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Feedback and comments are **always** welcome. Please send them to Mr William King at the address on page 3.

Articles for publication are also welcome. Please send them by email to the Editor at the address on page 3 and, if possible, saved with file extension of .doc in Word, and photos in .jpg format.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This year, our day conference and AGM will be held in November at Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory, Warwick St, London W1B 5LZ. Details to follow. Everyone is warmly welcome. We have had some excellent speakers this year for our monthly Zoom talk including one on the dissolution of the monasteries by Prof. James Clark which had an audience of around seventy. We have speakers lined up until the autumn of 2025. If you haven't yet joined an online talk, please do so as they are very interesting. The ECHA continues to go from strength to strength with its media presence and publicity.

On the 29th September, I will be giving a talk on Heroines of the Reformation at Bosworth Old Hall, Husbands Bosworth, Leicestershire in conjunction with the local Ordinariate parish at Husbands Bosworth. The talk is at 3pm followed by tea.

https://echa.org.uk Our website gets better and better! Please look at it and see what you think. There are many more links to topics now so its far more searchable and user-friendly.

https://www.youtube.com/@englishcatholichistoryasso930 Here you will find all our online talks from our monthly Zoom talks.

You can find us on X @EnglishCatholi2. We are also on LinkedIn, Face Book and Apple Podcasts.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of our committee who make all these things possible. They are doing a fantastic job and are all unpaid volunteers. We are looking for someone to help with maintaining our website and doing a few digital tasks. We would be most grateful if you could help us in any way at all.

Tim Guile
Chairman ECHA

NOTES AND NOTICES

York Catholic History Day

Due to circumstances beyond their control the organisers of the annual Catholic History Day in York have had to change the date of the 2025 meeting to **Saturday June 14th** at the Bar Convent. Please note this in your diaries to save the date. Thank you.

Help required!

Does anyone know someone who could make some maps of the British Isles for the Timeline project? I think so far there are 6 required. I can send details etc of what is wanted. Please get in touch with Margaret Turnham at newsletter.echa@yahoo .com

Also, if anyone would like to research and write an article for the Timeline there are still plenty of subjects to choose from or you may have your own idea of an interesting subject. Email Margaret on the address above with your offers or suggestions.

New ECHA Website

As you will have read in the last newsletter we are currently building a new updated website for ECHA, and we will need assistance with the ongoing maintenance and updating of the site. If any of you would be interested in helping us with this essential task please do be in touch. Thank you! email: chairman.echa@yahoo.com

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.

INTRODUCING THE COMMITTEE

My name is William King and I am the Secretary of the ECHA. I not only have an interest in the Catholic past of England and Wales, but I am fortunate to get paid whilst I share it with others. This is because I work as a Visitor Assistant at Boscobel House, an historic recusant house on the Shropshire/Staffordshire border. It was historically the home of the Staffordshire Jesuit mission (which at one stage stretched as far as Westmoreland) and was most probably a centre for sheltering Catholic priests from 1622. It is most famous for having given refuge to the fugitive King Charles II in 1651. His day spent hiding in an oak tree behind the house being responsible for one of the most popular pub names in Britain.

I have a BA in History and a CertEd in Theology. My dissertation was on how English and Welsh Catholics maintained a sense of national identity during the Penal Times. Whilst I enjoyed writing about people who left our inclement island to find sanctuary in Rome, I, myself only got as far as the Tyburn Convent opposite Hyde Park when I was at university. My own pilgrimage to Rome taking place a few years later in a familiarly damp February.

My first ECHA trip was to Stonor Park in 2015 and I really enjoy being able to meet as many fellow enthusiasts as I can at such gatherings. I hope by the time you read this to be all set for our AGM and looking forward to further such visits in 2025. This will mark my first year in post on the committee and I have found it a very enjoyable twelve months. Please feel free to say hello if our paths cross, either at one of our events or if you call in to Boscobel to see the Royal Oak.

VISITS

The Shrine of St Winefride at Holywell

In May 2024, the ECHA had a pilgrimage to St Winefride's Well, Holywell, north Wales. We enjoyed talks from the Secretary, Mr William King on the history of the shrine and its importance in the story of Welsh and English Catholic history. After lunch at the convent in the town, we visited the Catholic church and again had a talk from William. It was a very successful trip to this significant Welsh holy place.

Almost everyone has heard of Lourdes and its reputed miraculous healing properties, yet St Winefride's Well, in the north Wales town of Holywell, is much lesser known. Even though it has been a place of pilgrimage and healing for more than a thousand years and is now known as the Lourdes of Wales. No other place in Britain can boast a history of 1,300 years of continual pilgrimage. Many people through the ages have made pilgrimage to this holy place. Richard I made pilgrimage to the shrine to ask Winifred for her blessing for his crusade to retake Jerusalem, Henry V walked on foot from Shrewsbury in thanksgiving for his victory at Agincourt, Edward IV took soil from about the well and rubbed it upon his crown in the hope that Winifred would grant him victory against his Lancastrian enemies.

The chapel itself dates from the late fifteenth century. Set into the hillside, it's a striking and unusual building, richly decorated and exceptionally well-built. On the bottom floor, the spring water bubbles up into a star-shaped basin beneath an elaborately vaulted ceiling before flowing out into a more recent outdoor pool, where pilgrims still visit to bathe in its waters with their claimed healing properties. A place of pilgrimage, it's on the route of the North Wales Pilgrim's Way that travels along the Llŷn Peninsula to Bardsey Island/Ynys Enlli, the legendary 'Isle of 20,000 Saints'. Pilgrims have come to St Winefride's Well throughout its history, to seek healing. Records dating back hundreds of years are testimony to the many cures from sickness and infirmity received through the intercession of St Winefride and the stories who have come in thanksgiving for healing for themselves or others. Just a mile's walk away from St Winefride's well is the ruins of the former Cistercian Basingwerk Abbey. During the medieval period,

both English and Welsh nobility gave grants of land to the monks of Basingwerk. Dafydd ap Llywelyn gave them nearby Holywell church, pilgrimage chapel, and the shrine of St Winifred. Medieval pilgrims would have found hospitality at Basingwerk Abbey and then walked to the well. Whatever the exact truth of her legend, Winefride herself is said to be real rather than legendary, and the extraordinary and enduring personality of this seventh century Welsh woman has meant that she has been venerated as a saint ever since the moment of her death. Since that time, too, her well at Holywell has been a place of pilgrimage and healing. In fact, it's the only such place in Britain with a continuous history of public pilgrimage for over many centuries. There has been a church on the site of Holywell since the earliest Christian times in Wales. The legend of St Winefride goes back into the mists of time. According to the legend, Winefride also known as Gwenffrewi in Welsh, was said to be the daughter of a local prince named Tyfid and his wife Gwenlo. Her uncle was St. Beuno. One day, around the year 630 AD, Caradoc, a local chieftain from Hawarden, attempted to seduce Winefride. She ran from him towards the church which had been built by her uncle, Beuno. Caradoc pursued her and cut off her head with his sword. In the place where her head fell, a spring of water came up. St. Beuno came out from the church, took up her head and placed it back on her body. He then prayed over her and she was restored to life. A white scar was said to have been seen round her neck as a witness to her martyrdom. Caradoc sank to the ground and was never seen again. Winefride became a nun and, after her uncle's departure from Holywell for the Monastery of Clynnog Fawr, joined a community at Gwytherin where she later became Abbess. She died there some twenty-two years later.

Originally owned by the St Werburgh's Abbey in Chester, it came into the ownership of Basingwerk Abbey in the twelfth century. Henry Bradshaw, writing in his 1513 book, The Life of St Werburge, wrote about Richard d'Avranche a Norman landowner around 1115-1119 that:

Erle Richard intended all thing to the best to visit Saynte Winefride in hert deririus upon his journey went (myn author sayth thus) devoutly to Holywell in pilgrimage for his great merit and ghostly advantage.[1]

Until then, the relics of the saint were kept at Holywell but in 1138, Winefrede's relics were removed from Gwytherin and enshrined in Shrewsbury. Her shrine there became a focus of popular pilgrimage, and devotion to her gradually spread across England, gaining strength, until in 1415 the archbishop of Canterbury made her feast day on 3 November into a major solemnity. The well chamber with chapel above was built in the early sixteenth century under the patronage of Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby. Her shrine at Shrewsbury was destroyed at the reformation under Henry VIII.

The holy well and shrine continued as a place of pilgrimage for centuries and many healings of bodily and mental ailments were said to have occurred there. Despite the depredations of the reformation in the sixteenth century, by the seventeenth century pilgrims began to return in larger numbers. Many inscriptions cut into the pillars date from these times. During the reign of Elizabeth I pilgrims continued to visit the shrine. The local Catholic population helped to protect the shrine and encourage its continued use. Brave Catholic recusants risked fines and imprisonment by travelling to the shrine and practicing their, now illegal faith. Despite arrest, torture and imprisonment, Fr. John Bennett continued to minister to the spiritual needs of the people in the area.

In November 2022, bishops of England and Wales elevated St Winefride's Well to the status of a national shrine. The shrine at Holywell has now been a site of pilgrimage for almost 1,400 years since St Winefride was killed.[2]

T.J. Guile

[1] https://www.mythslegendsodditiesnorth-east-wales.co.uk/st-winefrides-well
[2] https://catholicherald.co.uk/bishops-elevate-st-winefrides-well-to-status-of-national-shrine/

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By the author

https://www.pilgrimways.org.uk/history-of-pilgrimage-in-england-and-wales



ARTICLES

Talk at the end of the commemorative Mass for Blessed Margaret Pole in the chapel of Farleigh Hungerford Castle, near Bath: 25 May 2024 (the nearest Saturday to her feast on 28 May)

Blessed Margaret Pole – or pronounced 'Poole' according to some scholars – was born Margaret Plantagenet of the House of York on the Eve of the Assumption of Our Lady, 14 August, 1473, here at Farleigh Hungerford Castle. Her life started towards the end of the so-called Wars of the Roses, a highly unstable period of brutal civil war. This castle was then in the hands of the Crown. King Edward IV gave the castle to his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, in 1462. It seems that the brothers then passed it to their other brother George Plantagenet Duke of Clarence, Margaret's father.

Margaret might have lived in some comfort but she suffered the loss of her mother, Isabel Neville (daughter of Warwick 'the kingmaker'), who died in 1476 when Margaret was only three, and then she suffered the loss of her father,executed for treason in 1478, when she was only five. Her father George was Shakespeare's 'false, fleeting, perjured Clarence' in the play *Richard III.* Her father's execution, whether justified or not, and Clarence's subsequent reviled reputation must have weighed heavily on Margaret as she grew up. Her uncle, Edward IV, died aged 40 in 1483 when she was ten and her other uncle King Richard III died aged 32 in battle at Bosworth in 1485 when she was 12. One would like to know more of the relationship between Richard III and Margaret. Richard's reputation during the Tudor re-writing of history must have been another burden for Margaret to carry. The Yorkists in 1485 were defeated by Henry Tudor and thereafter made vulnerable by Tudor ambitions and sidelined by Tudor power-networks. Plantagenet became the most dangerous name in England.

In 1486, Margaret's only brother, Edward, eleven-years' old and the Yorkist claimant to the throne, was taken into custody, from which he never emerged. Edward was executed in 1499 on a trumped-up charge of treason, in order to remove a Yorkist royal claimant and clear the ground for a Tudor marriage to Catherine of Aragon. The constant perils of the age dragged in Margaret and her family. She probably lived at Farleigh Hungerford for some ten years until forced by Richard III

to move to Yorkshire in 1483. We can rightly imagine the child Margaret being baptised and perhaps receiving further sacraments in this chapel, where she worshipped and prayed, and being tutored in the castle. She must have played in the grounds.

Under the Tudors Margaret's private life seems to have been a pawn in the chessboard of power. Henry VII arranged for Margaret to marry his relative Sir Richard Pole, probably in 1487, part of Henry's strategy of keeping Yorkists tied into the new *régime*. Margaret bore Richard Pole five surviving children, including Reginald, later Cardinal Pole. However, Richard Pole died in 1504. A widow at 31 with five young children Margaret was impoverished to the extent she had to seek help from the Bridgettine nuns of Syon.

Margaret's fortunes, however, were to change upwards for a time. She joined the household of Catherine of Aragon and became a close friend and a governess to Princess Mary. She was made countess of Salisbury and a peer in her own right. Her estates were to put her among the five wealthiest nobles of her age and potentially one of the most influential women in England.

The countess was also a supporter of the best classical scholars of her age, reading, for example, the works of Erasmus, and encouraged in so doing by her cultivated clerical son Reginald in Italy. Margaret was intelligent and intellectually curious.

She was also deeply pious and resolute of character, qualities that helped sustain her through the constant decline in her circumstances in the late 1520s and 1530s. First came personal grief caused by the death of her son, Arthur, in 1527 or 1528, probably from the sweating sickness. Then she was to suffer increasingly from her support for Queen Catherine of Aragon and the Princess Mary in the face of Henry VIII's efforts to cast them both aside and pursue an invalid marriage to Anne Boleyn, a major element in his momentous break from Rome. The king exiled Margaret from court, although he called her the holiest woman in England. In 1536 Margaret's son Reginald, later that year made a cardinal, sent the manuscript of his work *De Unitate* to Henry VIII, in which he defended the unity of the Church and urged the King to repent, describing him as more cruel than the Turks and arguing that his claim to be supreme head of the Church was illegitimate and absurd. Reginald also urged the princes of Europe to depose Henry

VIII. The work was published in 1538 or 1539. The King was furious and took vindictive revenge on the whole Pole family. Margaret's son Lord Henry Montagu and a cousin, Lord Henry Courtenay, were executed in 1538. Geoffrey Pole, another son, was arrested but eventually pardoned for giving information on his family. Margaret was imprisoned in the Tower of London for two and a half years, when we are told she was 'tormented by the severity of the weather and insufficient clothing'.

There are at least three different accounts of Margaret's execution on the morning of 27 May 1541. There seems general agreement that she did not recognise the legitimacy of her sentence for treason, for which she was not afforded a legal trial, and general agreement that her executioner was untrained, 'a blundering youth' in one account, and that her beheading turned into a bungled, brutal butchery. There can be no doubt that her execution, now a mere footnote in history books, is a savage indictment of Henry: what kind of man would execute his aged cousin? Such barbarism went totally against what remained of an unwritten code of chivalry. By then Henry was steeped in blood.

Margaret Pole's body was laid to rest in the chapel of St Peter ad Vincula at the Tower. Her remains were discovered in 1876, revealing her to have been of above average height. Margaret in our diocese is commemorated by a stained-glass window in St Osmund's Church in Salisbury.

Although she was killed in 1541, Margaret's martyrdom should be seen as the coda of the 1535 executions and tortures which Cardinal Pole saw as measures to terrify everyone (which they did in the case of the monasteries and of all but one of the bishops) into submission over Henry's claim to royal supremacy of the Church. Margaret Pole and her family were only too aware of the 1535 executions. The first to die were the 6 Carthusian monks on 4 May 1535 and 19 June, followed by another 12 monks, mostly starved to death by 1540. Cardinal Pole's veneration of the Carthusians was only deepened and sharpened by the effect on him of his mother's martyrdom. It was almost certainly Cardinal Pole who wrote a broadsheet in 1555 about the Carthusian martyrs The Pole family were also very close to the family and circle of Thomas More. Fisher, More, the Carthusians, the Pole family and

others could see that once papal supremacy had gone all hell would be let loose. The later iconoclastic frenzy and religious confusion in the years from 1547 to 1549 proved them right.

In 1886 Pope Leo XIII beatified Margaret Pole and 53 other English martyrs. The Decree stated that the martyrs 'suffered death for the Catholic Faith and for the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff in the Church'. Margaret and the others were targets of hatred of the faith, *odium fidei*. Margaret Pole was the only woman in this group. In a later group were three women, Saints Margaret Clitherow, Anne Line and Margaret Ward, canonised in 1970. For the period from 1535 to 1681 there were 285 beatifications at various times, of whom 43 were subsequently canonised. 30 more martyrs have been declared Venerable. Cardinal Manningdescribed England as the 'island of saints', *Anglia, Sanctorum insula.* Margaret Pole stood out from the rest in that she had royal blood. None of the martyrs was of higher social rank. Also, none, as far as I can reckon, was as old or older: John Fisher was martyred at 66. Margaret Pole died at 67, which in those days made her an old woman.

In terms of the world, Margaret Pole seemed to be born on the wrong side of history; she seemed to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and she mixed with the wrong people. All the castles in which she lived were pointless defences when the enemy was her own cousin the king. In terms of the Kingdom of God, her suffering and death turned to glorious and everlasting triumph. A heroine, she is worthy of our deepest admiration, a lodestar for all time. Her faith defined the core of her being. She had no truck with nonsense, above all the nonsense that she was a traitor. The accounts of her struggling with her executioner, even trying to get up from the scaffold, were not to suggest she was in any way a coward, but to show her strength of character, her exasperation with her accusers. She was as magnificent in death as she was in life: *une dame formidable.*

She must inspire us in our own times to have no truck with nonsense, to put matters of faith first, always. Margaret Pole's example challenges us to defend and uphold our faith should the tidal currents of the age try to pull us in other directions. It is right that we venerate Blessed Margaret Pole today in this holy place. It is right that we pray that

her intercession can strengthen and guide us and our families, our parishes, our centres of learning, our workplaces, our homes, our Church.
Blessed Margaret Pole, pray for us.

Dr Giles Mercer KSG

John Howman O.S.B. and the poor of Feckenham.

Residents and visitors to Feckenham will be familiar with the memorial window in the north aisle of Feckenham parish church which commemorates Feckenham's most famous son, John Howman always known as John Feckenham. Below, behind the altar are four coats of arms which commemorate the successive institutions where he lived, namely Evesham Abbey, Worcester College, Oxford, St Paul's Cathedral London, and Westminster Abbey.

Circumstances and his intellectual abilities placed him at the centre of English public life at a time when religion and politics were inseparable. The successive and sudden changes of monarch and of national religion, led to correspondingly dramatic changes in his life. These have been much studied both by members of his order, the Benedictines, and by academics studying Tudor history.

The Public Life of John of Feckenham

His father was Thomas Howman, and his mother Florence, and he was born in Feckenham about 1508. Several members of the Howman family are known to have paid tax in 1520, including Thomas who paid 2 shillings for land. John went for his education to Evesham abbey, a large Benedictine abbey, and in due course he entered the order. The Benedictine houses had their own College at Oxford University, and, doubtless in recognition of his intellectual abilities, John's superiors sent him there to study. The College was known not only for its teaching of Divinity, but also for the regular training of the students in preaching, and all his life John was famous both for his scholarship and for his debating skills. John graduated Bachelor of Divinity, 11 June 1539; however it

was already clear that King Henry Vlll would continue his policy of dissolving the monasteries. The monks at Evesham had already been visited by the King's commissioners in 1535, but in the event Evesham was one of the last monasteries to be dissolved, surviving until 1540. Monks received a pension from the king, in John's case 15 marks or ten pounds, and he was appointed Vicar of Feckenham and Rector of Solihull in 1539, just before the dissolution. However he did not necessarily spend all his time in eiother of these places and for he was also domestic chaplain to Bishop Bell of Worcester, a post which would give him an insight into ecclesiastical administration. He then moved to London as domestic chaplain to Bishop Edmund Bonner of London in 1543.

So far John had been able to survive in the political world, but when Henry V111 died in 1547 and was succeeded by his only son, the very Protestant boy King Edward V1, John was in a very invidious position. He and his patron, Bonner, both opposed the Calvinist and Lutheran divines, and also the politicians Protector Somerset and the Earl of Warwick who now successively governed for the young King, and soon both Bonner and Feckenham were imprisoned in the Tower.

Everything changed again when Edward died in 1553, and Mary, the eldest daughter of Henry V111 succeeded on 5 Sept, 1553, and as a committed Catholic, she immediately launched a campaign to restore the practice of Catholicism throughout England. John of Feckenham became well known as a preacher in London, and in March, 1554, was made dean of St. Paul's in London. The Earl of Warwick made a desperate bid to put sixteen year old Lady Jane Grey on the throne, an attempt which failed. She and her husband were executed, and as Dean of St Paul's, it was John of Feckenham's duty to attend Jane on the scaffold, a scene illustrated in the window of Feckenham parish church in the north aisle. After Wyatt's rebellion, Elizabeth, the Queen's protestant half sister was imprisoned in the Tower, but John successfully appealed for her life and release.

John received from Oxford University the degree of Doctor of Divinity in May, 1556, and on 7 September of the same year, was appointed abbot of the restored royal Abbey of Westminster, and head of its Benedictine community of about twenty- eight monks, where he restored the Abbey church and the shrine of the Confessor. He sat in the House of Lords, the last abbot ever to

do so, where he made speech- subsequently published- opposing the changes in religion.

However, Mary's changes were very short-lived as she died in November 1558, and Mary was succeeded by her half sister Elizabeth. On her accession Elizabeth made determined efforts to gain a broad base of support among the more moderate clerics, and she offered (November, 1558) to preserve the monastery if John and his monks would accept the new religion, but Feckenham refused, planting trees while awaiting the inevitable expulsion, which took place 12 July, 1559. In May, 1560, he was sent to the Tower "for railing against the changes that had been made". Three years later he was given into the custody of the new Bishop of Winchester, but in 1564 he was sent back to the Tower. Feckenham himself said that he preferred the prison to the bishop's palace. In the Tower he and his fellow-prisoners were "haled by the arms to Church in violent measure, against our wills, there to hear a sermon, not of persuading us but of railing upon us." About 1571 he was sent to the Marshalsea until he was released on bail, 17 July, 1574. For a short time he lived in Holborn, but falling ill, he was permitted to go to Bath. He was subsequently committed to the custody of the Bishop of Ely ,and later to Wisbech Castle, a dismal prison in the Fens, where many Catholic priests were interned. He died there in 1580, and was buried in Wisbech church. He had been a prisoner for 23 of his 72 years.

John Howman and the Feckenham Loan fund.

Like many men of the sixteenth century who went to London and became famous in politics, theatre or commerce he did not forget his birthplace. He left in charity ten pounds in memory of the ten years he had spent as vicar of Feckenham (1539-1549). He obtained additional money for the charity from his parents Thomas and Florence Howman, from a priest Richard Hawkesbury who gave £6 13s 4d., a widow, Margaret Sterne, Mr. John Moorman, and Dr Richard Crispin D.D.

Five trustees were appointed to receive the money: the Vicar of Feckenham, Master William Jennetts, gentleman of Norgrove, Master Jeffrey Markham, gentleman, of Astwood Court, Mr Anthony Hanbury, gentleman of Bean Hall and Thomas Hughes and Hugh Lacye yeomen. The money was to be used to help 'the poor that have sustained any manner of loss or hindrance'; to enable them 'to take house, ground, pasture or any manner bargain thereby better to

live, ' and also to help the poor to pay their rents 'that they for need shall not sell nor pledge their necessary goods or for lack thereof forfeit their holdings.' to make grants to young couples, or to enable young men judged of sufficient 'towardeness' to make good use of a small grant of land or pasture. The person wishing for a loan had to find a surety to guarantee repayment and the loans should be ten shillings, or twenty shillings, thirty shillings but not more than forty shillings. The loan was to be repaid in no longer a period than a year. The elaborate and detailed plans show that John Howman had a good understanding of the practical problems and needs of his former parishioners. His instructions were to be written into a special book to be held by the parish, and this is now in Worcester Record Office. It was transcribed by Dame Foord, O.S.B. then of Stanbrook Abbey, and her meticulous work was published in a series of five articles in the periodical Worcestershire Recusant 1963-7.

Feckenham parish at this time had about 136 families: the great majority earned their livings from farming or in the trades which supported agriculture. The first grant was made at Michaelmas, 1556, when nineteen men and one woman received a grant. The numbers gradually dwindled and there were no grants recorded after 1565. In all eighty grants were made.

John Beebee borrowed money and John Bybbe twice, perhaps the same man. Thomas Egglestone appeared four times, Humphrey Johnson four times and Thomas Hemying three. There were only two women Alice Morgan and Elizabeth Stanton, who is immediately followed in the list by John Stanton. A few were identified by occupation, namely Thomas Lewisyn , the tanner, John Kybbe, thatcher (1546) and Humphrey Johnson, smith (1565) Of the people taking out loans almost all bore names which are found repeatedly in the Feckenham parish registers- among them Beebee, Abolton, Darbye, Egglestone. However, given variations in spelling and the frequency of both surnames and Christian names in the parish we can never be sure of identifying these individuals and families. They do not appear as landholders or even as holders of assarts on the 1563 map of Feckenham field lands, which suggests that they were genuinely among the local poor of Feckenham as John had wished.

Each borrower was required to bring with him his surety. Some of them bore the same surnames as the people taking out the loans. John Smith of the Wood stood surety for five loans in the sixties. Hugh Lacey was also active in

guaranteeing loans. In all there were some forty other guarantors. Where it is possible to identify them from the parish registers and the probate records, they also belonged to Feckenham families, mostly of yeoman status. Anthony Edgyoke who died in 1577 had stood surety in 1556, 1558 and 1560, was a man of some substance. He had a holding of land in Astwood, 25 cattle and 4 working mares and 4 colts, geese, pigs and poultry. He had a little corn and hay. He was remarkable in the society of his time that at his death it was recorded that he owed no debts, and no debts were owing to him. Humphrey Mascall of Cruise Hill who stood surety for two loans in the last year when a grant was made, 1578, died in 1598. He had a house well furnished for the period with painted cloths hung in the parlour, and glass in the windows (valued at 4 shillings). He had the equipment of a working farm harrow, wayne, plough, with oxen to draw it and "all farm gear".

Unless there were further gifts to the parish it was inevitable that the fund would dwindle, and these do not appear to have been forthcoming. John had forbidden the investing of the money to gain interest as committing the sin of usury. The entries in the book cease in 1578 without explanation leaving many blank pages.

This was by no means John's only charity. He made a similar charity for Solihull where he had also been Vicar, though for the record of this we now depend on a history of Solihull published in 1906. While he was under house arrest in Bath, in 1576, he issued a book of basic medical remedies for the use of poor people some of which he had acquired from his family of which the original is now in the British Library. He gave money for the building of a Bath house for the poor, known as Lepers' House, Nowhere Lane, Bath, and produced a book of detailed instructions about healthy bathing. This charity continued until the nineteenth century. In all his charities, he wrote lengthy introductory statements, citing their religious basis, and explaining that they were needed to replace the work of the monasteries in caring for the poor and the sick after the Dissolution.

It is evident that despite the vicissitudes of his public life, John Howman, who was always known as John Feckenham, was throughout his life rooted in his birthplace and his Order.

Marie Rowlands

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Worcestershire Recusant no 13 June 1969
This periodical is now Midland Catholic History and esquiries about copies of these back numbers may be addressed to Mr Vincent Burke.
F.A. Gasquet, Last Abbot of Glastonbury and other Essays (London, 1908), s.v.Feckenham at Bath
Military tax `1524 p. 40
Herbal Remedy book now in British Library.

The Gordon Riots 1780

The Gordon Riots of June 1780 were a direct result of the passing of the first Catholic Relief Act in 1778. This article will examine the background to them and then discuss the effect they had on the Catholic population during that week.

The legislation was the first step in giving Roman Catholics the opportunity to play a full and public part in the affairs of the country that had been denied to them since the reign of Mary Tudor. The passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689, although only applying to Protestant denominations did mean that attendance at the Anglican Church was no longer compulsory. This had meant that Catholics had been able to start establishing discreet chapels. By 1778 however, there was, amongst the Protestant educated elite, a willingness to consider extending the Act of Toleration to Catholics. This was partly because among them there was a growing indifference towards religion, and a growing sense that in an age of toleration it was unjust to exclude Catholics from society. The Catholic gentry for their part were also anxious to to join in the political life of the country and had spent much of the preceding decade

playing down the differences in theology and deciding what concessions they might make to ease Protestant sensibilities. Perhaps the greatest problem was the oath of allegiance to the King that all those in public office including the armed forces had to make under the Test Acts. In 1766 with the death of the Old Pretender, the Pope had ceased to support the claims of the exiled house of Stuart, and given de facto recognition to the House of Hanover, so that part of the oath was no longer problematical, but Catholics could not swear to abjure their faith as required by the second part of the oath. In 1774 the *Irish Relief Act* provided an alternative oath of loyalty to the crown which Rome did not denounce and became the model for later Relief Acts passed by Parliament. By 1778, leading Catholic laity had formed a Catholic Committee to urge for Relief, but did so without reference to the Vicars Apostolic, telling them that they, the laity, were better placed to urge reform of the law. They presented the King with a loyal address containing a revised oath, but it failed to give the impetus for change; that came from situations outside Britain regarding war, and the threat of war. In 1778 during the American War of Independence France allied herself with North America declaring it a sovereign nation and thereby declaring war on Britain. With the need to draft more soldiers into the army, the British government realised the recruitment of Catholics was both necessary and desirable.

The Act was very limited in its provisions. In return for taking the reworded oath that was embedded in the text, Catholics could legally purchase land and priests and teachers were freed from the threat of arrest and imprisonment, although to receive a Catholic education was still forbidden. Additionally, the requirement to pay double tax was abolished and the right of Protestants to to claim inheritances bequeathed to Catholic descendants was also abolished. Perhaps its most important effect, however, was that Catholics were now recognised as an acceptable part of Hanoverian Britain. Additionally, Garrison towns such as Hull and Woolwich saw Mass attendance suddenly soar as Catholics signed up to serve their country. However, even though the legislation was very limited it still brought about an explosion of anti-Catholic feeling, which began in Scotland even though the provisions of the Act did not include that part of Britain. A Protestant Association was formed in Scotland and soon spread to England with branches throughout the country, for Catholic Relief was not popular in the Protestant middle and lower classes. In

December 1779 the young MP, Lord George Gordon was elected as its president. Gordon's argument against the Act had two strands: first, it was introduced in a thin sitting of the House, at the end of a session and passed without a public debate. Secondly, he said he did not want to raise fears on the part of the lower classes but felt it was necessary to make known the threat the Act posed; that Popery, when encouraged by the government was dangerous to the liberty of the people. Gordon also believed that Catholics might swear the oath but not respect it. His argument was reinforced by John Wesley who in January 1780 wrote in the *Public Advertiser* that 'No Protestant government ought to tolerate men of a Roman Catholic persuasion'

Opposition to the act became so persistent and strong that the leading Catholic layman, Lord Petrie visited Gordon to try and persuade him to allow the Act to run for five years to see if his fears materialised. Gordon however, rejected his overtures on the grounds that were he to deny the members of the Association the leadership they expected him to give there would be trouble and possibly civil unrest. Gordon became evermore entrenched in his view that the 1778 Act must be repealed and started a petition to that effect. By Spring 1780, it contained over 100,000 signatures including about one in five adult males living in London.

It was decided to present the petition to Parliament following a mass protest meeting on June 2nd at which large numbers assembled in St George's Field Southwark. Gordon insisted he would only present the petition if accompanied by 20,000 supporters. The Rally, which numbered around 50,000 broke up into four columns each approaching Parliament from a different direction. Each marcher wore a blue cockade as a means of identifying their allegiance to the Protestant cause. Parliament refused the demand of Gordon to debate the petition immediately and as the crowd was dispersed by the military, rioting broke out that lasted a week. A variety of explanations have been put forward as to why a disciplined, yet angry march became a lawless mob. The explanation offered by the Protestant Association exonerated their members by placing the blame on Papist agent provocateurs who infiltrated the demonstration or that other undesirables may have infiltrated the marches to encourage and enjoy gratuitous violence. Their argument was unsustainable as the events of the whole week demonstrate there were Protestants who viewed

it as appropriate to mount an assault on Catholics and innocent people were carried away by the mass hysteria it produced.

Targets for the mobs included the Ambassadorial chapels and homes of known Catholics as well as homes of those peers who had passed the Act and thus betrayed the Protestant cause, in the view of the mob. The Sardinian Embassy chapel, which was ransacked then burned was a particular target for the rioters as it was regarded almost as a cathedral by the Catholic community and Bishop Richard Challoner, the Vicar Apostolic of London, called it 'the chief support of religion in London' Bishop Challoner, himself, a very elderly man, was rescued from his lodging shortly before the rioters arrived at the house, and taken to safety, but although he later resumed his work, but he was weakened by the experience and it was only six months later he suffered a stroke and died in 1781 aged eighty-nine. Newgate Prison, where arrested rioters were incarcerated also became a target for their confreres in order to free them. Other places attacked included areas such as Moorfields where the Irish were known to live often itinerate lives but included a few wealthy Irish merchants who employed their countrymen rather than the English as they would work longer hours for less pay. A distillery owned by the Langdale family was also attacked and burnt, but the exploding spirits caused the death of some rioters who were sampling its wares and failed to escape.

It was a week before the military managed to quell the riots and meanwhile, they had spread also to Bath, where its new chapel was destroyed two days before it was due to be opened and to Hull a town that was particularly renowned for its Protestant fervour but was also a garrison town. Hull had known anti-popery riots during 1688, when its Catholic Governor and other Catholics taking refuge in the town were captured by rioters, their chapel destroyed and the town declared as 'being for William'. Anglican Archiepiscopal records show that in 1735 there were only four Catholics in Hull; this had risen to sixty in 1780 as a result of increased Catholic recruitment by the military. In 1778 the priest used a local solicitor as an intermediary to acquire a site in Posterngate to convert into a small chapel. However it was destroyed 1780 after being attacked by a mob in the wider civil unrest. William Wilberforce, shortly before he entered Parliament for Hull wrote to a friend:

'We were alarm'd last night [Sunday 11.06.1780] at Hull by a mob which burnt the Catholic chapel and attempted to pull down a private house'.

Further rioting in the town followed on the Monday, and on Tuesday rioters threatened both Burton Constable Hall and Houghton Hall, home of the influential Catholic Langdale family; however, they were intercepted before reaching their destinations. Hull Corporation eventually paid Fr Howard compensation for the loss of his property, despite the fact that Catholic chapels, unless they belonged to foreign ambassadors, were not protected under the terms of the 1689 Toleration Act, unlike registered non-conformist chapels. Fr Howard abandoned the Posterngate site, and provided Mass in different rooms until, in 1799 his successor, provided a new public chapel on the rapidly growing northern flank of the city. Bath too, was awarded compensation for the destruction of its chapel and by 1786 had rebuilt its imposing chapel.

In many ways it was the ordinary Catholic who suffered the most in the riots, for they had enjoyed what Coffey termed toleration in its social context, a practical tolerance of religious dissidents by neighbours and friends. Unfortunately, he argues, it could quickly turn sour at times of heightened tension such as the Gordon Riots. Furthermore, the riots did happen at a turning point for the Catholic community in England as it coincided with the start of growth in the numbers of people who claimed Catholicism as their religion. There were two main reasons for this: first, the low implementation of the penal laws coupled with the internal strengthening of the community by effective Vicars Apostolic led by Richard Challoner. It was also the start of Irish immigration particularly to the new industrial areas of the Northwest and London. Even so, the riots were an ugly reminder that anti-Catholicism in Britain was never far from the surface, but reassuring also in that Parliament did not give in the demands of the Protestant Association and repeal the new Act, but after a pause resumed the gentle easing of the penal laws until Catholics were free of all sanctions in 1829.

Margaret Turnham

BOOK REVIEWS.

The Life and Letters of Rev. George Leo Haydock
Loreto Publications 2023
Edited by Sidney K.Ohlhausen
xxxiv + 425 pages
ISBN**:** 978-1-62292-409-7

The Rev. George Leo Haydock, "Bible Scholar, Church Builder, Gentleman Farmer and Minister to the Poor during and after Penal Times", (1774 – 1849) lived at a time during which legal restrictions on Catholics in England and Wales were eased by three significant pieces of legislation**:**

1778 First Catholic Relief Act
1791 Second Catholic Relief Act
1829 Catholic Emancipation Act

which enabled Catholics to emerge slowly from the situation of a persecuted minority to that of a body of citizens with almost full civil rights. Sadly, by one year, he did not live to see the full restoration of the hierarchy in 1850.

The Haydock family had two distinguished earlier members**:**
William Haydock, a Cistercian monk who joined the Pilgrimage of Grace and was executed in 1537
George Haydock, sem. priest, educ. Rheims and Rome, ordained 1581, martyred at Tyburn 1584

George was born on 11 April, 1774, the youngest of seven children of his namesake father. He was confirmed in 1784 and took the name Leo. Although a name taken in Confirmation does not become a legal name, George would continue to use it throughout his life. He was sent with his brother Thomas to the English College at Douay at the age of 10 or 11. When French revolutionary forces threatened the College in 1793, the brothers managed to escape to England. George attended the newly-established seminary at Crook Hall (later to become Ushaw), was ordained at age 24 in 1798 and remained as professor at Crook Hall. In

1803 he was assigned to the mission at Ugthorpe near the Yorkshire coast. In 1815 he accepted the Whitby mission in addition to that at Ugthorpe. Ugthorpe and Whitby were poor missions. George used his own resources (he had income from the family estates in Lancashire) to build a replacement chapel at Ugthorpe and to support his poor parishioners in both places.

During his time at Ugthorpe George was able to complete his great literary work, the Haydock Bible. This is the Douay Rheims Bible with extensive and edifying annotations.

After certain disputes over financial matters, George was, in 1831, suspended from his priestly functions by the Vicar Apostolic. He retired to the family home in Lancashire and spent eight years in exile there, devoting himself to study. The author tells me that he was surprised that he could not find any letters dating from that period. George was reinstated to the priesthood in 1839 and was appointed to the mission at Penrith, where he remained until his death ten years later. As at Ugthorpe and Whitby, he was assiduous in the support of his poor parishioners. The chapel in use when he arrived was "most inconvenient". He was eventually able to organize the building of a proper church but did not live to see it completed.

The greater part of the book, 275 of the pages numbered 1 to 425, consists of reproductions of 211 letters from and to George Haydock or members of his family or from and to other persons associated with him. The first three are well-written letters sent to his mother by the young George shortly after his arrival at Douay. The originals of those letters are, of course, handwritten, often in styles of handwriting unfamiliar to modern eyes. For the purposes of this book the letters have been transcribed into typewritten form. The author tells me that he did his own transcribing. Some of these letters, in printed form, are two or three pages long, so that the writing of the originals by hand, with a quill pen, would have been a lengthy task. In the case of letters between family members this would, of course, have been a labour of love.

It is amazing, and indeed fortuitous, that so many letters were kept by George, by members of the family and their descendants or by other persons. Someone (the author suggests that it may have been Joseph Gillow, who married into the Haydock family), at some stage, with great initiative, collected together all these letters and they are now an archive at Ushaw.

These letters give an insight into many aspects of Catholic life in the north of England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and, to that extent, may well be unique.

Two short sections at the beginning of the book:

Short biographies of Other Persons Frequently Mentioned in Correspondence

(46 persons)

a Timeline of Significant Events

are particularly useful in the study of the book.

This book is a record of a truly monumental amount of research, in respect of which the author deserves the highest congratulations.

Bernard Polack

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SATURDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2024, 10am BST *Via Zoom*
Fr Robert Cross: Monsignor John Hawes
Joint presentation with the Australian Catholic Historical Society
Mgr Hawes was a priest-architect who designed and built a series of churches throughout the mid-west of Western Australia.

TUESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2024, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*
Elaine Joyce: *Thomas Leveson, the Catholic Recusant Governor of Dudley Castle in the Civil War*

TUESDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2024, 7.30pm Via *Zoom*
Tim Guile: *St Nicholas Owen, SJ*

SATURDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2024
Annual General Meeting and Day Conference
Church of Our Lady of the Assumption & St Gregory, Warwick Street, London, W1B 5LZ
More details to follow

TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2024, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*
Aimee Fleming: *Margaret More Roper*

WEDNESDAY 15 JANUARY 2025, 7.30pm *Via Zoom*
Bernard Lewis: *Wales' Unknown Hero – Soldier, Spy, Monk: The Life of Henry Coombe-Tennant, MC, of Neath*