

**English
Catholic**



**History
Association**

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NEWSLETTER

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Membership of the English Catholic History Association

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

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

Membership forms and further details are available from:

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 going from strength to strength! We have had excellent online speakers this year and have a busy programme booked for the rest of the year and well into next year. Our AGM is on 28th October at the church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm St, Mayfair. We will be having a well-known speaker to do our annual in-person talk. Please come along and support your English Catholic History Association.

We at the ECHA encourage the study of all aspects of English and Welsh Catholic history and I recently gave a paper at the Catholic Records Society Conference in Leeds on the subject of recusant women during the reign of Elizabeth I. We are on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Youtube as well as <https://echa.org.uk>. We hope you enjoy this newsletter and that you might like to give us some feedback or even consider contributing to the next one.

Tim Guile
Chairman ECHA

OBITUARIES

URSULA POLACK – RIP

An obituary by Sheila Mawhood

You will have seen in the May newsletter the sad news that committee member Ursula Polack had died. She and her husband Bernard were a double act, co-ordinating the visits far and wide that we had to put on hold with the Covid pandemic. Ursula did not attend the committee meetings though Bernard did. And Bernard remains our Programme Co-ordinator.

So, it was at one of these events where I first met Ursula. When I had joined the committee I did feel like a fish out of water, a bit of a fraudster, as I'm not even English. And I was *Editor* of the quarterly newsletter. I had nothing to fear. When I first clapped my eyes on Ursula, she put me completely at ease and I always had a friendly greeting from her.

Bernard tells me more about their life together, both outside and inside the ECHA

“I grew up on the north-east side of London and Ursula grew up on the south-west side. We met, in the late 1950s, in a London-based club called the Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Ramblers’ Club, which organised rambles in the counties around London each Sunday. We married in 1959, so had been married nearly 64 years. We have six children, three sons and three daughters (the first two are girl-and-boy twins) aged from 62 to 54 and thirteen grandchildren.

We joined the ECHA in 2000 after seeing a poster about it (with, of course, Toni Eccles’s address) in the Catholic church in Aldeburgh, Suffolk when we were on holiday in that area. We became enthusiastic members and went (always together) on many visits (in those days the Association was able to organise visits to places of Catholic history interest almost every month from April to September each year) to parts of the country that we had never visited before, for example Tewkesbury, Chester, Lincoln, Northumberland. In those days the AGM was held each year at Downside Abbey in Somerset.

Our eldest son lives in York, so, every year up to 2019, we went to York for a long weekend at the beginning of June, combining days with our son and attendance at the Catholic History Day at the Bar Convent on the Saturday.

Of course, since 2020, the Covid pandemic curtailed all ECHA activities. However, even if it had not, it is probable that Ursula's declining activeness would have curtailed our participation anyway."

The funeral was held on Anzac Day, 25th April 2023 at St Joseph's church Milford, Godalming in Surrey. Many members of the extended family played a part in the liturgy, doing the Readings, leading the responsorial Psalm, presenting a very personal eulogy and six of them, sons and grandsons were pall bearers.

I'd like to share with you some of the anecdotes from the eulogy, which had been read section by section alternately by two daughters – Catherine Elizabeth and Margaret Clare

"Mum was born 93 years ago today, 25th April 1930 in Mitcham, Surrey. She spent all of her childhood in that area apart from during WW2 when she moved, briefly, to Scotland. On leaving school she worked in Barclays Bank. It was in London where she and her sister Therese joined the Catholic Ramblers' Club and this is where she met Dad. They were married on 25th July 1959. And so began 62 years of married life, blessed with 6 children, 14 grand children and 2 great grandchildren.

Living through the war encouraged Mum and Dad's generation to have a 'make do and mend' attitudes to resources and objects, perhaps they were ahead of their time in terms of green ethics. I remember when we were young and at primary school, every summer Mum would unravel jumpers and cardigans from the previous year and knit them again in the appropriate sizes for the new school term. So if you spot Dad in a royal blue sweater at any point, you may be able to guess at its provenance.

Mum has always been a bit of a worrier and I remember her ringing from work to ask me to check that the iron had been unplugged. When I was driving Mum and Dad down to stay in Bournemouth last summer, we had to make a 40minute round trip and check that everything had been turned off properly."

Ursula would have been close to nervous collapse when their son Christopher bought a motor bike at the age of 19...

"Despite worrying, Mum was very determined when she needed to be. She learned to swim in her 40's and to drive in her 50's and on moving to Godalming in her 50's, made every effort to involve herself in parish life and also in local history and archaeology groups. She ran Christmas Bazaars at our primary school, held coffee mornings for charity and reading with children at St Edmunds and supporting others at her bible group and through prayer.

Ursula is a wife, mother, gran, great-grandmother, friend and neighbour who is greatly loved and will be missed.

She was a devout Catholic and her faith was always central to her life.

We send her all our love and pray that she will rest in peace.

Des Anglin, 1929-2023

We are sad to report the recent death of Desmond (Des) Anglin who will have been known to many, particularly longstanding, members. He and his late wife Valerie were among the pioneering members of the ECHA and she, supported by Des, was for many years the energetic programme/events organiser.

Des might have been fairly short in stature, but he was always large in presence – a lively and entertaining conversationalist with a great appetite for history and love for our Catholic heritage. He had a mischievous sense of humour – memorably leaving a Salisbury cathedral guide speechless by questioning the rightful ownership of the building. He had a long and fulfilling life which was not always easy for him – raising a young family more or less singlehandedly at the same time as doing a demanding job as a secondary school teacher. Unlike a number of us he did not escape from the profession at the earliest opportunity, but continued up to and maybe beyond the normal retirement age in a senior school position. He was an energetic and committed practitioner, both liked and respected by his students.

In his middle years fate brought Des and his second wife Val together. They had been friends in their teens, but decades elapsed before chance brought them, both now free, together again. They went on to share a long married life that brought them both great happiness.

Des and Val were long time members of St Bonaventure's parish in Bristol, very active in the life of their parish community. It would take too long to itemise all the good work they undertook; but just one notable example was the development project in Malawi, which they also took the opportunity to visit. They 'adopted' and supported a young seminarian through to his ordination and beyond; both he and they regarded themselves as members of the same family.

In recent years both Des and Val experienced declining health and it caused Des a lot of pain to watch the steady deterioration in his wife's condition. Val died over a year ago and her loss affected him very badly; he made no attempt to disguise how much he was struggling. But they are reunited now as the devoted couple they always were in life. Those of us who got to know and like them both will miss them. May they both rest in peace.

Vincent Burke

NOTES AND NOTICES

Grants

Applications are welcome from students/researchers for modest financial assistance to help defray costs incurred in the pursuit of their research. The research should have as its principal focus the history of Catholicism in England and Wales and be in accordance with the objects of the ECHA (to advance the education of the public in English Catholic History) and should be intended for publication or as part of an academic qualification. Applications are only considered from members or those applying for membership of the Association. Previous grants have been in the region of £150-£300.

Josh Madrid is a recent recipient and will be giving a zoom talk about his research in January 2024. **Simon Lambe**, another recent recipient will hopefully be writing a short article about his research during 2024.

Timeline of Catholic History

Our friends at the Australian Catholic History Society were recently in touch with us and amongst other things commented that on their website much the most popular pages are those of the Timeline of Australian Catholic History that they have created. It is well worth a visit.

[\(https://australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au/history-resources/timeline-of-australian-catholic-history/\)](https://australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au/history-resources/timeline-of-australian-catholic-history/)

We would like to create our own timeline of English and Welsh Catholic History for the ECHA website, but it will be a lot of work and plans are at an early stage. If you would like to volunteer some time to help or have an interest in a particular era of our history that would enrich the timeline, please get in touch via the secretary (see p2) and we will get back to you as soon as possible. The more volunteers we have, the easier it will be, and it just might fill some of those long dark winter evenings and wet days and introduce you to things you never knew about Catholicism in England and Wales.

Newsletter Editor

Angela Hodges, who has edited the newsletter for several years on a temporary basis is stepping down at the AGM from her editorial and secretarial duties (see below) and I have been asked to take over the newsletter from this issue. Before introducing myself, I want to thank Angela for all her hard work in producing the newsletters and for her help as I feel my way forward.

My name is Margaret Turnham and together with my husband have recently moved from Teesside down south to be closer to family. I joined the ECHA around 2005 when I was studying for a master's degree in Church History. In 2012, I completed my Doctorate on aspects of English Catholic faith and practice from 1778 -1990. My passion is to make our Catholic heritage in this country better known, better understood and to show how our past influences our present and our future. To do that via the newsletter requires your help, however.

The pandemic has, of course limited a lot of activities members used to take part in, though it has opened the way for other activities such as the monthly Zoom talks. However, as life gets back to a more normal pattern, activities such as visits can take place once more. Please inform us (via the secretary) in good time of any activities you are planning so that they can be advertised on the website and in the newsletter and please nominate a member of the group to write a report afterwards. What about the Zoom talks – would those of you unable to join like to see a summary of them in print? What else would you like to see in the newsletter? Let me know. Details of how to get in touch are on p2.

Secretary – a note from Angela Hodges

I have been taking minutes for the English Catholic History Association since its inception in 1991 (then the English Catholic History Group), but I actually took over as secretary from Toni Eccles in 2011 – a hard act to follow as the ECHA was Toni's brainchild and she was passionate about it.

There are lots of reasons why I have stayed so long in the job. One is the people. Unlike many committees, there is never any irritation or unkindness with the ECHA. They are a lovely bunch of people, very

considerate of each other, with a great sense of humour. Committee meetings are never dull as everyone has a genuine interest in Catholic history and the talk runs down fascinating little side paths.

One of the secretarial duties is to field queries which are sent in via the ECHA website and bat them on to someone more knowledgeable than myself. The queries range from information wanted about Catholic agriculture, to someone finding a Papal bulla in a field while metal detecting. I have met some interesting people while in my role as secretary, made some good friends and learned a good deal about English Catholic history.

Covid was a death knell to some societies, but our committee took up the technical challenge, with the result that we now have regular monthly Zoom talks, and thanks to our social media links people regularly contact us, keen to talk about the subjects they are passionate about, while others exchange information via our Facebook page.

So now is an exciting time of development in the ECHA, and it feels to me that it is a good time to pass on the role of Secretary to someone with new ideas, energy, and enthusiasm.

Thank you, Angela, for all your commitment and hard work.

NB Nomination forms for the role of Secretary and other officers and committee members are included in this mailing?

ARTICLES

Squints or cameras? Ways to glimpse the Holy, then and now.

Live streaming of Mass and other devotions rapidly became a part of many Catholics' lives during the pandemic crisis. We sought out Facebook and YouTube to replace what we were missing whilst our churches are closed. We talked excitedly about how all the new technology was helping us keep in touch with our spiritual side as we relaxed in our armchairs and watched Mass; or if being really engaged said the responses, made the sign of the cross, and paid attention to the homily in a way we probably didn't always do if sat on a hard pew, in a chilly church building. The equipment used to bring these riches to us was mostly very simple, the smartphone or tablet belonging to the priest. With its camera eye turned towards the altar the miracle of the Eucharist was beamed into our homes through our phones, computers or tablets and we were content. We did not even have to watch it as it happened; we could watch it later as a video at a time of our choosing to fit in with our locked down lives. It was almost like the old days when Mass was on the hour every hour and people chose which Mass to attend based on how the timing fitted into their lives on a particular day. Perhaps we still do that on occasion.

But was anything new or is it more a case of what goes round comes round again?

Due to the historical circumstances of the Reformation, the Catholic Church in Great Britain has very few ancient churches and so has lost a big part of its heritage. But many medieval churches still have a seeing device variously called a Squint, a leper-hole, or a hagioscope. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "a small opening, cut through a chancel arch or wall to enable worshippers in an aisle or side chapel to obtain a view of the elevation of the host". What it is important to note is that it was a hole in the wall, delivering not money but grace. However, was it meant as an inclusive device allowing a person standing outside the church and previously unable to see inside, the possibility of doing so, or was it a means of excluding the observer placing them outside rather than inside the church. The answer to that lies in whom the squint was constructed for and why they were so important.

Why were squints so important?

As Eucharistic doctrine developed in the Church it was inevitable that practice changed with it. By the start of the 13th century the focus on communion found in the early church had disappeared and the movement of the altar away from the people had inexorably led to the liturgy becoming the sole responsibility of the clergy. The laity instead became listeners and observers. They heard Mass and they saw Mass and only rarely participated by receiving communion usually to fulfil their Easter duties as laid down by Clause 21 of the IVth Lateran Council held in 1215. This particular Council also reaffirmed the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which increased the importance of the sacrament and led to demands from Rome that everyone must see the consecrated host for seeing it had the same efficacy as receiving communion. On the part of the laity, they believed that observing the host would save them from death, hell, and destruction. Changes in the ritual were demanded and the Great Elevation was introduced heralded by the ringing of bells to alert the kneeling congregation to lift their eyes and adore the host held high above the priest's head immediately after the words of Institution had been repeated bringing about the miracle of transubstantiation- the high point of every Mass. But this new action and response caused architectural problems. Rood Screens, which separated the Chancel from the Nave often blocked sight lines for the kneeling laity and eyeholes or squints would be drilled into the wood where possible to enable those at the front to still see. Larger squints would be created in the internal walls by removing a block of stone to enable those inside aisles or chapels to observe the elevation of the host. But there were other types of squint, of more elaborate construction and research tells us that in the main they served to aid three different groups of people: the outcasts, the sinners and the recluses or Anchorites and each had a slightly differently constructed squint.

The Outcasts

Perhaps this is the category that has most resonance for us currently for the history of humankind could be described as a history of viruses germs and infections. Such things terrified people and continue to do so. Fear of contagion meant sufferers were ostracised and cast out of society. During outbreaks of Bubonic Plague such as the Black Death

in 1347 onwards and the Great Plague of 1665 crosses were placed on the doors of houses of the infected partly to warn people to keep away and partly because of superstitious belief that sin and disease went together.

Leprosy was particularly feared. Even in the Bible we read of lepers living in isolation outside their communities forbidden to enter society unless cured and it verified by the priests (Lev 13; Matt 8:1-4). It was a disease closely connected with the idea of sin and several early Christian writers such as Tertullian (c240AD) interpreted it as a consequence of sin drawing upon the Bible for their reasoning. By medieval times in Europe, people diagnosed with leprosy underwent an isolation ceremony, or funeral rite whereby they were symbolically buried becoming dead to the world before being taken to the local leprosy hospital. That was kind- in England, King Edward 1st (1239-1307) buried the victims alive at the end of the ceremony, while Philip V of France (1293-1322) dispensed with the ceremony altogether and burned the victims alive. It was not fear of medical contagion however, that led to such cruelty, but fear of the contagion of sin for leprosy and sin were still closely woven together in the medieval mentality. It seems highly unlikely given the fear of lepers that squints were designed for leprosy sufferers and the term “leper-hole” is misleading.

However, leprosy was not the only disease that caused scarring or disability; the pox is a case in point. But in medieval life, anyone noticeably sick was shunned even by the Church although the construction of squints did allow these outcasts to attend Mass. They were always constructed at a steep angle and gave the watcher a clear view of the High Altar; the sick person could watch Mass and observe the Great Elevation, but they could not see the people inside the church and this was important as it avoided the sick from infecting the congregation. For in the medieval mindset, as William of Conches (c1020-1145) a French natural philosopher explained, the ray or gaze of a person carried his properties and so a sick eye could infect the healthy if the observer met the gaze. Therefore, the squint prevented the sick person from looking at, and thereby infecting the congregation. In this case the squint was both an inclusive and exclusive device, for it allowed the outcast access to grace and maybe healing, but it also excluded them placing them apart from the main body of the worshipping community.

The sinners

In the medieval church, there was a difference between the popular concept of purgatory as a place that arose in the late C12th and its actual definition which was first stated at the Second Council of Lyons held in 1274. This defined purgatory as a state where some souls are purified after death and that such souls benefit from the prayers and pious duties the living do for them. The notion of purification quickly caught the public imagination and the revelations of horror that awaited one and passed on through visionaries such as St Bridget of Sweden ensured that many resources, both financial and penitential were diverted to try and ease purgatorial sufferings. But as Eamon Duffy points out in Chapter 10 of *Stripping the Altars* penance for sins was more easily achieved in this life – a time of grace, rather than after death which was the time of justice. The vivid accounts of the state of purgatory were designed to move the individual to action in the here and now: by completing penances, trying to avoid venial sin and be generous in charity. But it didn't prevent the rich, in particular, from trying to buy their way out of purgatory. Henry VII who died in 1509 made a donation for 10,00 masses to be said after his death to ease his purgatorial passage; one wonders how many were left to be said when his son Henry VIII seized such assets for his treasury. For those attending Mass, there was a new division; those whose sins were mortal and therefore excommunicated were completely cast out as before, those doing penance were temporarily shut out of the building but allowed to stand outside and observe through the squint.

The Anchorites

In the medieval world those who chose to live a solitary life were greatly respected. Anchorites lived a solitary life in a cell attached to a church where they stayed living a life of prayer with the Eucharist as their focus. Although solitaries, they were often searched out for their wisdom and counsel such as Julian of Norwich, perhaps the most famous English Anchorite. Hermits were also solitaries, but not fixed to a particular place and many wandered the country offering their prayers and counsel. With the Eucharist as their focus, the Anchorite would require a squint that allowed them to receive the Eucharist and have a good view of the Mass as it progressed, but at the same time remain unseen

by the congregation. Many Anchorite cells or reclosoriums were connected to the church in such a way that the Squint was placed in the apse, which guaranteed a good view of the altar while leaving the Anchorite unable to be seen by the congregation. The squint would also have allowed for food and other items to be handed in, and also for counselling or praying with the people who sought them out so was a slightly deeper and larger opening than the other forms of squint. When the Anchorite first entered their cell a form of funeral was held with Psalms from the Office of the Dead sung, the doorway was sealed up and the Anchorite remained there for the rest of their life. So for the Anchorite, the Squint was life sustaining; nourished spiritually by observing and receiving the Eucharist, and dispensing wisdom; nourished bodily by food and the reception of other physical requirements such as for example, pens and paper if they chose to write down their thoughts.

So how did we feel in 2020 using our technological squints. Were we feeling outcast because of COVID-19 and lockdown? Were we penitents observing Mass from outside and maybe asking ourselves how much have we contributed to this crisis? Maybe we had failed to completely fulfil the conditions of lockdown and unknowingly passed the virus on? Did we feel it is partly due to the frantic lifestyle we all seem to lead nowadays that is slowly poisoning our world? Or did we, like the Anchorites see it as a chance to refocus our lives on the things that matter? Whatever we felt and possibly still feel, we cannot deny that our modern squints have shown us that they are a means of grace and give us a glimpse of the Holy, we otherwise would not have.

Margaret Turnham

Major Sources

Eamon Duffy, *Stripping the Altars* (2nd edition 2005) accessed via Kindle 08.04.20

Sheridan Gilley and William Shiels, (eds) *A History of Religion in Britain* (Blackwell, 1994)

K. Petterson, *Seeing and Sinners* (diva-portal.org) accessed 07.04.20

AN IMAGE LOST AND FOUND?

In the Victoria and Albert Museum, London one of their most important sculptures is an oak Crowned Virgin statue¹, the only one of its type in England known to have survived the destructive reign of Henry VIII, though there may be some that were smuggled out of the country. Known as the 'Langham Madonna', it bears a striking resemblance to the image on the Walsingham Priory Seal, even bearing in mind that a wax impression from a seal only 3 inches in diameter cannot be exact. And the statue itself is damaged.

My attention was drawn to it by a note in the archives of the Anglican Shrine which led me to a letter written by Fr Fynes-Clinton to the *Tablet* in 1930. Fr Fynes-Clinton was one of the closest collaborators with Fr Patten when he restored the Anglican Shrine, and he knew Sir Eric Maclagan, the Director of the V & A who, like him, was a founding Guardian of the Shrine.

Saturday, July 25, 1931.

Sir, Those of your readers who welcomed the interesting article headed "July 18th 1538" concerning "Our Ladye of Walsingham", will be glad to know that the Seal of the Abbey with its representation of the Statue need not be considered as the only contemporary representation.

Recently there was discovered in an old house near Walsingham, and sold, an old wooden carved figure apparently of the twelfth century which almost without any doubt is a copy of the Walsingham Image, or even, may we think? the original, saved perhaps as other relics and holy things, by means of substitution being made for the purposes of satisfying the desecrators.

This image is one of the chief treasures of the medieval wood-carving section of the South Kensington Museum, whose authorities I leave to testify to its genuineness.

Yours faithfully,

H. J. Fynes-Clinton

¹ A.79-1925 known as the Langham Virgin, in the Medieval & Renaissance, Room 8.



The crown depicted on the seal was given by Henry III in 1246² (it is not Saxon as some have suggested) and the V & A Catalogue dates the Langham Madonna 1220–1230 by its style, though the present Curator agrees it could be ten years later. If it really is the Walsingham image it would seem the crown was made for the image when it was carved and put in the Holy House. That would explain the band around the head on the Langham Madonna. Most wooden statues have a carved crown, but for statues of cultic significance with a precious metal crown, a simple band was carved around the head to hold it, and on the Langham Madonna there is a gap in the back of the band allowing the crown to be seated securely under tension. This makes the Langham Madonna a very important statue indeed: there are no records of any other statue than Walsingham with such a crown at that date, and this fact alone seems to connect the Langham Madonna to Walsingham. A crown given by a king of England was quite exceptional: Henry III gave no other. He was exceedingly devoted to Our Lady of Walsingham, gave many very generous gifts, and went on pilgrimage there at least eleven times.

During the Middle Ages styles of sculpture naturally evolved, but whichever period is studied no two statues are alike, whatever their date. Within a common genre e.g., late fourteenth-century, there are differences in detail, and you will not find two the same. So few statues survived in England there is nothing with which to compare the Langham Madonna, but the details between that and the figure on the seal are strikingly and surprisingly similar. Like a cartoonist looking for details to highlight, the seal-maker made an attempt to show the prominent folds in Our Lady's upper garment beside the Child, and on her right shoulder even included the little **V** fold. It is with the folds of the Virgin's lower garment that the similarities become most marked. Even the sweeping fold on the right as you look at it, is the same.

There is a problem with the feet of the Child. On the Langham Madonna they stand on the Virgin's knee, and he sits rather awkwardly higher up (on what? Not on the virgin's hand because that is at the side). If this is the statue he was looking at the seal-maker ran into trouble, not knowing quite how to reproduce it. He elongates the Son's body and

² J. C. Dickinson, *The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham* (Cambridge: 1956), p. 19.

truncates and engraves squiggles on the legs. Erasmus tells us that the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham was ‘small’ and ‘not excelling in workmanship’, and his sharp mind may have picked up this problem. (Or, since the statue was already over 250 years old when he saw it, maybe it was just showing signs of wear and tear. Such sculptures were made in several parts, glued and dowelled together).

Over the years glue fails. The head of Christ has dropped off, and the Virgin’s right arm and Christ’s left arm are missing. Curiously there is a large **V** cut at the base of the statue, clearly deliberate and very smoothly cut out by a sharp chisel. Erasmus tells us that

At the feet of the [Walsingham] Virgin is a jewel, to which no name has yet been given in Latin or Greek; the French have named it a toad-stone because it so imitates the figure of a toad ... the stone is very small; the figure of the toad does not project, but shines as if enclosed in the jewel itself.³

The jewel was unique. We know of no other Crowned Virgin statue with one. If the Langham Madonna is Our Lady of Walsingham the cut would indicate someone hacked out the jewel. And if it is not the original image of Our Lady of Walsingham why would such a cut have been intentionally made? It is not a crack and cannot be accidental damage.

One major difference between the Madonna on the seal and on the statue is that on the seal the Virgin wears a veil. Statues were sometimes dressed, especially for liturgical feasts, so it may be that the veil depicted on the seal was made of fabric, and the seal-maker was asked to include this. Another obvious difference is that on the seal the Virgin sits on a high-backed throne. In most Crowned Virgin statues, the Virgin sits on a bench; but on some she does sit on a throne. The Langham image has no back. It is hollowed out, which was and is quite normal. Carvers do this to prevent statues from cracking, and then they conceal the hollow with a board. There are 7 dowel holes at the back of the Langham statue.

³ Erasmus, *Pilgrimages to Saint Mary of Walsingham and Saint Thomas of Canterbury*, J. G. Nichols, trans. (London: 1849), p. 41.

So many would hardly have been needed for a thin backing board but could well have attached the throne-back shown on the seal. Moreover, there are dowels and dowel holes at the side of the bench, indicating the seat was wider and higher than it is now, as indeed is the seat on the seal.

The Provenance

Close as these resemblances are, the question of provenance matters as much or more. And herein lies the difficulty, for there cannot be any written provenance on a statue that has lain hidden since the reign of Henry VIII. Such provenance as we have is ambiguous and based on hearsay. That Fr Fynes-Clinton was referring to the Langham Madonna there is no doubt, and he tells us that in 1931 it was in the South Kensington Museum (the V & A). We would dearly love to know how he found out about its discovery in '*an old house near Walsingham*', but his biographer, John Salter, has found nothing about it among Fynes-Clinton's papers. He was right about it being sold, for it first came to light after all these centuries when it appeared in Willis's Sale Rooms in King Street, St James. It was purchased by a representative of the V & A in a sale of Messrs Robinson, Fisher & Harding on 23th December 1925. Apparently, it was spotted by Curator R. P. Bedford who on the previous day wrote to Eric Maclagan (later Sir Eric) *Director, in a mixed sale at Willis's Rooms on Wednesday, 23 December, is an oak figure of the Virgin and Child (Lot 48) said to have come from Langham Hall, Colchester. The V&A's representative in the sales rooms added a further note after purchasing the figure I learnt from the former owner that it came from the Church, now I think destroyed.*

There are difficulties in these statements. The statue is only *said to have come from Langham Hall, Colchester*. So there was a doubt, and of course it is contradicted by Fynes-Clinton's letter that it was *discovered in an old house near Walsingham*. Moreover, the previous owner *thought the church it came from had been destroyed*. The medieval church at Langham, Colchester still stands, but of course the church at Walsingham was indeed destroyed.

Nonetheless, the idea that it came from Langham, Colchester in Essex took root. In a letter dated 29 December 1925, Maclagan wrote to Sir Robert Witt of the National Art-Collections Fund, *My dear Witt,*

Just before Christmas I was fortunate enough to be able to buy for a few shillings [£2.10] a small^t oak figure of the Virgin and Child, about eighteen inches high, which comes from a church in Essex. It is clearly of the late 12th or early 13th century and is in all probability English work. I am presenting this to the Museum, and I should like to do so, if you have no objection, through the National Art-Collections Fund. I feel sure that you would agree that it is not unworthy. My very best wishes for the New Year. Yours ever, Eric Maclagan. And this is how it rests. The Catalogue of the V & A says: *Said to have come from Langham church, near Colchester, Essex.*

There was no pilgrimage or cultic Shrine of Our Lady in the area around Langham, Essex, and no reason for there to be an image made for a gold crown. The Langham Madonna was made to have a crown, and it is exceedingly unlikely that an image with a valuable crown would have been kept in Langham village church, because of the risk of theft. Great care was taken in Walsingham to guard the image. Erasmus tells us there was always a canon in attendance inside the Holy House⁵ and the canons said the gates of the Priory were always locked at night because of thieves.⁶

It seems that Sir Eric Maclagan himself had doubts about this provenance and speculated that the statue might be Our Lady of Walsingham. In an article dated Epiphany 1961, Hedley Hope-Nicholson, a well-known London barrister, commenting on Fynes-Clinton's letter about the V & A 'image being almost without doubt a copy ...or the original', revealed that

The late Sir Eric Maclagan, when Keeper of the Museum, drew the writer's attention to the possible identity of the wooden figure with the far-famed image thought to have been burnt at Chelsea.⁷

What I suspect is that someone in London, upon hearing 'it came from Langham Hall' said, 'Oh, I know Langham Hall; it's near Colchester in

⁴ Erasmus says it was small. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵ Erasmus, *Pilgrimages*, p. 16.

⁶ Dickinson, *The Shrine*, p. 26.

⁷ *Walsingham Review* N. XII March 1961, p. 10

Essex'. And that appellation stuck. Maybe neither Curator Bedford nor Eric MacLagan knew there was a Langham Hall six miles from Walsingham, and the Langham Essex label stopped further consideration of the provenance?

There was courageous activity in villages around Walsingham to save the Shrine. In November 1536 the 'Walsingham Conspiracy' began with the intent of joining the Pilgrimage of Grace. It was very quickly betrayed, and Cromwell and Henry VIII ordered the immediate arrest and execution of the conspirators 'without sparing'. Twenty-five stood trial from Walsingham and its surrounding villages. One of them was John Grigby, Vicar of Langham. Twelve, including Nicholas Mileham the subprior of Walsingham Priory were found guilty and sentenced to death by being hung, drawn and quartered or beheaded in 1537, a year before the Shrine was destroyed. Grigby of Langham was one of the lucky thirteen, against whom the charges were unproven, and after a short imprisonment he was pardoned. If the image of Our Lady of Walsingham was hidden in Langham Grigby was likely to have been involved.

The family of Langham Hall (whichever Langham it was) must have been involved too: such a risky enterprise in a village could not have been undertaken without the lord of the manor's complicity. Assuming Langham near Walsingham they were the Calthorpe family, a large family, many of whom became well-known Catholic recusants around Norfolk. And in 1555 Langham Hall passed to the Rookwood family of Euston in Suffolk through marriage, and the Rookwoods too were strongly Catholic, so presumably the secret of the statue was passed to them if it was there. They also had a manor in Egmere which is only 1.5 miles from Walsingham, and one was a recusant there as late as 1676. Of course the Hall that stood there in 1538 no longer stands now, nor does the medieval Langham Hall, Essex. Both were replaced. Whichever Langham it was it is hard to credit how the statue came to survive through all those centuries to be discovered in 1925, when its memory and significance were not remembered. But somehow it did.

There is a further twist to the tale. At his Suffolk manor, Euston Hall, Edward Rookwood was entertaining Queen Elizabeth I on 9 August

1578 on her Royal Progress⁸, which was planned partly to intimidate Catholic families and gain their loyalty. *A piece of plate being missed in the court and searched for in his hay house, in the hay rick such an image of our Lady was there found, as for greatness, as for gayness, and workmanship, I never did see such a match,*⁹ wrote Richard Topcliffe, the notorious persecutor and torturer of Catholics. Had hiding statues become a family pastime? It was burnt in the presence of the Queen: Rookwood was arrested and imprisoned to receive religious instruction before being released on the payment of guarantees. One can only wonder which fine image this was that the family had hidden in Suffolk.

Fr Fynes-Clinton questioned whether the Langham Madonna could be a copy of Our Lady of Walsingham. It is possible, because it has only been dated by its style, so a fifteenth-century copy could be taken to be thirteenth century. The only way to verify this would be by carbon dating which would be accurate to about ten years from when the tree was cut. But would someone have taken such risks to save a copy? What about the **V** cut in the Langham statue where it seems something was hacked out? Would a copy have had such a jewel? And a copy would have had a carved crown, rather than a band to bear a gold crown.

The Curator of Sculpture in the V & A, Michaela Zoschg kindly studied a submission I made and discussed with her, and she confessed she was 'half-convinced' I was right. She also agreed with me that Langham, Norfolk is more likely to be the source of the statue than Langham in Essex. The problem is that *Said to have come from Langham church, near Colchester, Essex* is written in the provenance, and this is not easy to overturn. She would be willing to reassess it if another shred of evidence to support Fynes-Clinton's letter that it was *discovered in an old house near Walsingham* could be found, or some corroboration of the statement of the barrister Hedley Hope-Nicholson, *that the late Sir Eric Maclagan, when Keeper of the Museum, drew the writer's attention to the possible identity of the wooden figure with the far-famed image thought to have been burnt at Chelsea*. Or some proof that it was sold by the owner of Langham Hall

⁸ See page xxx.

⁹ Letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury from Richard Topcliffe, 30 August 1578' in *Criminal Trials*, Vol II (London: 1835).

in Norfolk. Unfortunately, Willis's Saleroom in St James, where auctioneers Robinson, Fisher & Harding had an office, was bombed in the war. The firm no longer exists.

When the statue was sold in December 1925 the owner of Langham Hall, Essex was Sir Robert Balfour, MP, and the owner of Langham Hall, Norfolk was Frederick Budd Ryder. One of these sold the statue to the V & A, but which? Ryder's papers, including his diaries, are held by the Norfolk Record Office, but the diaries relate only to his farming. I have been unable to discover any papers of Sir Robert Balfour. Are there perhaps some family papers, or even recollections by an elderly member of either of these families? Or records somewhere of the auctioneers, Messrs. Robinson, Fisher & Harding. Perhaps someone would enjoy pursuing the necessary research further?

Fr Michael Rear

BOOK REVIEWS.

Books on the Martyrs

MARTYRS OF HENRY VIII Repression Defiance Sacrifice

John Matusiak

The History Press 2019 HB 352pp Illus

Offered by Postscript Books at £9.99 (original price £20)

This hard-backed book of 352 pages might be thought, from its title, to describe all those martyred during the reign of Henry VIII (1509 – 1547). The Act of Supremacy (1535) made it High Treason to refuse to acknowledge the King as “the only Supreme Head on earth of the Church in England”. From the passing of that Act until 1544 fifty persons are recorded as having been martyred, 45 clergy and 5 lay persons. This book, however, is concerned mainly with three persons, two of the fifty martyrs, St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More, and a Benedictine nun, Elizabeth Barton.

John Fisher was born around 1469. His life story and the inter-relationship of his adult, clerical life with the tumultuous events of the time are described in great detail. The life and times of Thomas More less so. In and out of their lives, and of the history of that period, came Elizabeth Barton, a visionary and so-called Maid of Kent. Her life came to a sorry end because she herself was executed in 1534. The book ends with the executions of Fisher and More in June and July 1535. The book is written in narrative form. The detail evident in the text must have been the result of tremendous research.

STRANGERS AND NOMADS
Catholic Martyrs of England and Wales

Dudley Plunkett

Gracewing 2021 Paperback 138pp

Available from Aid to the Church in Need at £9.99

This paperback book recounts the lives of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, canonised by Pope St. Paul VI on 25th October 1970 and of the three other saints martyred on English soil who were canonised separately, namely St. John Fisher, St. Thomas More and St. Oliver Plunkett.

The author says that, while the book by Malcolm Pullan (described below) is an invaluable source of information on the martyrs, it is essentially a reference work whereas the aim of his book is gather together the story of the lives and sufferings of the martyrs with the deliberate intention of spreading devotion to them and of encouraging the seeking of their intercession for the spiritual needs of contemporary society.

An excellent 18-page introduction gives a review of the history of the times, a summary of the type of persons who were willing to die for the faith and some details of the means and manner of their sufferings and deaths.

The lives of each martyr are set out in the date order of their feast days through the year. In many cases, a martyr made a speech or defiant statement from the gallows and, where known, this is reproduced in the book. Most of the life stories are followed by a Collect, a prayer of intercession to God making reference to the holy life of the martyr.

A valuable Appendix gives a full list of Beatified Martyrs, those beatified by:

Pope Leo XIII on 29th December, 1886 (41)

Pope Leo XIII on 13th May, 1895 (9)

Pope Pius XI on 15th December, 1929 (107)

Pope St. John Paul II on 22nd November, 1987 (85)

**THE LIVES AND TIMES OF
THE FORTY MARTYRS OF
ENGLAND AND WALES
1535 – 1680
Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged**

**Malcolm Pullan
New Generation Publishing 2013 Paperback 670pp £14.99**

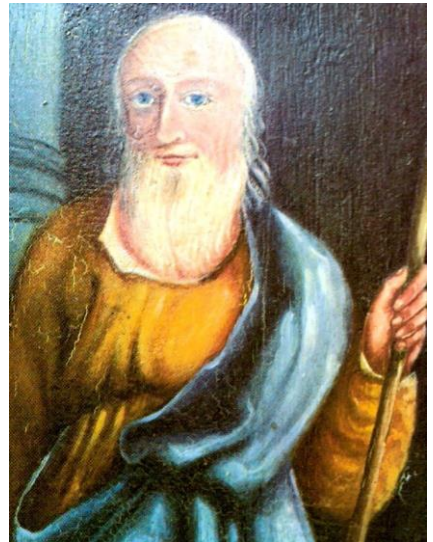
Thirty years of research went into the writing of this comprehensive compilation of the lives and state murders of Catholics from all walks of life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The text is full of illuminating background material and fascinating detail. Vividly set in the context of the turbulent times in which the martyrs lived it makes compelling reading.

The author explains that his book contains no new, hitherto unpublished material and that it is, by its very nature, a compilation. The amount of detail thus compiled, covering the history of the times and the lives of all the martyrs (many more than the Forty Martyrs of the title) is amazing.

**Blessed NICHOLAS POSTGATE
Martyr of the Moors
Nicholas Rhea
Paperback 246 pp £12.99**

From his sixties to his martyrdom in his eighties this inspiring Good Samaritan, kind to all, regardless of status or religion, walked the North York Moors offering practical and spiritual help. A seminary priest, he was born in North Yorkshire, educated at Douay and ordained in 1628. In the aftermath of the Titus Oates plot, he was condemned for priesthood and hanged, drawn and quartered at York on 7th August, 1679.

Bernard Polack



Some of the English Martyrs mentioned in the books reviewed: St Thomas More; St John Fisher, St Margaret Clitherow; Blessed Nicholas Postgate

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

SATURDAY 28 OCTOBER 2023, 2.00pm

ECHA AGM: *Loyola Room, Church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm Street, London W1K 3AH*

TUESDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2023, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

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

TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2023, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

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

TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2023, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

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

TUESDAY 16 JANUARY 2024 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Josh Madrid: *English Catholics in the Second World War*

