

**English
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NEWSLETTER

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

Annual membership £11 with reductions for additional members at same address and students under 25

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The Secretary or Treasurer, addresses on page 3,

or on the website - <http://echa.org.uk/>

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

Please send contributions to Mrs Angie Hodges 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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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The ECHA is a society and a charitable trust which promotes the Catholic history of England and Wales from the early medieval period to the present day. We continue to host interesting talks from experts in their respective fields. For example we have learned about Tudor queenship which was most interesting. We have many more talks lined up for the rest of the year and are already thinking about next year. The association continues to provide grants to researchers in areas pertinent to English or Welsh Catholic history. If you know anyone who is undertaking any such research, please put them in touch with us.

Our committee continue to work hard behind the scenes to update the website, Facebook group, Twitter and Youtube channel as well as the newsletter. New members are always welcome. Just a reminder to renew your subscription to the ECHA when it comes up for renewal. It represents good value for money. We are keen to grow the membership so tell others about our work.

<https://echa.org.uk>

Tim Guile
Chairman ECHA

RIP Ursula Polack

We are very sad to announce the recent death of Ursula Polack, beloved wife of Bernard. Ursula and Bernard have been staunch members of our Association since they joined over 20 years ago. They held the role of Programme Co-ordinators and were responsible for organising many visits for our members to places of Catholic interest over the years. She will be greatly missed and we wish Bernard our sincere condolences. Bernard continues on the Committee as Programme Co-ordinator and we are indebted to him for his contribution.

Remembering Father Harding

Some ECHA members may remember visiting Bath in 2010 and hearing Fr Harding lecture on the Papal States at Prior Park. These are a few personal memories.

Rev Doctor Canon John Anthony Harding, Archivist of the Diocese of Clifton

15 May 1931-29 January 2023

I knew Fr Harding for only about twenty years, but worked with him in the Clifton Archives on many Monday mornings during that time. It was a happy place for him, and the 11 am coffee time was special. He enjoyed the chance to chat, and I learned so much from him. His simple honest faith was so reassuring and it was backed by a sound knowledge of theology. He also had the nearest thing to a photographic memory of anyone I have ever known.

He was born in Clifton, Bristol and grew up during the dark days of the Second World War. He had no fears during the Blitz, being assured of the fact that if he died, he would go straight to heaven. He attended the Pro Cathedral school, where, he remembered as a small infant, taking his dressing gown to school and acting, in front of the Bishop of Clifton, no less, 'Christopher Robin is saying his prayers.' He also once horrified his sister,

when as a very small child, he contradicted the Bishop. Later he was evacuated to Exeter, where he remembered seeing a memorial in church to George Oliver, who had published *Collections illustrating the History of the Catholic Religion in the Counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wilts, and Gloucester. ... With notices of the Dominican, Benedictine, and Franciscan Orders in England,* (London, 1857).

Fr Harding had so many memories. He remembered when Bishop Lee died on 21 September 1948 at Bishop's House, (St Ambrose) Leigh Woods. Bishop Lee was a big man of twenty stone or so, and it took some manoeuvring by several priests to bring him downstairs where he lay in state on the long table in the library. On 27 July 1949 the young Tony Harding was eighteen and altar server at the consecration of the new Bishop, Joseph Rudderham. In his mind were thoughts of what this new bishop would be like and whether he would be permitted to follow his dream and become a priest.

In October of the same year, he was on his way. Fr O'Callaghan, engaged on further studies in Rome, gave up a week of his holiday to accompany Tony on the long voyage from Bristol to the Venerable English College, Rome. His first impression of the city were the lights, it was so bright everywhere. His other abiding memory was of his homesickness. The only connection with family would be by letter; he did not see them for seven years, until he returned as an ordained priest. (He briefly saw his mother when she took part in the Clifton pilgrimage to Rome for Holy Year, 1950). His homesickness was exacerbated, when a mere three weeks after his arrival, Bishop Rudderham arrived in Rome for a Papal Audience. The bishop took a small group of Clifton priests to Castel Gandolfo to meet Pope Pius XII. Tony was summoned to attend and kneel before the Pope. Afterwards a photograph was taken to commemorate the event. Tony hung back but was placed in the centre of the group, standing next to Bishop Rudderham.

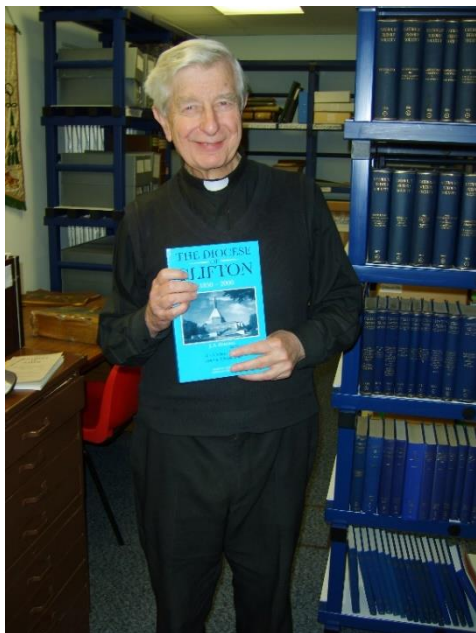


L to R – Dr Joseph Buckley, Bishop’s Secretary; Fr William O’Callaghan, residing at Beda and studying Canon Law at the Gregorian; Bishop Rudderham (cons. July 1949); Tony Harding, then beginning his studies for the priesthood at the Venerable English College; Fr Mervyn Alexander, studying for his doctorate at the Gregorian; Guy Gibbins, late vocation, studying at Beda and ordained March 1951

He was ordained on 27 November 1955, at the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles, Rome, by Archbishop Traglia. On his return to England, he was appointed curate to St Nicholas, Bristol. He subsequently served in this role at St Osmund’s, Salisbury; Holy Rood, Swindon and St John’s, Bath. He became parish priest of St George’s, Warminster before his final move to St Bernadette’s at Whitchurch, Bristol, where he served for 27 years until his retirement at the age of 75. He then moved into a flat at St John’s Bath.

In 1980 he published *1300 Years – A History of the Catholic Church in Warminster* (Burleigh). In 1985 he gained his M Litt at the University of Bristol. His thesis was called *The Re-Birth of the Roman Catholic Community in Frome (1850-1927)*. Recognising his abilities, Mervyn Alexander, Bishop of Clifton asked him to become Diocesan Archivist, to which he was appointed in February 1986, on the stipulation that all archive material should be returned to St Ambrose from the Bristol Record Office except for parish registers. This was a wise move as interest in family history was burgeoning and the Clifton Archives had neither the space nor the time that the Record Office had.

He was intent on recording Catholic history. He contributed to Dom Aidan Bellenger (ed) *Fathers in Faith, The Western District 1688- 1988 Tercentenary Essays* Downside Abbey (1991) . The same year he was awarded his D Phil. He chose as his subject *Dr William Clifford 3rd Bishop of Clifton (1857-1893): His influence at the 1st Vatican Council and on the English Catholic Church*.



The next major project was a big one. He oversaw, contributed to, and edited *The Diocese of Clifton 1850-2000. A celebratory history of events and personalities* (Clifton Catholic Diocesan Trustees 1999). He was also a contributor to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. In 2011 he fulfilled a long-held wish to publish his study, *Clifford of Clifton 1823-1893 England's Youngest Catholic Bishop* (Clifton Catholic Diocesan Trustees, 2011).

His Diamond Jubilee in 2015 was marked by a celebratory Mass at St John's Bath and a special edition of the *Downside Review*.

His memory was phenomenal. I remember one query regarding a nineteenth century priest called Eustace Barron, 'Oh yes' he said 'the seaweed priest! Look him up, you'll be intrigued', I did and I was. His memory aided his failing sight in later years.

In summary, while fulfilling his role as parish priest at Whitchurch (and saying Mass at nearby Stockwood), he also answered academic queries, oversaw visitors researching in the archives, did his own research, and still found time for a pastoral role counselling those who were not members of his congregation.

A full life, well lived, REQUIESCAT IN PACE

NOTES

Northern Catholic History

All past editions of Northern Catholic History 1975 to 2021 are now available to consult on the Hexham and Newcastle diocesan website: rcdhn.org.uk/nechs (Access to the 2022 current edition No. 63 is reserved to subscribers).

The editor of Northern Catholic History is always looking for material to publish. All periods are covered in the geographical area from the Scottish border to the Humber on the eastern side of the Pennines, and all topics, including family history, are included. Anyone wanting to submit an article is welcome to contact leo.gooch@btinternet.com.

ECHA Newsletters

Mrs Hilary Taylor has a complete set of ECHA newsletters from when she and her husband first joined the ECHA (at least 2000). If anyone would like to have this set or individual copies to fill gaps in their own set, please contact Bernard Polack tel. 01483 421412.

ARTICLES

A Short History of Our Lady of Muswell's Twelfth Century Holy Well and Pilgrim Shrine

“A new path is in these days is hard to find, but we think few, if any writers ancient or modern, have compiled an account of a stretch of dairy ground... it was a suburb of London and yet entirely country...it contained a Holy Well of wide repute... by the Well was a statue of Our Lady of Muswell, to which throngs of pilgrims came attracted by the repute of its (healing) waters and religious fervour”

(Connolly and Bloom, 1933, Foreword)



The present day Muswell Road, north London, is the location of a ‘mossy well’ and which still exists, though capped, in the garden of a private house. The ‘Mus Well’ was dedicated to Mary and because it was said to have great healing properties, it became the subject of pilgrimages. The ‘mossy well’ which gave the settlement its name, was situated on sixty-four acres of land east of Colney Hatch Lane. This was

gifted in 1152 by Richard de Belmeis (or *de Beaumais*) Bishop of London, to the nuns of the Priory of St Mary, Clerkenwell, for use as a farm.

Statue of Our Lady of Muswell
[courtesy of S. Gill]

The nuns built a chapel on the site and dedicated it to ‘Our Lady of Muswell’. The well was believed at the time, to have curative properties after a reported cure of a King of Scotland. The chapel with a priest’s house were built to

serve the pilgrims drawn to it. The Mus Well is the main source of three headstreams rising on the slopes of the hill forming the Muswell Stream. Last year I contacted Durham University's Department of Catholic Studies, trying to track down any books that had been written about the little-known twelfth century Catholic holy well and pilgrim shrine, of Our Lady of Muswell. To my delight Durham University did have one book. Originally in the London CTS Library but moved, along with the entire collection to Durham, and now stored in the Bill Bryson library. Only five percent of this book collection is available to the public and miraculously the one I wanted was one of those books.

I spent a delightful few days' retreat, in the summer of 2022, studying this book, *An Island of Clerkenwell, Notes on the Chapel and Well of Our Lady of Muswell*, by J.F. Connolly and J. Harvey Bloom, published in 1933. Around 1144, a layman, Ralph Brisset, founded a convent of nuns in Clerkenwell, with the specific aim to "Honour God and Our Lady of Clerkenwell". The original Charter of Deed, between Archbishop of Canterbury, Theobald and their first prioress, a nun called Christina is kept by the British Museum. This deed granted them certain land ownership rights, allowing them a potential source of income. The exact links with a religious order are not clear. The Victoria County Histories say that it was used by Augustinian canonesses while other sources say it was a Benedictine nunnery.

In the reign of King Stephen, 1153, Bishop of London, Richard de Belmeis, gifted the Clerkenwell nuns with sixty-five acres of land, just outside London. This was to be used as a dairy farm for the needs of the central London motherhouse but also as a source of income for the convent. Amongst various features on this land, such as an orchard there were also two natural wells. Because these wells were surrounded with moss, they were called the 'Mosse Wells'. On this gifted land, the nuns built an enclosed priory and dairy farm. Although the land was outside London, legally it still belonged to the London parish of Clerkenwell and was therefore known as "An Island of Clerkenwell".



*The church of St James,
Clerkenwell, London, the site of
the nunnery of St Mary*

The Clerkenwell nuns seem to have had many influential benefactors. At that time all Scottish kings inherited the title 'Earls of Huntingdon', and they appear to have had connections to the Clerkenwell nuns, either directly or indirectly. For example, King Malcolm IV gave a hundred and forty acres of land in Tottenham to one of his men, Sewin of Northampton, who in turn, made a gift of this land, to the Clerkenwell Benedictine nuns as a source of income for them. This gift is recorded in a charter by Malcolm's brother David, Earl of Huntingdon.

So, it is reasonable to conclude that Malcolm IV, not only would have known the nuns of the Clerkenwell motherhouse but would have also been aware of their rural priory and dairy farm with its natural wells, at Muswell. It is thought that Malcolm visited the outer London priory either in 1159 on his way to fight with King Henry II of England, in France or 1160 when he returned. Alternatively, King Malcolm may have visited them in 1163, after being taken seriously ill in Doncaster, whilst journeying through England.

Whichever date it was, whilst passing through the nunnery lands, Malcolm is said to have drunk from one of their 'Mosse Wellss'*(sic)* and received a miraculous cure. Malcolm was thought to have suffered from Paget's disease. This is a disease of the bone which disrupts the normal cycle of bone renewal, causing them to become weakened and possibly deformed. It was a relatively common condition in Britain, particularly in older people. It was, however, rare in younger people.

News of the Kings miraculous cure spread quickly and soon large numbers of pilgrims were travelling great distances to take of these healing 'Mosses Well' waters. The nuns built a chapel and erected a Statue to Our Lady of the Mosse Wells, to which pilgrims gave 'continual resort', particularly around the Feast of The Assumption. This name then evolved into the modern vernacular of Our Lady of Muswell.

A Papal document called 'Taxatio', dated 1288, in which Pope Nicholas granted Edward 1 the 'tenths' or tythe due to the clergy, for a period of six years and had been intended to support Papal attempts to gain repossession of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. In this document it states that the Clerkenwell nuns leased out their Muswell estate for £5 8s 8d in rent, plus a

total of £2 from all the pilgrim donations, which was a considerable sum of money then. The well and shrine were becoming more and more popular with its reputed healing properties.

All was well for this renowned holy well and shrine until the Henrician Reformation in the 1530s. A prayer composed for Our Lady of Muswell stated, that the power of Our Lady could not be destroyed and miracles might still occur.

The foresight of the last prioress, Sr Elizabeth Sakfield enabled the holy well to survive for a bit longer. Sensing the approaching Reformation and fearing that Henry VIII would destroy the holy well and pilgrim shrine of Our Lady, the prioress made provision to sign over the estate to a layman, John Avery, who had been Henry VIII's cellarer and must have been well known to the king.

A document dated the fourth of February 1539, confirms that John Avery was allowed to keep the Muswell estate for his lifetime. Avery was clearly not a well man and it seems that within a year he died. In a miraculous way, the site was saved while the king's agents were desecrating other shrines and monastic sites.

In the records of this land transfer to John Avery, the Muswell estate was described as follows: "*Muswelle Ferme, Muswelle Chapelle, the Pryste, chamber over the Gate, a house, an orchard and gardyne, to said Chapelle adioyning, a store house and stable, with all lands, meadows, pastures and woods.*" Interestingly, the holy wells were not listed, as later land deeds showed. Perhaps they were considered of no economic importance by the secular authorities.

After John Avery died, it appears it was sold in January 1544, by William Burnell to William Cawper, one of King Henry VIII Forest Augmentation Commissioners, the original chapel and holy well was still intact at this time, though without of course, the presence of the nuns.

In December 1576, during the reign of Elizabeth I, we read that the original holy wells are now covertly hidden within what was described as a 'Proper House', erected by the new owner Alderman Roe, who may himself have been a Catholic. Despite risk of persecution, Catholics appear to have continued to go on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Muswell. There may have been an original or restored statue of Our Lady of Muswell next to it as reported by John Norton in 1593," *in which was also an image of the Ladie of*

Muswell, whereunto was a continuall resort... in respect of a great cure which was performed by this water upon a King of Scots... absolutely to denie the cure I dare not for that the high God hath given virtue unto waters, to heale informaties, as may appeare by the cure of Naaman the leper."

(John Norden's Speculum Britanniae, The First Parte: an Historicall, & Chorographickall Discription of Middlesex, 1593).

Alderman Rowe's will stated that he bequeathed the estate to his son Nicolas and in documents dated 1612, detailed rents that were paid the land which still bore Our Lady of Muswell's name: "*a cottage on the land of the Blessed Mary of Muswell*". The last Rowe family document referring to the Muswell estate was dated sixteenth of March 1696, where Sir Thomas Rowe (junior) reported that the estate was now worth double what it had formerly been under his own father.

There is a record from 1750, where a Mr Griffith paid rent on land, which was no longer attributed to Mary but was now referred to simply as '*Spa Field*'. Miraculously, Muswell's holy well managed to survive destruction by being labelled by as '*Spa Waters*', although there is no record of an established spa being built and used on this land. Perhaps the water from this ancient well was still seen as being therapeutic in some way, even if their power was no longer attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.

In 1859, the land was used for the building of an ever-growing number of residential homes. One such landowner was Thomas Rhodes. After his death, records show that the Rhodes family made what was described as a "*great action*" or protest along with other tenants and property owners, to stop one of the tenants covering over the holy well, which was clearly still intact. The reasons they gave were not religious, or not overtly so at least. The group petitioned for the well to be saved and kept open so that the local poor could continue to use the well for laundry purposes. It seems that it was charity to the poor and most vulnerable, that saved the well for a bit longer.

In 1899, the House of Lords published the "Finsbury Adjustment Scheme" which detailed plans to transfer the historical lands of Our Lady of Muswell, which were still officially recognised as belonging to the London parish of Clerkenwell, to the parish of Hornsey in the County of Middlesex. This was in part due to issues arising from the improvement of Colney Hatch Lane and the Great North Road as well as increasing population. By the 1890s, the ancient holy well had still not been lost or covered over and a local

committee assessed its condition and found it to be: “*railed (fenced) but dilapidated*”. The committee got in touch with the Vestry (church council) of Clerkenwell, recommending that it take steps to purchase the freehold of the ancient holy well, so that it could be: “put in proper order and maintained forever”. Consequently, in 1898, the Vestry of Clerkenwell made an application to The London Financial Association, to request that the ancient holy well be transferred to the Clerkenwell Vestry to be preserved as an historical relic, but no reply was received and nothing happened. Subsequently, in 1900, a property developer and builder, C.W. Scott, built a house over the site of the ancient well and all potential public access to the site was lost. Today however, on the front wall of a house, 40 Muswell Road, N10, is a plaque that says: “*This House stands on the site of the Mus Well*”. Remarkably, although a house is on the site, the ancient holy well itself still exists in the rear garden of the property but now capped with a concrete slab. The modern Catholic parish of Our Lady of Muswell was established in 1917 and the church built in 1938 and consecrated in 1949. Like the original well and chapel, it is on Colney Hatch Lane.

Novena or prayer to Our Lady of Muswell.

Oh Mary Immaculate, Our Lady of Muswell and our powerful Advocate, remember thy children and in thy goodness, once more show forth on their behalf the power of intercession that thou hast with God the Father Almighty. Hail Mary etc. Our Lady of Muswell, pray for us.

Please can I ask all ECHA members to include this Novena in your daily prayers, I pray it perpetually. Let’s pray that one day the ancient Holy Well of Our Lady of Muswell will be accessible again to Catholic pilgrims and that the nuns will return to Our Lady of Muswell parish shrine.

S Gill

About the author: <https://www.ourladyofmuswell.com> (blog)

I am a privately dedicated, Lay Benedictine Solitary, currently in formation in Scotland but planning to return to Muswell Hill shortly, as a mustard seed of grace for this little work, which I believe is God’s will. We know what God can do with even a mustard seed size faith. Please pray for me. Our Lady of Muswell, pray for us.

Sources

Connolly J and Bloom, J, 1933, *An Island in Clerkenwell*
John Norden's Speculum Britanniae, The First Parte: a Historical, and Chorographical
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* * *

"George Conn's *Assertionum Catholicarum* as Justification for Protestant Suspicions of the Court of Henrietta Maria"?

Part 2

Addressing George Conn's work solely in terms of what it meant for his reputation among Protestants, and how Protestants likely received it would be negligent to the vast majority of its intended audience. Conn includes a preface entitled, "To the Heretical Reader" aimed at Protestants, but the book was written for a Catholic audience, although it remains unclear whether Conn intended that audience to be from Britain or in continental Europe. It would be reasonable, not to mention true to form, for Conn to have written with a British, and specifically Scottish, audience in mind. There is, however, no proof of this within the text or without.

A chief obstacle in understanding how Conn fit among his Catholic peers in writing about heresy is the fact that there has yet to be a comprehensive study of Catholic book production in Europe that focuses on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the end of the sixteenth, however, it is clear from contemporary records of the Frankfurt Book Fair that the industry as a whole was struggling.¹ A high percentage of these works written by Catholic authors were written by members of the clergy

¹ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 178-179. Hsia shows that by 1592, the Fair catalog included a total of 80 books by Catholic authors, with 62 written in Latin and 18 in German. By contrast, the same year's catalog lists 191 works by Protestant authors.

rather than by laypersons, and the overwhelming classification of Catholic works were books dedicated to theology, mostly focusing on dogmatic theology and polemic and written by Jesuits.² The emphases of the content of the works, coupled with the fact that Conn's was, in fact, a Jesuit, and that Conn interacted with them at the Spanish embassy in England figure considerably in the mistaken contemporary English interpretation that Conn was a Jesuit, as well.

Through this understanding of the Catholic book trade it can be reasonably determined that Conn's *Assertionum Catholicarum* was grounded in a familiar topic for Catholic writers, at least at the time around his birth. While it is difficult to determine the ways in which those trends changed, if they did, by the time Conn was publishing, the inclusion of several works among Gee's "Protestant Index" that resemble the content regarding Protestant heresy that Conn addresses indicates that such works were not yet uncommon in Britain, especially those written in English, by the middle of the 1620s.

Organized into three separate "books", *Assertionum Catholicarum*'s first is devoted to the "Foundations of the Christian Religion, Which Are Shattered by the Innovators." The second book addresses the "Dogmas of Faith, Which Are Spoiled by the Innovators," while the final book concerns "The Heads of the Faith Who Are Completely Denied by the Innovators." The way in the work is organized indicates an opinion that the two sides of the confessional divide agreed more than they disagreed. The opening book sees Conn being less argumentative than in the two sections that follow, and as such underscores his belief that there was more common ground than there was not. It also indicates that, in Conn's opinion, Protestant exception to the structure of the Catholic Church, including the idea that the pope was the conduit between God and the rest of humanity, was an important misunderstanding to correct, but not a view that was worthy of a more vehement defense. This is also likely a testament to Conn's adherence to the Catholic view. In this consideration, it is plausible that he believed the most important elements of *Assertionum* to be so certain that he did not find them worth arguing about with nearly the amount of zeal with which he approached the elements that followed.

Conn addresses the more contentious elements of Luther's *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*, as well as Calvin's influence on the evolution of Protestantism, in Book Two. Conn includes sections here that address Christ, the justification of faith, the sacraments and their

² Hsia, p. 180-181.

number, the Eucharist, and more. Conn's more impassioned responses are reserved for Calvin's view, which is not surprising given Scotland's adoption of Calvin's version of the Reformation. Conn also took considerable efforts to discredit Calvin and Calvinists in his most previous work, *De Institutione Religionis Apud Scotos*, published in 1628.³

The final book of *Assertionum* is noteworthy in part because it actually raises questions about Conn's choice of topical arrangement. The first two "vindications" regard teachers of religion and monastic vows. Then, the remainder of the work includes segments that might have been better positioned in the center section of the work, if Conn was strictly guided by thematic grouping. For instance, whereas Book Two includes segments on predestination and justification of faith, he reserves a segment on the importance of good works for Book Three. He also includes a segment on purgatory in the work's latter stages. The final "Vindication", which regards the importance of free choice, seems to be a logical successor to his argument regarding predestination, but is instead used for his final statement. A segment regarding images and likeness is also included. Conn's organization of the work provides insight to the issues he believed were of the greatest concern and in need of the greatest attention.

Conn's challenges to Calvinist doctrine begin with a preface in which he quotes Book 3, Chapter 21 of Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion* in order to focus his own writing. Conn quickly seizes on the social ramifications of the doctrine of predestination, noting that there are many people that, if a person has been chosen to receive eternal life, would like to know how such a person is to be recognized. Conn adopts an incredulous tone in his segue to Scripture to counter Calvin's claim. "Surely the Sacred Letters testify brightly on account of it being created from God in order that he might have eternal life," Conn writes.⁴ The tone he assumes underscores two elements that relate to *Assertionum's* purpose. First, Conn stresses that while Protestants have proclaimed the pre-eminence of Scripture in the formation of Christian theology and acceptable practice, they overlook Scripture that countermands their statements. Second, it shows Conn's use of expository writing in order to convey his point. The work is much more of an instruction manual than it is a polemic, and as such follows a tradition of catechetical education. Conn adopts the tone of a teacher in this passage, as if his next question will be, "Who can tell me where we find the contradiction?" One does not have to go far afield to surmise that, to many,

³ Conn, *De Duplici Statu Religionis Apud Scotos*, p. 111.

⁴ Conn, *Assertionum Catholicarum Libri Tres*, p. 94.

Conn's ambition and intellectual confidence that bordered on smugness might have made him quite difficult to interact or work with, and certainly would have provided his English critics fodder to work with, as is evidenced in D.T.'s *The Popes Nuntioes*.⁵

The five pages that follow include a litany of Old and New Testament references to correct Calvin's notion. Conn cites passages from Genesis 2 and 7, arguing that stories of Adam & Eve and the creation clearly rebuke Calvinist predestination. "God has not brought forth death," Conn writes, stressing that it was not the tree that God created that caused the damnation of mankind, or God's predetermining the individual fate of mankind, but rather mankind's actions in relation to God's commands that determines such things.⁶ Conn strengthens his argument through assessments of Scripture in Romans 5, 1 Timothy 2, 2 Peter 3, and Ezekiel 18 before returning to Romans 9:8-13. Conn insists that Calvin misread Scripture to apply matters of a temporal blessing regarding inheritance and political leadership to an opinion about eternal life that is unequivocal.⁷

Conn's tone and writing voice are the most distinguishable and noteworthy elements of this argument. The Church, of course, disagreed with Calvin's notion of predestination, as he was excommunicated in 1538. However, in the English world in which Conn arrived nearly a hundred years later, his blatant repudiation of predestination would raise concerns among Puritans in particular who were already suspicious of the religious leanings of William Laud and Charles I. Pamphlet and correspondence disputes between members of the clergy in the 1630s were the "civil wars that pre-dated those of the laity in the 1640s, and were fought with pens rather than swords."⁸

Being that these debates largely surrounded Laudianism and increased in volume and intensity after 1633, and that Conn was referenced numerous times during the earliest stages of the Long Parliament, it is safe to suggest that Conn's views and role exacerbated, or at least fit neatly into,

⁵ D.T., *The Popes nuntioes, or, The negotiation of Seignior Panzani, Seignior Con & c resident here in England with the Queen: and treating about the alteration of religion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and his adherents in the yeares of our Lord 1634, 1635, 1636, & c.: together with a letter to a nobleman of this kingdom concerning the same* (London: Printed for R.B., 1643), p. 5.

⁶ Conn, *Assertionum Catholicarum Libri Tres*, p. 94.

⁷ Conn, *Assertionum Catholicarum Libri Tres*, pp. 95-96.

⁸ Anthony Milton, *Laudian and Royalist Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: The Career and Writings of Peter Heylyn* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 42-43

anti-Laudian arguments that had been taking place for several years before he arrived. The influence Conn quickly developed among other members of the Queen's court would, therefore, also be of grave concern, as it indicated his ability to spread his views to the general public. With Laud having been elevated to the position of Archbishop of Canterbury three years before Conn's arrival, his own assault on predestination through an introduction of a modified version of Arminianism into the practices of the Church of England created an increasingly toxic religio-political environment.⁹

Add Conn to this mix, who unlike his diplomatic predecessor Gregorio Panzani had his own record of speaking out in opposition to Calvinist predestination, and a suitable "other" was provided for those who wished to pin responsibility for the developments and trends in the Church of England on the influence of an outsider rather than on an Englishman. Conn's identity as a Scot, rather than an Italian, was viewed as a bigger threat to the English nation than the standard papal representative would otherwise be. Panzani took note of this in his recollection of the mood in England at the end of his own embassy, writing, "The latter choice (Conn) was not very agreeable to several of the English, who would have been better pleased with an Italian agent. They apprehended something might be carried on to prejudice the English nation, while two Scotchmen were employed."¹⁰

Conclusion:

Conn is often portrayed as little more than a faceless representative of the papacy in discussions of the final years of Charles' personal rule. This identification has unfortunately sufficed for historians for decades. However, Conn's national identity as a Scot, and more importantly his publishing career before entering diplomatic service, provided much more opportunity for the Puritan faction to view him as a threat to not just their designs for government, but to the practice of their own faith. While his five-book bibliography can be mined for items that Puritans and even members of the Church of England whose religious views were more conventional would

⁹ Milton, *Laudian and Royalist Polemic in Seventeenth Century England*, p. 178.

¹⁰ Panzani, p. 233. The second Scot to whom Panzani refers is William Hamilton, a Catholic who was at the time selected to represent the English as ambassador in Rome.

find offensive, it is his final work that was potentially the most damaging to his mission. As Conn intended it to be a manual to be used by Catholics to combat what he viewed as the Protestant heresy, those same words could be used by an increasingly powerful Puritan faction to protest his presence near their king and queen.

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Building the Fortress

The urbanisation of Britain in the later eighteenth century had a profound effect on English Catholicism. Whereas formerly the majority of missions had been located on gentry estates, now, in one generation they became mainly located in London and the industrialising towns. At the same time the French Revolution and secularisation on the continent led to the closure of English colleges and religious houses abroad. The new generation of Catholic clergy were educated and ordained in England and the missions they served were increasingly located not on gentry estates but in the industrialising towns.

There have been studies of urban Catholic communities in Bristol, Preston, Wigan of which the most significant was that of G.P. Connolly on Manchester. The transition was by no means always achieved peacefully. I propose to describe the process in two contrasting Midland towns.

Birmingham, situated south east of the Black country, had for many years been a centre of worldwide distribution of manufactures and import of raw materials, and this was the period of its most rapid growth of population by immigration and natural increase. The same was true of Wolverhampton to the north-west of the Black country.

In such towns the authorities of state and church could not prevent the growth of nonconformity.

The last serious attempt by the government to enumerate papists had been made in 1767, and the local parish returns are an excellent starting point for examining the social composition of the Catholic community, as they list names, families' occupations and ages and length of residence in the parish. In Birmingham 220 Catholics were listed at a time when the total population was about 30,000. Many of the heads of householders were skilled metalworkers, and a high proportion were incomers. They were found throughout the town

There had been no Catholic chapel in Birmingham; the Masshouse was in Edgbaston to the west of the town, on the estates of the Middlemore family, where the Franciscans had long had a house and a school. In 1791 the principal Birmingham Catholic families financed the building of a chapel in Birmingham and the Franciscans provided a priest. The baptism registers record between thirty and forty baptisms a year many of them families who would play a leading role in Birmingham business and Catholicism, for example Hardman, Powell, Chopping, and many more. Their connections were strengthened by intermarriage and as godparents.

The Franciscans were an order traditionally committed to travelling about and visiting many missions, but their numbers were declining. After the death of the first priest in 1799, problems arose between his successor and some of the businessmen of the congregation, and they began an all too public campaign for his removal. Bossy and Hilton have proposed a theory of "collectivism" but to me I think these business men simply showed a lack of understanding of authority in the Catholic church. They were used to employing agents, sometimes abroad, sometimes locally, but expecting them to provide services and be regularly accountable. The Franciscan superior and Milner rejected their demands, but although the priest was quietly replaced, they were still dissatisfied. They began to campaign for a second 'proprietary' church. Milner, while rejecting the idea of a 'proprietary church' eventually conceded the need for a second chapel. This was built in 1808 on the opposite side of the town and called St Chad's. Even here, some of the businessmen who raised the money, initially thought they had the right to direct the priest's time. Peach, supported by Milner made it very clear that

this was not to be. It should be stressed that thereafter these same businessmen became the loyal supporters of the chapel and the priest, generous in financial support and loyal in the work of the mission.

The story was different in Wolverhampton, which lies to the north west of the Black Country coalfield. It was one of the few towns with a longstanding Catholic presence. Exceptionally, there had been a succession of resident priests since 1694. In North St. (otherwise known as Goat St. or Tup St), a house which had originally belonged to a junior branch of the Gifford family, had been given to the Catholic clergy, and re-built in 1729-36 at a cost of over £1,000. There were two priests; each had a stipend of £30 a year paid out of clergy funds. One priest looked after the townspeople and one, known as the out priest, visited Bilston, Sedgley, and Bloxwich. The chapel was inside the house at the rear. This was further enlarged in 1765, with elaborate plasterwork. It was entered through the house. All this was of course technically illegal but it was 'openly resorted to'.

The report for Wolverhampton, listed 491 papists of whom 116 were under 14. In North Street lived two men described as gentlemen- in fact the two priests- Peter Beeston and Alexander Taylor. More houses were built in Goat St, out of clergy funds and rented out to Catholics. By 1767 seventeen Catholic families lived in North St, near the chapel and the rest were distributed through the town.

Most of the Catholic men of this already substantial congregation worked in one of the wide range of specialisms in the metalworking trades- for example locksmith, bucklemaker, chape filer and toymaker, while a few offered the usual services to be found in market towns. Most women worked in the family trades, or as servants, but included no less than four schoolmistresses, including one with a boarding school in the prestigious Cock Street. Others earned their livings as hucksters, spinners, a screw filer, a toymaker, a seller of small wares, a brazier, and an innholder. The newer trades were concentrated around the new Church of England chapel, St John's, which had been built ten years before. The Catholics had embarrassed their priest by asking to be allowed to subscribe to it- 'for the sake of the goodwill shown to Catholics in the town.' The priest referred the matter to the Bishop

- the outcome is not known. The house was occupied by eight Catholic gentlewomen as a retirement home. In 1787, the Wolverhampton chapel was enhanced by a large painting by Joseph Barney of Jesus and St. Thomas after the Resurrection.

The Vicars Apostolic had previously lived at Longbitch to the west of the town on the estate of the senior branch of the Catholic Giffard family. Bishop Milner soon moved to the town, and Giffard House provided a dignified gathering place for clergy meetings, grand Masses, ordinations and special appeals. There were two priests and an out priest but Sedgley had its own chapel from 1785.

As the population of Wolverhampton increased, so the Catholic population rose accordingly. The lists of Easter communions provide the surest guide to the real size of the congregation, and they rose from 155 in 1823, to 207 in 1823, 351 in 1826 and 640 in 1844. There was a steady stream of converts. In 1831 there were 76, receiving instruction of whom 10 'fell off' and the rest continued their instructions. The following year, 170 were confirmed of whom 70 were converts. Similarly, at Birmingham the registers show the regular baptism of converts.

In both towns there had certainly been a small number of Irish families – including some travellers and soldiers- but the numbers in the Catholic registers do not become significant until the late 1820's. Both Birmingham priests, on being asked to report to Parliament in 1836, said that the increase in Irish numbers was from the 1820's.

More important were the steady influx of Catholic families seeking to improve their business and employment opportunities. To Birmingham came the Catholic John Hardman 1 from Lytham, Lancashire, and the Mascalls from Catholic Rowington in South Warwickshire. The town's specialist industries attracted foreigners like Peter Borini and Charles Devoto.

Similarly, Samuel Jones, Grocer arrived in Wolverhampton from Brewood, by 1788. He and his wife Ann Corvisor had married by licence at the Catholic chapel at Longbitch, Brewood, and had six sons and two daughters. Their eldest daughter Sarah Jones was confirmed at Longbitch. They built up

a substantial Grocery business at 10 Cock St, Wolverhampton with china, glass, and delph ware. At Samuel he left household furniture and stock to the value of £300 to his daughter Anne. Five of their sons were educated at Crook Hall and eventually became priests. All the Jones family were musical, and Milner used their talents to introduce musical and devotional liturgy at Oscott and Sedgley Park. Anne and Sarah were much in request as soloists at grand Catholic events, such as the opening in 1828, of Lichfield chapel, with a High Mass with music by Mozart, Haydn, Handel, Zingarelli, Pergolesi, and Novello.

Other families were attracted by Wolverhampton's japanning and related trades, as for example, Edial Lawrence Davey japanner, and Peter Guisani and his family of carvers and gilders, who were to become leading members of the Catholic community. William Paddy, landscape and portrait painter, came from Calf Heath and his daughter's will was witnessed by the Wolverhampton priest. The Gibbons family came from Oscott in Aston parish which had a recorded Catholic history from the early seventeenth century. They were to serve the Wolverhampton mission throughout the nineteenth century. These business men were prominent in developing the needs of the Catholic community - the Sick Club.

The wealthier urban families educated their daughters at Caverswall Benedictine convent school in North Staffordshire. Ann, daughter of Thomas Simkiss surgeon Wolverhampton in North St, was educated there and formed lifelong friendships with Maria Moore also of Wolverhampton, and with Maria, Ann and Harriet Richmond from Codsall. Similarly the five daughters of Peter Borini of Birmingham were educated there as were the five daughters of John Hardman 1 of Birmingham

Sedgley Park boys' school had been established in 1763, on the boundary of Wolverhampton and Sedgley. By 1803 over 1,000 boys from towns all over England had been pupils at Sedgley Park. Milner held confirmations there only two days after his move to Wolverhampton, and at regular intervals thereafter.

Birmingham boys at Sedgley Park included the four sons of John Chopping, paper tray makers, William the son of William Hopkins, John son of John Ledsam surgeon, of Paradise St., William the son of William Weston grocer, High St, and Joseph Sollom, son of William Sollom, gun barrel maker.

From Wolverhampton came Thomas, James and John Simkiss, sons of Thomas Simkiss, surgeon, Charles Adams, son of a breeches maker, John Crewe, James Barney of the family of japanners and artists, Francis, James and John Yates, and George Heavingingham and his brothers Henry and John. The sons of Thomas Gibbons went to the Benedictine school at Douai, Somerset. Future priests and lay men were formed together in the same spirituality, and networks of friendship and family were established when young which would continue through life, and bound the Catholic community together.

Catholics, like those of all denominations reacted to the rapid growth of population, and the high proportion of children in the community, by providing Sunday and Day schools. However, Catholics, unlike the Church of England and the Dissenters had no national organisation and depended on the generosity and initiative of each individual mission.

All Catholics rich and poor, adults and children, were taught their faith by the clergy according to the official *Catechismus ad parochus* used since the Council of Trent.(1564). At his first clergy meeting in 1804 Milner insisted that ‘protestant catechisms’ must not be used. Teaching from the scriptures, especially versions ‘without notes’ by laymen was entirely unacceptable. The laity nevertheless gave much money and time to provide and maintain school buildings, manage the mission schools, collect subscriptions, make reports and award prizes. At Wolverhampton Miss Ann Simkiss and her school friend, Miss Moore, are credited with gathering some of the local boys for instruction on Sundays. Anne’s father Thomas Simkiss paid for the building of a school behind the chapel. Like Catholic schools being built in other towns it aimed to impress. It was “arched and ceiled” plastered and coloured. Inside the school had an altar and sacristy. In 1820 Wolverhampton school was put on a formal basis, managed by a committee of Wolverhampton businessmen. Milner made it clear in a document signed by him and the two

Wolverhampton priests, that the lay committee would have no authority in religious matters. There was a Sunday school and a Day school. Anne Simkiss continued to teach the girls on Sundays, and their numbers rose to 130 and Mr Brandwood taught the 60 boys. The day schoolteachers were salaried as was the organist, Thomas Maskell. Similarly, in Birmingham each of the two chapels had Sunday and Day schools. The lay committees collected subscriptions, visited the schools regularly and assisted in the Sunday schools but the priests had overall authority, and continued to catechise the whole congregation on Sundays.

Income at the Wolverhampton school included £3-9s6d from 'pennies from the day school children for cyphering'. Mission schools here, as elsewhere provided for a wider section of the working classes than the titles 'poor schools' or 'charity schools' would suggest. There were increasing employment opportunities for those who could write and keep accounts.

There were close links between Sedgley Park school and Wolverhampton Catholic community. George Spicer, the steward at the school regularly went to the shop of George Sollom there. Similarly, Thomas Richmond master of the school at Codsall constantly visited Sedgley park for social and religious events.

The chapel, mission and school buildings, the house of the priest and of the schoolmaster were all close together, and familiar to all. Voluntary work bound the Catholic community together and the increase in additional devotions, and events such as bazaars and special speakers both, in different ways, further increased the sense of solidarity, especially of the middle class.

A number of 'young ladies' and small boys from Wolverhampton went to Thomas Richmond's school at Codsall. Catholic private schools such as this and the ones at Temple St. run by Mr and Miss Marsden, and by Miss Senn in Birmingham were also validated and visited regularly by the clergy, to hear the children 'say their catechism'.

The same catechisms and the same prayer books, the Garden of the Soul and the Key of Heaven were used by all schools; at Sedgley Park, at the convent schools, at the Richmond's school at Codsall, at the mission schools and in

church. Most priests catechised adults and children on Sundays, and some held additional lectures on weeknights.

By 1825 Milner was becoming frail, and Thomas Walsh of Oscott College was appointed his co-adjutor. Milner died the following year, and Walsh succeeded him as Vicar Apostolic. The *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, reported at great length the impressive Requiem Mass for Milner at Wolverhampton; there were some 30 clergymen present, it lasted three hours in a crowded chapel and was ‘performed with most impressive effect.’

Wolverhampton chapel was closed for two years, and greatly enlarged. Milner had left £1,000, collections were made in the missions and 23 of the Wolverhampton businessmen with whom we have become familiar—Gibbons, Sollom, Moore, Law, Crewe Gould and Guisani subscribed generously. The architect was Joseph Ireland of London. In 1828, it was reopened with even more ceremony, led by Walsh and 60 priests. The *Wolverhampton Chronicle* described the event as one of ‘great gratification to the non-catholics of the town, who, though differing from them in doctrinal faith could not fail to be impressed with the solemnity and ceremonies they witnessed.’ The new building was much larger, higher, and much more conspicuous. The entrance was no longer private, through the house, but very publicly at the side, and was ornamented with large statues of St Peter and St Paul, to whom it was dedicated.

A silent revolution had taken place and was being publicly proclaimed in ostentatious buildings. It was supported by a solid lay community of loyal businessmen under the authority of the mission priest, sometimes called ‘Garden of the Soul’ Catholics. It became known as the Fortress Church and would persist until well into the 1960’s.

Marie Rowlands

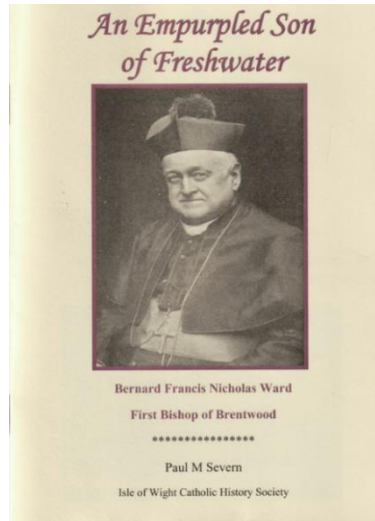
BOOKS

An Empurpled Son of Freshwater by Paul M Severn

William George Ward was a contemporary of Newman and Manning and a prominent figure in the Oxford Movement. One of his sons, Bernard, and three of his daughters became nuns. A grandson, Leo, also became a missionary priest. Bernard Ward's formative years were spent largely at this family residence on the Isle of Wight.

Ordained to the Holy Priesthood in 1882, Bernard Ward was a significant churchman in English Catholic history. It was at St. Edmund's College, Ware, that Bernard Ward was most closely associated and where he spent almost all his priestly life; first, as a Theology lecturer and later, as College President for twenty four years. Ward's final three years were as the first Bishop of the new Diocese of Brentwood (split from the Westminster Archdiocese). Under his brief episcopate the Catholic population and the number of priests increased significantly. He is remembered in laying the foundations of the diocesan

structure and the growth of the faith there in the immediate aftermath of World War One. His family are remembered also, with gratitude and affection for their work, generosity and commitment to the Catholics of West Wight, particularly at this time of their church's centenary.

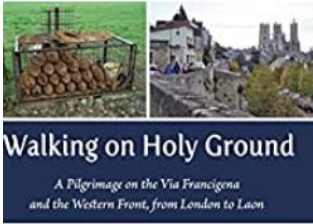


It is providential that this excellent and well researched booklet on Bishop Bernard Ward (published by the Isle of Wight Catholic History Society) should be produced at this significant time for St. Saviour's Church in West Wight. The Ward family were pillars of the Catholic community and they provided the present church which proudly celebrates its centenary this year.

The booklet is available from the IoW Catholic History Society at just £3-00 (£5-00 with p. & p). E. mail iow-chs@outlook.com

Peter Clarke, Chairman, Isle of Wight Catholic History Society

Walking on Holy Ground by Nick Dunne



A personal account of Nick Dunne's walking pilgrimage along the first part of the Via Francigena. The 1,900 km route passes through the battlefields of WW1 and is rich in ancient and modern Catholic history.

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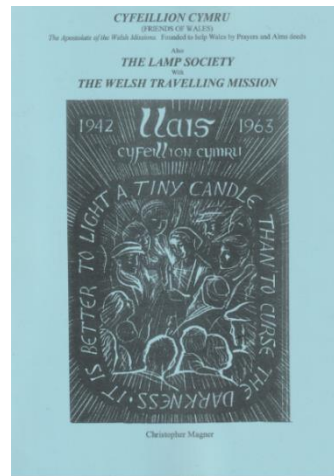


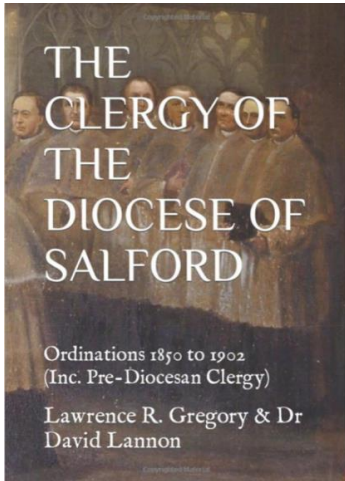
Cyfeillion Cymru (Friends of Wales), The Lamp Society and the Welsh Travelling Mission by Chris Magner

During World War 2 thousands of Catholic children of Liverpool were evacuated to Wales where they were kindly received and generously cared for. In March 1942, three Liverpool Catholics decided to do something to render practical help to poor priests and struggling parishes in Wales. It was the beginning of Cyfeillion Cymru – Friends of Wales.

Copies available £16.50 post free from Chris Magner – chrismagner45@yahoo.co.uk.

Copies are done on a cost of production basis and not for profit.





The Clergy of the Diocese of Salford by Lawrence R Gregory and Dr David Lannon

We are delighted to announce the publication of the first volume of the History of the clergy of the Diocese of Salford. We have been working on this project for more than two decades, and now, in over 243 pages and 610 individual biographical profiles (many with photographs), we tell the stories of the missionary Priests who restored the Catholic faith to South and East Lancashire.

Lawrence Gregory & David Lannon

The book can be purchased from Amazon on the link below:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B0C1J1WQ94?fbclid=IwAR1-5ZVyudHMxwC7xSuzH1V2fMCQS2LarIZXyhIVath2AAAnHmt5BXZ3QLA>



Launch of new website – <https://www.pilgrimways.org.uk/>

Hearts in Search of God

A three year project by Dr Phil McCarthy to promote walking pilgrimage within the Catholic dioceses of England and Wales. The title of the project comes from Pope Francis' words: "Whoever they may be — young or old, rich or poor, sick and troubled or curious tourists — let them find due welcome, because in every person there is a heart in search of God, at times without being fully aware of it."



Reading Abbey – a pilgrim church

by John Mullaney MA

SPECIAL PRE-PUBLICATION PRICE £24.00

The book begins by examining architectural aspects of Reading Abbey, with detailed diagrams of its layout. Dr. Kevin Hayward, one of the country’s leading petrologists, examined the stonework and mortar found in the abbey ruins and has contributed to several of the chapters.

I do not shy away from discussing some of the more controversial aspects of the Abbey, including the burial place of Henry I, the height of its central tower, or looking at some unexplored areas, such as whether its chapter house may have been the burial place of abbots and other dignitaries, possibly in an undiscovered vault. The seals of Reading Abbey are looked at afresh, with new images provided by various archives.

The book then moves to looking at the Abbey as a centre of prayer. I discuss pilgrimage and the role of Reading Abbey both before and after its dissolution. *Reading Abbey – a pilgrim church* is richly illustrated: there is hardly a page without a picture or a diagram. At over 250 pages, in A4 landscape format, this is a substantial work which brings together several strands of the story of Reading Abbey.

I am grateful for comments and advice from Professor Anne Curry and John Painter, among others.

The ‘Friends of Reading Abbey’ have kindly agreed to support and promote the book, which is dedicated to, and is in aid of, the ‘Friends’. Once costs have been covered, all the proceeds from sales of this print run will go to the “Friends of Reading Abbey”.

John Mullaney

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The print run will be determined by the number of copies ordered in advance. The full publication price will be £29.00 (£33.00 inc p&p), but by ordering, or

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Thank you,

John Mullaney

UPCOMING EVENTS

SATURDAY 3 JUNE 2023

York Catholic History Day, Bar Convent, YORK

Organiser: *Judith Smeaton*

TUESDAY 6 JUNE 2023, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Linda Porter: *“One of the greatest and most illustrious princesses in the world.” A reappraisal of Catherine of Braganza.*

TUESDAY 1 AUGUST 2023, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Conor Byrne: *Mary Queen of Scots and Lady Katherine Grey*

TUESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Valerie Schutte: *Anne of Cleves – The Survivor Queen*

TUESDAY 3 OCTOBER 2023, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Dr Anne E Bailey: *“Journey on Foot”: a consideration of pilgrimage.*

Dr Bailey is a member of the Faculty of History at the University of Oxford

TUESDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2023, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Joanna Bogle: *The History of St Mary’s University, Twickenham*

TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2023, 7.30pm **Via Zoom**

Ian Styler: *St Æthelbryth of Ely (also known as St Etheldreda).*