeth Terrace (beside Westminster Cathedral), SW1P 1EQ 2pm

Afternoon lecture "**Cardinal Newman - the next Doctor of the Church?**" presented by Fr Marcus Holden (PP of St Bede's Clapham Park and former Rector of St Augustine's Ramsgate)

This is a reminder about our Westminster visit. If you would like to come and if time permits could you please contact Nigel Parker. It would help to have an idea of numbers so that we know how many chairs to put out and how many bone china cups and plates of Danish pastries to have at the ready for your cup of coffee. But if you decide on the day that you would like to come – just come. We are all paying on the door anyway.

This event is being organised by Nigel Parker, our co-ordinator for the Diocese of Westminster. There is Mass in the Cathedral at 12.30 on a Saturday, so that will leave you time for lunch in the Cathedral café or one of the many places to eat nearby before coming on for the talk. Nigel also tells me that the Cathedral's Holy Souls chapel contains a mosaic of Cardinal Newman and references to The Dream of Gerontius, Newman's poem famously set to music by Elgar and which had its first London performance in the Cathedral in 1903.

Our presenter, Fr Marcus Holden, is a priest of Southwark Diocese, the co-author of the CTS "Evangelium" course on the Catholic Faith and has recently returned to London after 8 years as parish priest in Ramsgate where he has done great work in restoring Pugin's church and establishing a Shrine of St Augustine. Even though there is no need to book – and you can pay your £5 on the door, it would help with logistics if you could please contact Nigel if you are planning to come. And don't forget, ALL are welcome. Bring a friend or two.

Here are his contact details telephone (07930 955692) or email (nigel.parker349@btinternet.com) or by post (17 Salcombe Gardens, London SW4 9RY).

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Saturday 19th October, Day Conference and AGM at St Monica's Catholic Church, 19 Hoxton Square N1 6NT

Sheepfolds for Strayed Sheep - Catholic Missions in nineteenth-century Inner London presented by Jean Maynard

In the seventeenth century, Hoxton Square was established as a fashionable residential address. However, by the nineteenth century, it had become a poor area with many Irish workers. The Shoreditch furniture trade increasingly turned houses into workshops and housing became scarce and overcrowded.

The foundation stone for a church was laid in the garden of 18 Hoxton Square on 20 September 1864, shortly after the parish had been founded as a mission of the Irish Augustinians to the East End of London.

Over the course of the next 15 years, adjoining properties were purchased and demolished to enable expansion of the original church, to build a school and then the priory which we see today. This building was designed by Edward Welby Pugin (eldest son of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin).

The church has many unique features and you will have a chance to see them for yourself as there will be a tour of the church led by Jean Maynard following her presentation and following tea. Jean Maynard is the author of several books which include a history of St Monica's Church and the story of the Augustinian Friars in London. The cost of the church history is £10.

Once again our day conference will be confined to the afternoon not the whole day. This is to allow you extra time to travel into town – or across town for those of you in the capital.

The timetable is provisional at this stage but expect to kick off with our AGM at 1:30pm, Jean Maynard's presentation at 2:30 followed by tea and then the tour of the church at 4pm.

Here is the address and St Monica;s website - **St Monica's Catholic Church, 19 Hoxton Square N1 6NT.** hoxton@rcdow.org.uk

Directions if coming by public transport

Tube – nearest station - Old Street, Northern Line, intersection of City Road and Old Street, 8 minute walk to Hoxton Square.

Buses – **205**, you can indulge in a 55 minute grand tour from Paddington Station to the bus stop at Old Street tube– 8 minute walk to Hoxton Square

243 from Trafalgar Square- 6 minute walk from the stop further along Old Street

55 from Oxford Circus (stop is around the corner in Portland Street) - 6 minute walk from the stop further along Old Street to Hoxton Square.

ARTICLES

ANGLO-SAXON KINGS WHO VISITED ROME

It was a little over fifty years after the landing of St Augustine in Britain (AD 597) that for the first time in history Anglo-Saxons made a pilgrimage to Rome.



In the year AD 648 St Wilfrid at the age of thirteen entered the monastery of Lindisfarne in Northumbria. After a few years there he had a strong desire to make a pilgrimage to Rome as a penitential exercise and to receive the Pope's blessing and study the Roman monastic observances.

With the approval of his abbot, Finan, Wilfrid set out for Canterbury armed with a letter of commendation from Queen Eanfled, wife of King Oswy of Northumbria to her cousin Erconbert of Kent. Wilfrid spent a year in the Kentish city studying the customs of the Roman colony there. A

companion was found for him in the person of Benedict Biscop, a young thane of twenty-five years, who decided to renounce his wide possessions and embrace the religious life.

In September 655 Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop left Britain for Rome. Wilfrid stayed a while in Lyons but Benedict Biscop pressed on, arriving in Rome before Wilfrid, and was therefore the first Anglo-Saxon to complete the pilgrimage.

Wilfrid stayed in Rome many months making friends with a learned deacon named Boniface who taught him the disciplines of the Church. He returned to Britain about 660.

In about 665 Benedict Biscop began his second pilgrimage to Rome remaining there for several months. First he went to the monastery of Lerins near Nice,

staying there for two years as a member of the community. From there he discovered a merchant ship that took him to Ostia arriving in Rome at the same time as his compatriot Wighart, archbishop-elect of Canterbury who had come to Rome for consecration at the instance of Kings Egbert of Kent and Oswy of Northumbria.

The plague was raging in Rome at the time and Wighart with most of his companions contracted it and died there. Pope Vitalian then chose Theodore of Tarsus as the next Archbishop of Canterbury and it was at the express command of Pope Vitalian that Benedict Biscop accompanied Theodore as his guide and interpreter on his journey to Britain. The party went by sea to Marseilles, by land to Arles then continued to Paris where they were welcomed by Archbishop Agilbert before travelling on to England where they arrived on 27 May 669.

Benedict Biscop built a monastery at Wearmouth in Northumberland which was to become the cradle of culture, not only of Britain, but ultimately the whole of Europe. His next initiative was to build the abbey church of St Peter nearby with the assistance of masons he had hired in Gaul. Then he obtained Pope Agatho's permission to take back to Britain with him John, the arch-cantor of St Peter's and abbot of St Martin's in Rome, to teach his monks in Britain Gregorian plainsong, psalmody and Roman ritual. Benedict Biscop undertook a total of six pilgrimages to Rome where he acquired books, vestment and liturgical objects for his monastery.

The Northumbrian historian Bede wrote circa 730 that the Anglo-Saxons regarded themselves as being one people. There was even a title for the paramount ruler, *Bretwalda*, with a vague primacy which was largely personal. Roughly, the settlement in Kent emerged as the strongest kingdom by the late sixth century, the Northumbrians and East Angles in the seventh, the Mercians of middle England in the course of the eighth, while the ninth century was dominated by the kingdom of Wessex.

The first Anglo-Saxon monarch to set foot in Rome was **Caedwalla**, King of the West Saxons, in 689. Bede tells us that having most vigorously governed his nation for two years, he quitted his crown for the sake of the Lord and an everlasting kingdom, and went to Rome when Sergius was Pope. He was

baptized on Holy Saturday, **689** and being still in his white garments he fell sick, and died on the 20th April. He was only thirty, and in baptism had taken the name Peter.

Ina succeeded Caedwalla as King of the West Saxons. He reigned for thirty-eight years before following the example of his predecessor and, with his queen, **Ethelberga**, went off to Rome in **726**. The holy couple lived unrecognized, serving the poor and waiting on pilgrims.

Realizing that many of his fellow countrymen were lodging near St Peter's, Ina established a hospice for them there and bought a piece of land where they could own property and help one another. This has always been known as the Saxon Borgo. The Hospital of the Holy Spirit now stands on the site of the Saxon hospice and the nearby church of St. Maria in Sassia stands on the site of the first church where King Ina and his Queen are buried. Furthermore, Ina started "**Peter's Pence**", the annual gift from every household to the Pope that has survived to the present day. Ina is depicted in the glass window at Church at Curry Rivel examining the architect's plans for the new Minster at Glastonbury.



Offa, King of Mercia seized the throne and established supremacy over many lesser kings. He consolidated his position by marrying his daughters to the kings of Wessex and Northumbria, and was the first ruler to be called 'king of the English'. . By the end of his reign, Offa was master of all England south of the Humber. He had Offa's Dyke built ,a frontier barrier of a continuous ditch and bank that ran 149 miles along the frontier between the Mercian and Welsh kingdoms 'from sea to sea'.

Offa had dealings with the emperor Charlemagne and he visited Rome in **792** to strengthen his links with the papacy. The English penny (silver currency) was introduced during Offa's reign.

In the first recorded coronation in England, Offa's son **Ecgrith** was consecrated in 787 during Offa's lifetime in an attempt to secure the succession. However, Ecgrith died childless, months after Offa. Offa's success in building a strong unified kingdom caused resistance in other kingdoms. The Mercians' defeat at the hands of Egbert of Wessex at the battle of Ellendun in 825 meant that supremacy passed to Wessex.

In 798 **Sigeric**, king of the East Saxons, made a pilgrimage to Rome and entered a Roman monastery.

In the year 874, when the Danes entered the valley of the Trent and burned the minster at Repton that had become the burial-place of the Mercian kings, King **Burhed** fled to Rome where he died soon after arrival. He was buried in the *Scola Saxonum*, the territory between St Peter's and the Ponte Sant'Angelo where there was a settlement of houses, a hospice and church dedicated to the Virgin Mary that is still there but has been rebuilt many times.

The most important city in Wessex was Winchester, a day's march inland from the south coast. King Alfred's grandfather, **Egbert**, entrusted the education of his son and heir, Ethelwulf, to Swithin, Bishop of Winchester. Ethelwulf was deeply religious and had a particular devotion to the Holy See and his sons grew up in this atmosphere. Ethelwulf's youngest son, Alfred, was born at a royal residence at the foot of the Berkshire Downs at Wantage.



In 853 **King Ethelwulf** of Mercia sent his infant son **Alfred** to Rome with an honourable escort of nobles and commoners. (Ethelwulf's ring pictured left in the British Museum).

Two years later the royal party with Alfred returned to England whereupon Ethelwulf himself set out for Rome in great state taking his son back with him. The royal party remained in Rome for a complete year and Ethelwulf astonishes the Romans by his lavish largesse.

Matthew Paris wrote in the 13th century

When Ina arrived in Rome he built a house with the approval of Pope Gregory II which he called the School of the English (Schola Saxonum). This he did in order that the kings of England and the royal family with bishops, priests and clergy might come to it to be instructed in learning and the Catholic faith, lest anything might be taught in the English church that was

heterodox or opposed to the Catholic church. Thus they would return home thoroughly strengthened in the faith.

In 1015 **King Cnut**, king of Denmark and Norway , invaded England and defeated Edmund, son of Ethelred. On Edmund's death he was proclaimed king of England. In 1027 Cnut made a trip to Rome to attend the coronation of the Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II. He was warmly received there and went again in 1031.

Following the Danish invasion of 1013 Ethelred and his family spent several years in exile in Normandy whilst England was ruled by Cnut. After Cnut's death in 1035, Ethelred's son **Edward the Confessor** tried to take the crown of England but failed. He made a vow that he would make a pilgrimage to Rome if he managed to return safely to his kingdom.

In 1042 Edward's dream became a reality when he succeeded Cnut's son to the throne of England, but he found it impossible to leave his subjects to make the pilgrimage to Rome. The Pope released him from the vow on condition that he founded a monastery at Westminster and dedicated it to St Peter. A church had been built on Thorney Island by St Mellitus, bishop of London in the 7th century. In accordance with the Pope's wishes Edward built a new cathedral on the site in the Norman style to replace the old Saxon church at Westminster to be known as the Collegiate Church of St. Peter but which later became known as Westminster Abbey.



St Peter's Church Westminster depicted on the Bayeux tapestry at the time of Edward the Confessor's funeral

Pilgrimages after this time became hazardous with the presence of hostile Saracens who controlled the land-routes to Rome. Efforts were

concentrated on re-capturing the Holy Places in Palestine with the advent of the Crusades; the royal pilgrimages to Rome came to an end.

Dr Michael Straiton

*This article was previously published in **The Friends of The Holy Father** Newsletter and is reproduced here with the author's permission.*

BOOKS

Joanna Vials *The Indomitable Mr Cotham: Missioner, Convict Chaplain, and Monk* (Gracewing: Leominster, 2019, pp. 594, £25; ISBN 978 085244 928 8)

This biography of an important English Benedictine monk, Ambrose Cotham (1810 – 1883) takes us mainly into two worlds: that of the missions in Australia, particularly Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania), where Cotham was a missioner between 1835 and 1851; and that of the Catholic mission in Cheltenham centred on the Benedictine Church of St Gregory in which Cotham was the major driving force between 1851 and 1873. The book, therefore, falls into two main parts. Joanna Vials has made wide and meticulous use of sources, ranging from English Benedictine archives, Hobart’s archdiocesan archives, local sources, and newspaper archives in Australia and England. She tells a fascinating story with elegance, clarity, and mastery of detail. All those interested in Catholic history in nineteenth-century England and the British Empire will have much to gain from this magisterial book.

Cotham’s life was woven into some of the robust strands of English Catholicism. He came from a strongly Catholic Lancashire family, which counted the sixteenth-century Jesuit martyr, Blessed Thomas Cottam, as a direct ancestor (despite the spelling variation). After school at Stonyhurst (where Cotham deserves to be better known as a distinguished old boy), he became a Benedictine monk and was ordained priest at Prior Park in Bath. At that time, the English Benedictines were the driving force in Catholic missions in Australia, although their efforts were increasingly complemented by those of English secular clergy and Irish clergy. Interestingly, their missions, along with other Christian missions, were encouraged by the British government on the ground that they helped civilise the large convict population. This is another example of how the work of the Catholic Church in the Empire at large played a not insignificant part in advancing Catholic emancipation and in the longer story of gradual toleration of the Church in Britain.

Joanna Vials gives us a vivid insight into missionary work in Australia at large and Tasmania in particular. She enables Cotham and others to hold a three-dimensional place in our historical imagination. We are with him on the four-month voyage from Liverpool to Hobart, with him on

horseback as he covered hundreds of miles across Tasmania to reach his scattered flock. His bishop was Bede Polding OSB, the first bishop of Sydney and an Old Gregorian. With Polding and Ullathorne, another Old Gregorian monk, Cotham was among that early dynamic group of monk-missionaries in Australia. The challenges demanded that they be rock-solid in their faith and character, zealous and selfless: and they were equal to that. Cotham emerges as an attractive personality. He was attached to his relatives, especially his brother, Lawrence, who had an inn-keeping and coach business in Tasmania, and his Jesuit brother, Fr William Cotham. His humble devotion to the monastic disciplines supported and enriched his missionary work. He held no high office: his influence was at the next level and, as often happens, was thereby the more profound. He was obedient to superiors and employers (as he was salaried as a government official), yet his own man. He worked tenaciously each day, carrying a huge work-load. Cotham put much effort into sermon preparation, influenced by Chrysostom and Bossuet, and was regarded as a powerful and effective preacher. He knew French and Italian, enjoyed long walks when he could, and was kind to his fellow priests, enjoyed reading (St Alphonsus Liguori and Bishop Challoner were favourites), music and snuff. He had a good sense of humour too.

Cotham's unswerving focus on those in his care deservedly gained him a positive reputation as the convicts' priest. He ministered to Catholic prisoners, male and female, including those in hospital. He visited chain-gangs. As a colonial chaplain he had to be present at public executions. He also had pastoral care for military personnel and for free settlers. He supported teetotal societies and pressed for moderate alcohol consumption in a culture in which alcohol abuse was widespread. Of note too was the Church's work in prison reform, including better care for the mentally afflicted, one of the many excellent parts of the book, along with the importance the author rightly gives to church-building in Australia and the influence of Pugin's Gothic-Revival style.

On returning home Cotham took a railway tour round Catholic England in 1851, followed by Ireland and then a trip to Rome. Then his energies moved wholesale to Cheltenham and the development of the Catholic mission in circumstances that were far from easy. The author describes well the collision in Cheltenham between evangelical Anglicanism, led by Francis Close, and Catholicism. There was anti-Catholic pulpit preaching

as well as anti-Catholicism of the street, although most townspeople (usually the pragmatic majority in progress towards toleration) accepted that a Catholic chapel would benefit the town, not least in serving visitors, such as those from France. That chapel was to be transformed under Cotham's leadership into Charles Hansom's beautiful (and recently restored) Gothic-Revival Church of St Gregory the Great (1857; consecrated 1877), a well-crafted section in the book, which should appeal to students of the Gothic-Revival movement besides the general reader.

In education Cotham had a wide vision, developing elementary schools, with particular care given to schooling for the poorest of the poor, in large part Irish immigrants in and around the slums of Rutland Street. At the same time, he cared for the Catholic staff at Cheltenham Ladies College. The book gives good coverage to converts in Cheltenham and shows how Cotham, ahead of his time, actively involved the laity (admittedly mainly middle-class men) in planning committees. He touched and gained respect from all sections of the Catholic community, evidence of his pastoral maturity and personal integrity, welded into a simple, uncomplicated and effective evangelism. His talents as a church-builder and administrator, with a good financial head, were subordinated to evangelisation, teaching and sacramental ministry. Attention is given too to Cotham's promotion of good liturgy and prayer-life, together with his support for the establishment of religious sisters. Cotham was the kind of parish priest who embodied the timeless essentials set out in Pope Francis's *Evangelii Gaudium*.

The Cheltenham period of Cotham's ministry was, in its way, as vital as the Australian, and during which he built on his earlier experiences. His last years (1873–1881) were spent in mission work in Bonham in Wiltshire and Wincanton in Somerset. He was a visitor to the Benedictine mission in Bath. His grave is at Belmont Abbey.

I have only two small gripes. It would have helped the reader if the publishers had given us a map of Tasmania and southern Australia. Secondly, the publishers should not have opted for the use of the American 'practise' for the noun 'practice', which occurs frequently.

Ambrose Cotham OSB was an admirable missionary in Australia, a giant in the history of Catholicism in Cheltenham and an outstanding priest and

monk in nineteenth-century England, meriting this full-scale biography. This is an excellent and important book that deserves wide success.

Giles Mercer

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David Nash Forde **Royal Berkshire History** -

http://www.berkshirehistory.com/articles/campion_lyford.html

Sadly we did not have enough space for the lengthy article on this website, an article which gives a blow by blow account of the events leading up to and the arrest of St Edmund Campion at Lyford Grange in 1581. It is heart-breaking to read about the slip-ups that occurred but heartening also to read about Campion's acceptance of his fate.

2019 PROGRAMME

JULY: Monday 1st WINCHESTER. The Milner Hall, St Peter's Street, Winchester SO23 8BW at 7:30PM.

The Roy Wake Memorial Lecture: Thomas Cranmer – Who was he?

Presented by Professor Diarmid MacCulloch Kt. MA PhD Camb, MA DD Oxf. FBA. St Cross College, the University of Oxford.

Pay at the door £5

JULY: Wednesday 3rd. READING St James' Church

Reading Abbey: From Foundation Charter to recent research.

Tour of the Abbey ruins, The Turbulent Lifetime of Thomas Vachell MP

This event is being organised by the MCHS – booking form enclosed

JULY: Saturday 6th: LONDON Hinsley Room, Westminster Cathedral Morpeth Terrace, SW1P 1EQ at 2pm

Afternoon lecture ***Cardinal Newman - the next Doctor of the Church?*** presented by Fr Marcus Holden. This event is being organised by Nigel Parker our co-ordinator for the Diocese of Westminster. If possible please contact him if intending to come. Pay at the door £5

SEPTEMBER: Thursday 12th. BIRMINGHAM Aston Hall, Trinity Road, Aston, Birmingham, B6 6JD. An afternoon visit to **Aston Hall** (Grade I listed building) led by Michael Hodgetts with focus on the Catholic connection to the Holte family.

More details <https://midlandcatholichistory.org.uk>

This event is being organised by the MCHS

OCTOBER: Saturday 19th. LONDON. St Monica's Catholic Church, 19 Hoxton Square N1 6NT. Day Conference and AGM.

Sheepfolds for Strayed Sheep - Catholic Missions in Nineteenth-Century Inner London presented by Jean Maynard.

Booking form and further details to follow in September newsletter.