

**English
Catholic**



**History
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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

2022 has been a successful year for the ECHA. We have had several interesting Zoom talks with more lined up in the new year. Our social media presence has increased with a Facebook group and a Twitter account. Previously recorded talks are on our YouTube channel for those who missed them. Our website has all the relevant information about events, news and links to newsletters.

We had a very successful AGM and well attended talk at Westminster in the autumn. The talk was on Nicholas Breakspear, the English Pope Adrian VI. All the committee were re-elected.

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.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee for all their hard work over the last year. Without them this association would not be able to continue.

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

Margaret Panikkar (1931-2022)

Margaret was a longstanding and loyal supporter of the English Catholic History Association who would certainly have been known to other members in the north-west of England.

She was an assiduous student of local history, both Catholic and other (she was the world's leading authority on historic stone cheese presses!). She worked for many years in the Talbot Library, Preston, (an invaluable Catholic history resource of 50,000 items) until its closure in 2013. (Happily, the Talbot collection was re-housed four years later at Liverpool Hope University).

She produced a number of research papers herself as well as assisting in the publication of work by other academics. David Knight, archivist at Stonyhurst, remarked that her knowledge of Catholic history was phenomenal.

Margaret (Mary)(nee O'Brien) was born in Walsall in the West Midlands, but spent most of her life in Cheshire and the north west of England. She attended the Loreto School in Altrincham before moving on to the school in Llandudno.

She had a rich and fulfilled life both professionally and as a community activist. She died in her own home as she would have wished. Margaret had a good life and a good death.

May she rest in peace.

Michael Hodgetts R.I.P.

By the time this newsletter goes to press the sad news of the death of Michael Hodgetts on December 12, 2022 will have reached most of our members, many of whom will have known him personally and most of whom will be familiar with his major contribution to the study of Catholic history. The last sixty years have witnessed a great revival of interest in English Catholic history and Michael Hodgetts was at the forefront of that revival throughout his professional life.

There will be many tributes elsewhere to his scholarship and achievements, too numerous to list in their entirety here. His book, *Secret Hiding Places*, is recognised as a definitive work on Catholic priest hides in recusant times. The restoration of Harvington Hall in Worcestershire took place during the four decades he served on the management committee. He was for many years the editor of *Recusant History*, the journal of the Catholic Record Society. He taught philosophy, history and theology at Maryvale Institute in Birmingham for nearly thirty years. During the 1970s and 80s he served on the ICEL, the group responsible for the English translation of the Liturgy. Not least, he was editor of *Midland Catholic History* (and its predecessor publication *Worcestershire Recusant*) – a journal that contains the product of much of his research in the Catholic history of the Midlands.

Michael was a modest man who never sought the limelight or courted attention, but since the news of his death was made known there has been a steady flow of messages indicating the high regard in which he was held for his scholarship, but also the personal regard for him from members of the Midland Catholic History Society. He was approachable and always responded to requests for help from students and researchers – and whatever the query he always seemed to have the answer. He once referred to a young Canadian man who had sought his help on a visit to England in the 1960s researching his family's recusant roots in Worcestershire. That young man is now in his mid 90s, still a subscriber to and correspondent with the Midland Catholic History Society. There are scores of others – and the author of this short tribute is one of them – who were the grateful recipients of his help and became lifelong devotees of Catholic history. Sadly, that great store of knowledge is no longer with us but he has left behind a legacy of published work that will continue to prompt and inspire students in the future.

May he rest in peace.

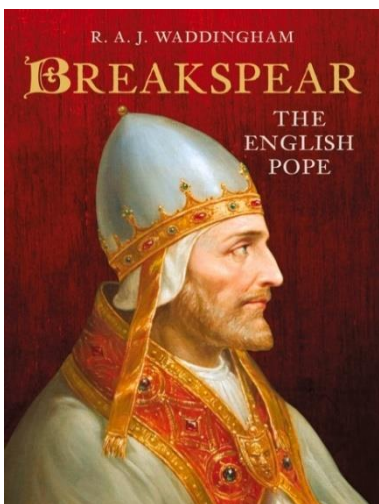
Vincent Burke

VISIT REPORT

The ECHA talk on Pope Adrian IV following the AGM

Following the AGM of the ECHA on the 29th of October, there was a very interesting talk on Nicholas Brakespear, the English Pope Adrian IV. Adrian Waddingham has published an excellent biography of this little-known Pope. We learned that he was a contemporary of the much more famous, Thomas Becket but was very much in his shadow.

Born in Hertfordshire and son of a cleric, though not a priest in 1100, he was initially rejected by St Albans Abbey when he asked to join that community. Instead, he studied in Paris for two years and later transferred to Arles and later Avignon. He became an Augustinian at the age of twenty-five and seven years later was chosen as prior. By 1148 he was



representing Pope Eugenius in Spain and by around the age of forty-five was made a cardinal. He was sent as a Cardinal Bishop to Trondheim in Norway to set up the diocese of Nidaros. By 1154 he had been unanimously elected Pope Adrian IV. His relationship with Frederick Barbarossa didn't go well at first due to a misunderstanding but later, Barbarossa helped Adrian in his struggles with rebels. Pope Adrian had little to do with his homeland after he moved to the continent which goes some way towards him not being well known in this country. He died at Anagni in 1159.

Adrian's talk was well attended and well received. The scholarship of this book is excellent and a great deal of work has gone into its writing. The talk was accompanied by many slides as illustrations.

TJ Guile

Oral History Project

Las Casas Institute for Social Justice, Blackfriars Hall, Oxford University has recently announced an oral history project devoted to capturing the stories of women religious working in conflict zones around the world. The project is led by Drs Maria Power, Briege Rafferty and Dianne Kirby who will be building on research into the work of women religious during the Northern Ireland conflict, euphemistically termed the 'Troubles'. (See <https://www.herstory.ie/news/2022/5/19/religious-women-and-the-peace-process>). While the religious dimension of the 'Troubles' has been the subject of scholarly study, that of the women involved had not. What emerged from the research was a network of women religious focused on grassroots community work but operating at all levels, who became party to personal, societal and political reconciliation. They made critical contributions to creating a climate and dynamic that not simply accelerated the peace process but sought to achieve a positive peace based on the emergence of a more just and equal society for all. Prior to the project their work had been neither documented nor acknowledged.

The premise of the new project is that the same commitment and determination to foster peace and reconciliation and the emergence of better societies from the wreckage of war-torn ones will be found wherever women religious are deployed. History shows that wherever there is pain and poverty, deprivation and destruction, suffering, there you find women religious. The research already undertaken suggests that their involvement has been far more consequential than hitherto recognised with profound implications for understanding the essence of peacebuilding, achieving, and sustaining it. Too often credit is wrongly attributed and hence a full and proper understanding of the process denied.

The coordinators welcome contact from all those, lay and religious, who have been party to or witnessed the work of women religious in conflict zones. Donations toward the project also welcome:

<https://www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk/research/las-casas-institute-for-social-justice/research-interests/women-religious-project/>

Dr Maria Power

Fellow, Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford

On Tuesday 7th March at 7.30 p.m., Dr Maria Power and her colleagues will kindly be giving our members a Zoom talk on this subject. Free tickets available via Eventbrite (see UPCOMING EVENTS)

ARTICLES

The Beauty of Welsh Holy Places and the Lure of Modern Pilgrimages by T J Guile

Abstract

This article aims to show that holy places from long ago may still resonate with travellers, pilgrims and visitors to Wales today. It tries to show that medieval Welsh people were strongly attached to veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints and that they were known to go on pilgrimages both within Wales and to elsewhere in England and abroad. The tradition of the cult of the saints and pilgrimage to holy places is historically evidenced and was largely suppressed at the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. This tradition of pilgrimage has been revived in modern times and is now part of the rich tapestry of Welsh Christianity, history, archaeology and heritage. Alongside those who would identify with the Christian community at large, lots of people have no religious beliefs at all and may indeed be antagonistic to organised religion. However, many of them may have an ambivalent attitude to places, people and events with connotations of religion, faith, spirituality or belief. They clearly ‘mean something’ and can engender enquiry or even fascination. The influence of ‘the church’ may have waned substantially in Britain and other countries in western Europe but it is still pervasive in many, and what may appear secular, ways. In autumn 2019 the Welsh government announced the creation of a new ‘Pilgrimage trail’ linking five hundred churches and chapels.¹ This trail has yet to become fully operational, but it underlies the need for some people to hike to holy and historic places in Wales.

¹ <https://undiscovered-wales.co.uk/2020/05/13/holier-than-thou-the-welsh-pilgrimage-and-why-2020-might-be-the-time-to-make-one-to-wales/>

Throughout the medieval period, shrines, holy wells and pilgrimages were part of the traditional faith of Wales and central to almost everyone's lives. This was an experience which was extremely common in the medieval period right up to the reign of Henry VIII after which it was strongly discouraged by acts of parliament and the new regulations brought about by the religious reformers who had the king's ear at that time. Pilgrimage grew in popularity in Wales from the fifth and sixth centuries and right through the Middle Ages, with the emergence of well-known native saints such as St David and St Teilo. With the arrival of the Normans in Wales at the end of the eleventh century, sites associated with many of these saints were developed into major pilgrimage centres, some of which claimed international fame. Some of these pilgrimage places became quite lucrative for the church authorities who were responsible for running them. In southeast Wales, the most important pilgrimage site at that time was the shrine of St Teilo in Llandaff Cathedral, though there were several holy wells and relics which attracted pilgrims.

A pilgrimage is a devotional practice consisting of a prolonged journey, often undertaken on foot or on horseback, toward a specific destination of significance. It is a short-term experience, removing the participant from his or her home environment and identity.²The means or motivations in undertaking a pilgrimage might vary, but the act, however performed, blends the physical and the spiritual into a unified, liminal, experience. During the Middle Ages, people made pilgrimages for a variety of reasons. Many holy sites were believed to have a healing power, such as Holywell in north Wales. Pilgrims who had a sick loved one could seek divine help at a place like this, along with people who were ill themselves, and people who had recovered from illnesses could also come to give thanks to God. Penitents would also undertake pilgrimages to gain forgiveness for their sins, or to shorten time in purgatory for themselves or for others. Basically, as a pilgrimage was a journey of faith, anything a person felt they needed God's help for could be motivation for the journey. Pilgrims would often bring back a memento or souvenir from their pilgrimage to a holy

² Guile, T, Ipswich, *Willesden and Walsingham, Three Marian shrines in Sixteenth Century England* (2020)

site. Two kinds of objects were commonly associated with pilgrims in the Middle Ages: ampullae, and badges. Ampullae were little lead scallop-shaped flasks containing holy water that were pinned to clothing or hung around the neck in the belief that they offered spiritual protection. These holy objects would be valued and treasured by the pilgrim for years to come.

St David (Dewi Sant in Welsh) was born in the late fifth or early sixth century in the south-west corner of Wales. Estimates of his birth date may range from AD 462 to AD 515. The traditional site of his birthplace is just south of the modern city of St Davids at St Non's Chapel in Pembrokeshire. Contemporary details of his life are scanty and much of what we know comes from a much later eleventh century source of dubious authenticity. David's mother was believed by many to be Non, who gave birth to him in a thunderstorm after she was raped by Sandde, a prince of Powys and son of Ceredig, the King of Ceredigion. David was said to have been educated by St Paulinus at Whitland monastery in Carmarthenshire. He founded a dozen monasteries in southern Wales and did much to spread Christianity throughout the country. Around AD 550 David is thought to have founded a monastery at what is now St Davids, near the site of his birth. When he finally died after passing a hundred years in age, he was reported to have been buried in the grounds of his monastery on the traditional date of 1 March 589. Over the following centuries, the monastery was attacked on at least ten occasions by Scandinavian raiders. David's monastery became known in Welsh as Tyddewi, which translates as 'David's House'.

During the medieval period, pilgrims would have travelled to St Davids for many reasons: to pray to the saint for help with life's difficulties, for themselves or their families, or to pray for loved ones who had died. In 1123, St Davids was granted a privilege from Pope Callixtus II in Rome, who declared that two pilgrimages to the Cathedral were equal to one journey to Rome. A village grew up around the monastery and it grew in importance during the medieval period as pilgrims flocked to visit St David's shrine in the cathedral. Despite the flow of pilgrims, St Davids never grew into a city although it has that title today due to the importance of the cathedral. The landscape around St Davids was sacred to pilgrims. The cathedral contained the shrines of St David and St Caradog, as well as other

relics, and there were chapels dedicated to St Justinian, St Non and St Patrick within two miles. David was declared a saint in 1123 and shortly thereafter he was proclaimed the patron saint of Wales. The importance of St David's shrine was emphasised by the visits of several monarchs, including William the Conqueror, Henry II, and Edward I.

One medieval pilgrimage site was the burial place of St Teilo in Llandaff cathedral near Cardiff. St. Teilo was probably born at Penally, near Tenby in Pembrokeshire around the year 500. Although there are conflicting reports about his early life, he was thought to be a cousin of our national patron Dewi Sant, St. David. He received his education at institutions directed by saints, one being St. Dyfrig, who he succeeded as Bishop of Llandaff, founding the very first Church in Llandaff where the Cathedral stands today. He was also educated by Paulinus of Wales at a place thought to be Whitland in Carmarthenshire. Here he is thought to have met and became a close companion of St. David. He is reported to have travelled extensively, including to Brittany, Rome and possibly even Jerusalem as well as to St. David's in north Pembrokeshire where David founded his monastery. Teilo founded a monastery in Llandeilo which literally means 'Church of St. Teilo', the place with which he is most associated, and at Penally. Penally Abbey was located on a pilgrims' trail to St. David's. Legend has it that Teilo went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem with Saints David and Padarn around the year 518. Three seats, one decorated ornately in gold, one of bronze and one of cedar, were erected in their honour in readiness for their ordination as bishops by the Patriarch of Jerusalem. The legend has it that the humble Teilo chose the simple wooden seat. A plague of Yellow Fever devastated parts of Wales in the year 547. Teilo and his followers fled firstly to Cornwall and then to Brittany where they were said to have been welcomed by St. Samson of Dol. It is thought by some that Teilo and Samson planted an orchard of apple trees between Dol and Cai, where the apple orchards are still known as the groves of Teilo and Samson today. At Landaul in Brittany, Teilo is considered the patron saint of apple trees and the town of Saint-Thélo in Brittany bears his name. At St. Teilo's Church, one of the stained-glass windows, installed as part of the church refurbishment in 2004-05, shows an apple tree in honour of St. Teilo. He later returned to Llandeilo. He is said to have died on the ninth of February, possibly in the year 560. After his death he became one of the most

venerated men in Wales. Several sites in Wales claim to house his remains. A tomb of St. Teilo is located in Llandaff Cathedral while a part of his skull can be seen in the South Chapel.

A central part of the medieval Christian faith was the Marian cult and for most Catholics in Wales at that time, Mary, the mother of Jesus was, as in England at that time, revered and honoured almost universally in Wales at this time. Many places are called Llanfair or Capel Mair (Mary's church, chapel), and dozens of flowers and plants bear her name in Welsh and in English. There was a tradition that no girl in Wales was to be given the name Mair which is Mary in English, as it was especially reserved for the Blessed Virgin Mary. Many larger churches had Lady Chapels and there were many places of pilgrimage associated with the Blessed Virgin which were visited by rich and poor alike. The Virgin Mary was always a popular figure for pilgrims, but by the fifteenth century sites dedicated to Mary were among some of the most popular in Wales: at Pwllheli on the Llyn Peninsula, Cardigan Priory in Cardiganshire, and Kidwelly Priory in Carmarthenshire, pilgrims all venerated statues of Our Lady.

By the fifteenth century, of all the Marian shrines in Wales, the most often visited by pilgrims was the chapel which housed the statue of the Virgin and Child, and nearby holy well, at Penrhys in the Rhondda. Legend tells that a statue of the Virgin Mary appeared in the branches of an oak tree near to the holy well. The statue was said to have been incredibly beautiful and a gift from heaven. Many people tried to remove the statue from the tree but it resisted all attempts to the point where 'Eight oxen could not have drawn the image of Penrhys from its place...' The statue would only allow itself to be retrieved once the chapel and shrine were built. The shrine was popular with people right across South Wales and across the River Severn in England. It was controlled by the Cistercian Abbey of Llantarnam, who profited handsomely from the offerings made by grateful pilgrims. Pilgrims came to seek healing and give thanks, and several Welsh poets composed works praising the Virgin and the holy site at Penrhys.

However, the evangelicals who had gained the King's ear, were plotting to end this largely peasant cult of the Virgin. In 1538, so alarmed were the

reforming authorities by the popularity of Penrhys, that under Thomas Cromwell's orders the statue of Mary was to be removed. Bishop Latimer wrote to Thomas Cromwell suggesting the destruction of the shrine. As a result, the statue was reputedly secretly removed and taken to Chelsea in London. It was reportedly burned to ashes on Cromwell's property under cover of darkness, alongside other statues of the Virgin Mary including, allegedly but by no means certainly, the statue from Walsingham.³ The practice of pilgrimage, forcibly discouraged by the evangelical elite who had gained the king's ear at this time, declined dramatically after the Reformation.

Another famous statue and shrine of the Virgin Mary was at Cardigan in southwest Wales and known as Our Lady of the Taper. The story is an ancient one, possibly dating as far back as the eighth Century. According to tradition, a statue of Our Lady and Child, with a burning taper in her hand, was found beside the River Teifi in Southwest Wales with "her sonne upon her lappe, and the taper bernynge in her hande". The statue was said to resemble an earlier shrine in the city of Arras, which was then in Flanders. One suggestion is that it could have been brought by Flemish traders visiting that area, possibly because of the wool trade. There was said to be a lesser taper shrine in Haverfordwest. The most notable taper shrine on the continent is at Cagliari in Sardinia, where in 1370 a Catalanian ship foundered offshore, and a statue of Our Lady of the Taper was brought to land. The shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria (Good Air) dates back to the latter years of the fourteenth century, at Cagliari, on the island of Sardinia.⁴ What we do know about the statue at Cardigan is that it was taken to the parish church but did not remain there, apparently being returned three or four times to "the place where now is buylded the church of our Lady."⁵ It is thought that it was brought to the parish church and subsequently moved on several occasions before a Shrine Church was built in Cardigan in around 1158 specifically to house the statue,. During the Middle Ages, pilgrimages grew up in honour of Our Lady of Cardigan. Some lodged with

³https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMEZT1_Our_Lady_of_Penrhys_Rhondda_Wales

⁴ <https://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/our-lady-of-bonaria.html>

⁵ <https://ourladyofthetaper.org.uk/history/story-of-the-shrine/>

the Knights Hospitallers of St. John, where the Angel Hotel in Cardigan now stands. A chantry priest sang Mass daily in honour of Our Lady for pilgrims who came to pray and leave gifts. Outside Cardigan, on the old pilgrim route, lie the ruins of a building by a stream. It is called Capel Bach or Little Chapel and may have been an oratory where travellers prayed before walking the last mile to the shrine. It is the same distance from St. Mary's as Walsingham Slipper Chapel is from the shrine there.

Since the seventh Century, several sites in north Wales such as Holywell, Gwytherin, Clynnog Fawr and Bardsey Island gained popularity with pilgrims. The first three have associations with two Welsh Saints, Saint Winifred and Saint Beuno. One of the oldest places of pilgrimage in north Wales was Ynys Enlli or Bardsey Island. Often known as the island of twenty thousand saints in the medieval period. It had an abbey which controlled the island and some of the mainland on the Llyn Peninsula. The twelfth century Augustinian Abbey on Bardsey Island and the large chapel at the farthest point of the peninsula were both dedicated to Our Lady. There was also St Mary's Well, a fresh water, natural rockpool, in a steep gully close to the site of the chapel, where all that remains is the imprint of the foundations today. Centuries ago, pilgrims in their thousands were finding their way to Bardsey Island, drawn there by stories of the special peace to be found at the edge of their world, drawn to the place by the setting sun, with only the vast ocean between them and the unknown. Fifteen hundred years ago St Cadfan had founded a religious community there. In the Middle Ages, two pilgrimages to Bardsey were said to be equal to one to Rome.

Winifred, sometimes written as Winefride or Gwenffrewi in Welsh, was a seventh century Welsh martyr associated with Gwytherin and is remembered at Holywell, Flintshire. She was said to have been the daughter of a local chief and niece of St Bueno. Her family connections mean she is sometimes called a princess. Winefride was supposedly pursued by a suitor named Caradoc, but when she told him she had decided to become a nun rather than give in to his advances, or so the story goes. Caradoc was said to have become angry and frustrated and decided to cut off Winefride's head with his sword. Versions of the story

differ, but one popular version is that her head rolled down the hill, and where it came to rest a spring gushed forth from the ground. This spring and the well that later developed around it and were thought by some pilgrims to have healing powers. Fortunately, according to one version of the legend, Winefride's uncle, Bueno, was passing, and managed to heal her and restore her to health. He then called on the almighty to punish her assailant, Caradoc, who was promptly struck dead on the spot, and the ground conveniently opened up to swallow him. Bueno then sat upon a stone and vowed that if anyone should stand or sit on that spot and three times ask God for help in Winefride's name, that help would be granted. The stone upon which he made this vow is called Bueno's Stone and lies in the outer pool of the holy well. As for Winefride, she carried out her wish to become a nun at Gwytherin in Denbighshire and later rose to be abbess of that convent. She died around 660 AD and was buried at her abbey. From the time of her death Winefride was venerated, and the holy well became a place of pilgrimage.

In 1138 her bones were carried with great ceremony to Shrewsbury Abbey, where her shrine became an extremely popular destination for pilgrims throughout the Middle Ages. It is thought that that St Winefride's Well has been a destination for pilgrims for over a thousand years, longer than most other Christian sites in the British Isles. This long history as a place of pilgrimage has led Holywell to become known as the Lourdes of Wales. The well is contained within a beautiful early sixteenth century gothic building. This beautiful structure has a bathing pool within a star-shaped inner chamber, joined to a more modern rectangular bathing pool for pilgrims. In the inner pool is St Bueno's Stone, taken from the nearby streambed. The spectacular vaulted canopy over the pool was constructed on the orders of Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, and carries elaborate carvings of Tudor family symbols. There are carvings representing St Winifred in several places and one large carving is set on the ceiling, showing the saint with a staff and a crown upon her head.

Pilgrimages must have begun soon after her death but the earliest written records of pilgrimages date to the twelfth century, when pilgrims claimed healing from illness after bathing in the waters of the well. Among the treasures on display in the museum are wooden crutches thrown aside by

pilgrims after healing. Most visitors focus on the holy well and shrine, but here is also a late fifteenth century chapel. Thomas Pennant (1726-98) the multitalented naturalist, antiquity, traveller and writer, wrote about the holy well in 1776.

*The resort of pilgrims of late years to these Fontanalia has considerably decreased; the greatest number are from Lancashire. In the summer still a few are to be seen in the water in deep devotion up to their chins for hours, sending up their prayers, or performing a number of evolutions round the polygonal well; or threading the arch between well and well a prescribed number of times. Few people of rank at present honour the fountain with their presence.*⁶

The holy well is still very much a place of pilgrimage with the local sign informing visitors that it is the Lourdes of Wales. St Winefride's Day is today celebrated on the third of November. A second festival is celebrated at Holywell on June 22nd which commemorates the day on which her head was said to have been removed and replaced.

The church of St Melangell near Pennant Melangell in the Berwyn Mountains of north Wales, provides the setting for a reconstructed medieval shrine. Saint Melangell was a female saint of the seventh century. According to tradition she came here from Ireland and lived as a hermit in the valley. It is said that one day Brochwel, Prince of Powys, was hunting and pursued a hare which took refuge under Melangell's cloak. The Prince's hounds fled, and he was moved by her courage and sanctity. He gave her the valley as a place of sanctuary, and Melangell became Abbess of a small religious community. After her death her memory continued to be honoured, and Pennant Melangell has been a place of pilgrimage for many centuries. Melangell remains the patron saint of hares. The Churchyard is almost circular and has been used since ancient

⁶ Pennant, History of the Parishes of Whiteford and Holywell, 1796.
<https://wellhopper.wales/2012/06/22/st-winefrides-well-holywell/>

times. Bronze age burial pits have been found with remains carbon dated to between 1000 and 1500 BC. Four ancient yew trees grace the church yard which have been estimated to be around a thousand years old. The Shrine of Saint Melangell is thought to have been constructed around 1160-70 to house the relics of the Saint. In 1561, the shrine was ordered to be demolished.⁷ Stones from the shrine were built into the Lych gate and into parts of the wall of the nave and were rediscovered in 1894. Some of the stones were recovered and the shrine was rebuilt in 1989 in its present position in the chancel, with any missing stones being clearly identified by the concrete used to avoid any confusion by their replacement. During an excavation in 1958, skeletal remains were found beneath the floor and further fragments in 1989. A lead casket containing the bones was examined by an orthopedic surgeon who identified them as being from a woman around five feet tall. These have been placed in the reconstructed shrine. Pilgrims and visitors once again visit this ancient site and some may pray at the shrine of this Welsh saint.

There are sources which point to a local shrine of the Virgin Mary at Pwllheli on the Llyn Peninsula in Gwynedd, during the Middle Ages. The main evidence for the shrine at Pwllheli is contained in the poetry of Hywel Rheinalt 1471–1494 who lived in Llannor close to Pwllheli. He compared the local pilgrims to those visiting the famous shrine on the promontory of St Dwynwen on Anglesey.

Mary's Ground

Crowds call at Pwllheli
To receive help on her feast day.
Men from the excellent holy region,
Men from the sea to the holy fortress,
Men from Llŷn and others of like persuasion.
Golden rock, wax and money,
A hundred hands carrying lit candles.

⁷ <https://stmelangell.org>

A citadel like Dwynwen's promontory,
This holy town is Mary's ground.

*(Translated from the original Welsh) Hywel Rheinallt 1471 –1494*⁸

In recent years the local Anglican community have funded a new statue of the Virgin Mary with hands facing palm outward in a gesture of acceptance. The statue by Simon O'Rourke, is known as Our Lady of Pen Llŷn or Mair Forwyn y Mor. Pilgrimages now take place to this church and a nearby holy well on an annual basis. The sense of the sacred still draws people to holy places in Wales today. The priest at St Peter's church where the statue is has said, "It's great to be able to have something that is both ancient and new, something to replace the medieval statue which is part of our cultural heritage that had been lost but made new for a new generation of Christians."⁹

Some ancient pilgrim routes survived the Reformation in Wales and a few can still be traced. The Cistercian Way from St David's to Holywell links these two important shrines as recorded by John Ogilby when he mapped it in 1675. The route is almost certainly medieval, though parts of it may have changed over time. The pilgrimage route between Cardiff and Penrhys survived, as did the importance of the holy well in popular culture. In the twentieth century the holiness of the site was confirmed when in 1953, the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff erected a new statue of Our Lady, carved from Portland stone, on the site of the medieval Cistercian chapel dedicated to her. It has become once again, a site of pilgrimage associated with Our Lady of Penrhys and a place of great importance to many Welsh Catholics. The Penrhys Pilgrimage Way is now established as a popular hiking or pilgrimage trail starting from the Welsh capital.¹⁰ The trail is a twenty-one-mile walking route that recreates the historic pilgrimage route between Llandaff Cathedral in Cardiff and

⁸ https://broenlli.com/en/be_visitor/the-shrine/

⁹ <https://www.treecarving.co.uk/our-lady-of-pen-llyn/>

¹⁰ <http://www.penrhyspilgrimageway.wales/history.html>

Penrhys. Today, hikers and pilgrims still walk the paths to the Llyn Peninsula and Bardsey is sometimes a destination for pilgrims. There is now a route called the Pilgrims Way which has been waymarked there from Holywell, the ancient Welsh pool in Flintshire. The route goes via ancient churches, thousand year-old stone crosses, sacred springs and waterfalls. It passes through woodlands and across great rivers, up mountains and along coast paths, along ancient roadways, through wilderness and human settlements. Tiny stone churches nestled into the hills provide shelter and rest along the Way, much as they would have done in the past original pilgrim places. tricky crossing to Bardsey Island in a simple boat, like so many pilgrims long ago. It will no doubt continue to attract hikers and pilgrims in the future. Modern interest in Celtic places of worship and wells still attracts visitors and the curious alike. Those who love the physical landscape and the beauty of nature are undoubtedly drawn to parts of Wales. Recent waymarked path still links ancient churches and wells dedicated to the saints of the early and later medieval period whose gentle faith and witness combined with the beauty and wonder of nature, still echoes with us today.



Figures

Fig. 1 Restored shrine of St David at St David's Cathedral
Courtesy of Tony Hisgett and St David's Cathedral



Fig.2 Grave of St Teilo, Llandaff Cathedral, Cardiff
Courtesy of <https://pravoslavie.ru/90880.html>



Fig.3 St Winifrede's Well, Holywell, North Wales
Courtesy of <tps://wellhopper.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/holywell-jun-2012-014.jpg>

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

Part 1

This article argues that the published writings of George Conn (c. 1598-1640) are of significant value when seeking to better understand English response to the diplomat's presence at the court of Queen Henrietta Maria. Conn, a Scot who had been working in the service of the Barberini family in Rome since 1623, arrived in England as a papal legate in 1636, remaining at court and overseeing numerous conversions to Catholicism among courtiers and others through the end of his embassy in 1639. Having published four books that largely dealt with the history of Scottish Christianity and political theory, Conn's final work *Assertionum Catholicarum Libri Tres*, published in 1629, was his most potentially controversial work. A point-by-point rebuke of Luther and Calvin while also a defense of Catholicism, it is this work that put Conn in a precarious position with Puritans and English theologians even before he set foot in Britain.

George Conn, often mentioned yet marginalized in studies of the latter years of Charles I's personal rule, possessed a significantly more impressive resume upon his arrival in England than many historians have considered in their analyses of the period. The author of five printed works including the first full biography of Mary, Queen of Scots, Conn had also written works concerning governance, the history of Scottish Christianity prior to 1630, all of which ingratiated him to his employer, Pope Urban VIII, a known devotee of the former Scottish Queen. However, the singular work that gave the greatest cause for concern to English Puritans and Protestants writ large was a 1629 work in which what he viewed as the logical problems with both Lutheranism and, more importantly to the English, Calvinism.

This work, *Assertionum Catholicarum*, was Conn's fifth in just an eight-year span, and saw the diplomat-to-be focus his writing on the core tenets of the Catholic faith in largely a defensive posture. Through his explanation of these tenets, Conn created a defense of the faith against claims made by followers of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and other Protestant

writers, placing the work again into the general field of polemic that Conn had previously navigated in his earliest writings, when he was operating under the tutelage of polemicist and historian Thomas Dempster. More than a simple defence, though, Conn presented the ways the theology and practices of the Church were, indeed, superior to the Biblical interpretations and practices of various Protestant sects. In this way, *Assertionum Catholicarum* is also an instruction manual for other Catholics in how to effectively argue in defense of their own faith in everyday life.

The work signalled that Conn had reached a point in his young career, seven years before being appointed to serve as the representative of Urban VIII at the court of Queen Henrietta Maria, where he appeared eager to address intellectual and philosophical matters of a broader scale than his earlier writings had indicated. By 1629, he had been in Rome for six years. His association with Urban VIII's nephew, Cardinal Francesco Barberini, had been fortuitous. It first landed him a position as the canon of the Arch Basilica of Saint John in Lateran. He later transferred his station and served as the canon at San Lorenzo in Damaso. Conn became a fixture at the papal curia in the latter portion of the 1620s, having served in Barberini's retinue on diplomatic missions to France and Spain in 1625. While working at Saint John, Conn helped administer the oldest and highest-ranking of the four major Roman basilicas.

Conn's competence and understanding of the nature of society in Britain, his grasp of diplomacy as it was conducted in seventeenth-century Europe, and perhaps most of all his knowledge of the Catholic faith were all critical to his selection as the replacement for Gregorio Panzani at Henrietta Maria's court. Of course, there were other factors that benefitted Conn. His professional and personal relationship with Francesco Barberini was crucial. The favourable opinion of Conn held by the Queen was also a factor, as she was also the Pope's Goddaughter. However, without his individual talents and merits, Conn ultimately would not have been chosen for such an important mission. While it would seem to be a given that understanding the faith should be fundamental for an emissary of the Vatican, it was common for the Vatican to use Church officials with lesser ecclesiastical knowledge to conduct diplomacy, as this was the function of the curia to begin with. All these elements had to figure in the decision to send Conn into an already contentious situation in 1636.

Throughout his earlier works, Conn had signalled his advocacy of serving in a role where personal motivations are dispensed with in favour of serving the demands and goals of the governor or political leader. Maffeo Barberini was familiar with Conn's work before he became Urban VIII, and it is of little surprise that Conn was seen as a useful part of the papal administration's diplomatic wing. What was missing from Conn's published bibliography by the late 1620s that would cement his status as an important figure within the curia was a clear statement of his views and interpretations of Christianity. Although Dempster wrote that Conn had moved from Bologna to Rome to pursue an ecclesiastical life, it is not so surprising that Conn, having been educated in canon law at Bologna, had not yet focused his writing attention on such issues. He spent no time in a monastery during his life and was, at least in terms of formal education, as well-versed in Catholic Church administration and policy as he was in scripture, and his professional duties were more closely tied to the administrative side of the Church. Even with the advent of the Inquisition, the papacy had focused more on legal matters than ecclesiastical or theological issue for much of the previous 500 years by Conn's time. This is a key reason why *Assertionum Catholicarum* is of note as more than simply Conn's final printed work. The book relies heavily on Conn's grasp and interpretation of Scripture and Catholic theology far more than anything else he published.

In the decade that had passed between the Synod of Dort and the publication of *Assertionum Catholicarum*, Calvinist views had become more entrenched and widespread among the growing number of Protestant denominations. In fact, Conn makes at least one specific reference to Arminianism in the book, and in doing so, paints it in a favourable light. While discussing the Nicene Creed, Conn writes, "If the Lutherans, and closely following the Calvinists, attack that thing, the Arminians have attacked it with far more dignity and excellence."¹¹ Even if the Puritan brand of the new faith was largely relegated to Britain, Conn's intended audience was not necessarily English or Scottish, but more universal. Conn was aware, still, that he was in theological territory, and that was not as familiar to him as other elements of religion. This occurred where he addressed predestination, and acknowledged that his approach

¹¹ Conn, *Assertionum Catholicarum Libri Tres* (Rome: Zanetti, 1629), p. 36.

to a critique of it came from study rather than practice. He writes, “Many might question this if they are able, and the teaching of it requires it to be investigated. I shall aim with a naked sword to cut through this multi-layered serpent to strike at its heart.”¹²

In England, bans on Catholic polemic literature, especially writings that originated at Roman presses, had been in place prior to Conn’s birth, but this is not to suggest that such texts were entirely kept out of the country by any means. In fact, there was a popular school of thought that argued that in order to best defend England against the perceived menace and threat of popery, it was necessary for England’s most educated theologians to have access to such works to best understand the Catholic Reformation as it developed.¹³ These works were generally consulted by clerics and scholars, rather than by the general reading public. This, in fact, had a direct impact on Conn’s embassy, or at least the very end of it. Many of these aforementioned Catholic texts were housed at Cambridge in the 1620s-30s.

If one seeks an English parallel by which to compare Conn’s work and gauge English response, there are few better choices than Richard Montagu’s *A Gag for the New Gospell? No, A New Gag for an Old Goose*, published in 1624. Montagu, in defending the Church of England, seeks to clarify 47 claims made by English Catholic theologian Matthew Kellison in his work, *The Gag for the New Gospel*, in which Kellison argued that the English Church had become overwhelmingly Calvinist. What developed in the publication of those works runs contrary to the standard Protestant v. Catholic war of words that were hallmarks of the era. Instead, Montagu, who was baptized a Catholic and whose own Arminian-inspired religious philosophy aligned well with English Catholics, used Scripture to explicitly detail the ways in which the Church of England was much more Catholic than Calvinist. Montagu includes chapters that argue in favour of the primacy of St. Peter over St. Paul, the importance of veneration of saints in the Church of England and perhaps most shockingly, the notion that good works were absolutely necessary for salvation.

¹² Conn, p. 93-94.

¹³ Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 45.

In addressing the Protestant arguments and interpretations of Christianity, Conn worked to provide a manual by which the Catholic public could combat the Protestant heresy, and he focused his attention on three easily identifiable elements of Protestant theology and practice: predestination, justification by faith, and religious imagery, or the lack thereof. Conn writes that he does not wish to engage in the ongoing debates in the matters about which he writes, but rather wishes to understand them strictly through the use of Scripture.¹⁴ Using organization that closely resembles Conn's political primer, *De Institutione Principis*, published in 1625, Conn works to answer each and every Protestant view of note and dedicates an entire chapter to refuting specific elements of that view. Most interestingly, he does this by employing the very source of Luther's power and appeal: The Bible. Conn cites Scripture from no fewer than fifty-four of the seventy-three books of the Bible to counter Lutheran interpretations. Conn's background in canon law was perhaps never put to more universal use. The work reads like a legal argument, and marks only the second of his works that does not centre on issues of Scotland.

Conn found fault not in the originators of these ideas, but in those who have followed them and turned the original interpretations of the Protestant pantheon of religious philosophers into a movement that threatened the Catholic Church of his time, and thus threatened all of Christendom. He particularly focuses on the Eucharist and the debate of transubstantiation. He notes, "The more Lutherans deny the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and idea carries on that this is true, all strength might fall down."¹⁵ Conn argues that the absence of transubstantiation removes a key element of the entire sacrament, and without that element, the sacrament itself is erroneous and hollow.

Two primary historical concerns related to the work emerge here. The Synod of Dort, which marked the most substantial development in how the characteristics of 1620s Protestantism formed and evolved, is the first. The second are the nature and method of anti-Catholic sentiment in England during the late 1620s and early 1630s. Further, two distinct facets of this element exist: the response to pro-Catholic literature and activity by practicing Catholics in Britain, and the outward exposition of anti-

¹⁴ Conn, p. 13.

¹⁵ Conn, p. 90.

Catholic sentiment. No extant written contemporary reaction responding to Conn's final work exists in England or English. A reasonable assumption can best be arrived at by measuring the evidence of these cultural elements.

Developments in the 1620s are key to understanding how the religio-political structure in England came apart during the following decade, particularly in highlighting the contention regarding the Spanish match, English Catholic exiles living in Spain, and the forced loan as situations and occurrences that indicate the foundation of English government was being shaken by a Protestant-Catholic divide.¹⁶ It is my contention that the disintegration of that religio-political structure can be better understood through works that originated outside of England itself. This creates a reality in which the English Civil Wars were not only an English crisis, or even just a British crisis, but instead were a crisis of the Three Kingdoms plus the Papacy.

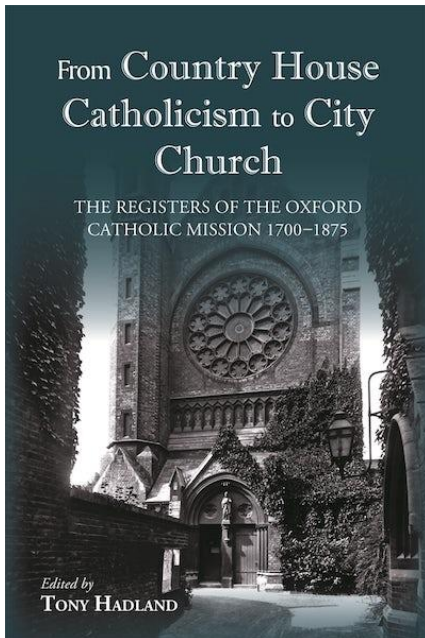
See Part 2 in our next issue...

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¹⁶ Ethan Shagan, ed., Ethan Shagan, ed., *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation': Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 9-10. Shagan cites the work of Richard Cust and Ann Hughes in their co-edited work from 1989, *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-1642*, as the origin point of this discussion.

BOOKS

'From Country House Catholicism to City Church, the Registers of the Oxford Catholic Mission 1700-1875.' To be published January 2023 by the Oxfordshire Record Society.



These registers, compiled by the Jesuits, are held in Oxford at St Aloysius, which is now the home of the Oxford Oratory. They have been edited by Tony Hadland. They will show the development of the Catholic church in England from penal times to a time when it was legal for the church to build churches where they were needed, even though there was still considerable prejudice among the general public.

Publication price £35, but available to ECHA members at the pre-publication price of £22.75. Check the ECHA website for more details.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 21st January 2023 at 2 p.m. “Keeping an Ember Burning: *Catholic Recusancy and the Fermor Family of North Oxfordshire.*” ECHA members are welcome to join the Catholic Family History Society Zoom talk being given by our Chairman, Tim Guile. Apply for the Zoom link via cfhsrecords@gmail.com

Tuesday 31st January 2023 at 7.30 p.m. “*Long live the Queen: Mary’s legacy 1558-1660*” – *Johanna Strong.* Please register on Eventbrite to receive the Zoom link:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/long-live-the-queen-marys-legacy-1558-1660-tickets-469820354327?utm-campaign=social%2Cemail&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-source=strongmail&utm-term=checkoutwidget>

Thursday 23rd February 2023 at 7.30 p.m. “*Reconstructing Queenship and Catholicism in Modern Heritage Sites*”. Amy Saunders will be specifically looking at the Stuart queen consorts, Henrietta Maria and Catherine of Braganza. Please register on Eventbrite to receive the Zoom link:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/reconstructing-queenship-catholicism-in-modern-heritage-sites-tickets-502572356447?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Thursday 7th March 2023 at 7.30 p.m. “*Women Religious as Peacebuilders in Conflict Zones*”. Zoom talk by Dr Maria Power. Please register on Eventbrite to receive the Zoom link:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/women-religious-as-peacebuilders-in-conflict-zones-tickets-502582657257?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Thursday 4th April 2023 at 7.30 p.m. “*Catherine of Aragon*”. Zoom talk by Emma Marron. Details to follow.