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NEWSLETTER

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Chairman: Tim Guile, Associate Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Email: chairman.echa@yahoo.com
Treasurer & Membership Secretary & Regional Co-ordinator for the dioceses of Birmingham and Shrewsbury: Mr Vincent Burke, 16 Brandhall Court, Wolverhampton Road, Oldbury B68 8DE
General Secretary (for all general enquiries): Mr William King, Email: sec.echa@yahoo.com
Programme Co-ordinator and Regional Co-ordinator for the dioceses of Southwark, Arundel & Brighton, Brentwood and East Anglia: Mr Bernard Polack, 4 Woodstock Grove, Farncombe, Godalming, GU7 2AX.
Vice Chair and Newsletter Editor: Mrs Margaret Turnham
Email: newsletter.echa@yahoo.com
Website Administrator: Email: englishcatholichistory@gmail.com
Regional Co-ordinator for the dioceses of Northampton & Nottinghamshire: Mrs Sheila Mawhood, 21 The Retreat, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire, HP27 0JG.
Regional Co-ordinator for the diocese of Westminster: Mr Nigel Parker, 17 Salcombe Gardens, Clapham Common North Side, LONDON, SW4 9RY.
Committee members (with those above): Andrew Fox, Angie Hodges, Robert Tickle

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Website: www.echa.org.uk

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

One of the good things about being the Chairman of the ECHA is being invited to events. Earlier this year I attended the Civic Mass at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral and met the Archbishop of Liverpool the Right Reverend Malcolm McMahon at a reception afterwards.

I was lucky enough to meet Monsignor Rod Strange and Archbishop Bernard Longley at an anniversary event at Over Warton, Oxfordshire earlier this year when I represented the ECHA at the 100th anniversary of John Henry Newman's first sermon in 1824. I asked him to do a talk for us at the day conference and AGM.

I also attended a talk by Prof Eamon Duffy at St Mary the Virgin church, Oxford when he came to do a talk on Newman's university sermons at the National Institute for Newman Studies conference held in Oxford. I got to chat to Prof Duffy afterwards and told him about the work we do on behalf of the association.

This year, our day conference and AGM was held in November at Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory, Warwick St, London W1B 5LZ. We had a talk from Paul Hodgetts on Priest Hides in the morning followed by Ordinariate rite of mass with the Bishop the Right Reverend David Waller. After lunch we had another excellent talk, this time by Monsignor Rod Strange on Newman's Conversion. The day was an enormous success with a sizeable number of members and non-members attending.

This year we have had some excellent speakers for our monthly Zoom lectures, and this will continue next year. If you know anyone who might be interested, please point them in our direction.

I am pleased to tell you that we have a new website as the old one was showing its age. We are very pleased to announce that the much-anticipated Timeline Project is up and running as of early November. https://echa.org.uk/timeline This is the brainchild of

Margaret Turnham who also edits the Newsletter and has now been elected Vice Chair of the association. The timeline has numerous articles by scholars on aspects of English and Welsh Catholic history going back to the early medieval period. This will be a great resource for students of Church history and will be invaluable to us as an association.

We hope you can come to our next day conference and AGM which will be held in November 2025.

TJ Guile

Chairman ECHA

NOTES AND NOTICES

New online Catholic History Timeline launched for England and Wales

www.echa.org.uk/timeline

More than just a list of dates the Timeline is an educational tool for the general reader but also created with a history undergraduate seeking to understand a particular period of Catholic history in mind.

Beginning with the arrival of Christianity in England and Wales and ending at the present day each of the significant moments in the Timeline feature an in-depth article.

Not fixed at the present time the Timeline will continually develop as more articles are added and as new academic research results in the further development or replacement of the existing articles.

Sources are identified for each of the articles that make up the Timeline and suggestions for further reading are offered.

The Timeline has been developed for the ECHA by Dr Margaret Turnham whose academic interest is Catholic history.

Pope Francis said in his letter "Renewal in the Study of Church History (21.11.24) that studying Church history is a way to preserve memory and build the future, as well as the best way to interpret the reality that surrounds us. He quotes from St Philip Neri that people "if they do not know history, they will eventually no longer know the faith."

These comments echo our vision and are what we are hoping to achieve with the Timeline project.
The Timeline is divided into five periods to enable ease of access:

- The early Medieval period AD 313-1066
- The later Medieval period 1066-1536
- The Reformation in England and Wales 1536-1559

- The Penal Times 1559-1850
- The Modern era 1850-2019

The period covered runs from AD 313 when Christianity was recognised as an official religion in the Roman Empire, swiftly followed by the first mention of the Church in England and Wales in the record of a group of bishops who attended the Council of Arles in France in AD314. It ends with the canonisation of St John Henry Newman

Day Conference and AGM

Saturday 9th November saw our Association gather in the bowels of the Portuguese Embassy. Before you start thinking about a possible diplomatic incident, let me clarify that the building in question was the home of the Portuguese ambassador in the 18th century. It is now the home of the church hall of Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory Catholic Church in Warwick Street, Soho. This little oasis from the bustle of nearby Regent Street has been the site of Catholic worship for 300 years. In 1724 the Portuguese Embassy chapel was built here. A provision of the Treaty of Utrecht meant that Catholics could legally attend Mass here, which they proceeded to do in large numbers. Discovering this Georgian gem had to wait however, as there was plenty to occupy the attention of members and friends beforehand.

Even finding the hall was a walk through the Catholic history of Central London. You pass a series of framed silken lists of previous chaplains dating back to the 18th century as you wander past the sacristy. Arriving in the entrance hall of the presbytery, you walk through an office and down a very steep set of back stairs. You then find yourself in a room named after a Vicar Apostolic. This proved an appropriate introduction to the first talk of the day, ***Secret Hiding Places During the Elizabethan Period*** with Paul Hodgetts. A visual journey of nooks, crannies and a secret lavatory, showed the lengths that people were prepared to go to in order to save the lives of their priests. Mr Hodgetts has built on the work of his late father, Michael Hodgetts and produced

a new edition of his work on priest holes, with a lavish collection of colour images to accompany the text. As many of the locations mentioned are not open to the public, the opportunity to hear about the construction and current state of these hiding places was most welcome.
As lunchtime arrived, many ECHA members availed themselves of Mass, celebrated according to the Ordinariate usage, in the church upstairs. Subsequent nourishment of a different sort was located, either in a nearby eatery, or in packed lunches consumed on the premises. There can't have been many sandwich shops that heard multiple discussions on English Catholic history that day, but the Pret opposite the church certainly did.
After a welcome social interlude, we reassembled to hear Monsignor Roderick Strange speak about ***The Conversion of Cardinal Newman***. Our speaker portrayed this as not one pivotal moment in Littlemore, but as a series of changes and spiritual developments throughout Newman's life. The young child who was taken to this chapel by his father, could never have imagined that this same building would house a reliquary bust containing a portion of his hair in the 21st century.
The slightly less moving business of the AGM itself brought our own story up to date. Our members were updated on our activities over the previous twelve months and had the opportunity to ask questions. Our committee was re-elected and Margaret Turnham unveiled the new Timeline feature of our website. A real scoop as it had only just appeared online.
It strikes me that Warwick Street is one of those places where you can almost hear the changing trajectory of history as Catholicism emerges after generations of persecution. Our speakers took us from the cloak and dagger church of the Elizabethan era, to the Second Spring of the 19th century. Our tour of the church would bring us right up to the present day, as we learnt how the church building is currently used by the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. All that remained was to say goodbye to friends old and new, as this attendee avoided being swept away by crowds of eager shoppers on the way to Oxford Circus.

Thank you

Lynne Hunter-Johnston has been a member of the ECHA for the best part of two decades, and as soon as she joined, she was taking an active role - organising successful visits to Tintern Abbey, Cornwall, Bath, the Forest of Dean, Wells and Woodchester. She took over from Val Anglin as Deputy Chairman in 2009 and has been Regional Co-ordinator for both Wales and the Southwest of England.

By 2010, the ECHA website was up and running with Lynne at the helm, and she has quietly and efficiently kept it running ever since, sending out messages to members via Mailchimp to alert them to updates on the website, and to ECHA events in the pipeline. After Covid, we started our Zoom talks and Lynne was uploading to the website every month and putting them onto YouTube.

On every committee, there is a tendency to discuss a subject at some length without actually coming to a conclusion. You need someone who will say – "What are we going to do? When are we going to do it? And who is going to do it?" That someone was Lynne, and she did it in the gentlest, most tactful way possible. Her wisdom, kindness and generosity will be greatly missed, and we wish her all the best for the future.

Richard Challoner 1691-1781

Early life

For the greater part of the C18th the leading figure of English Catholicism was Richard Challoner who served for forty years as Vicar Apostolic of the London District. He was born in 1691 just a few years before the execution in 1697 of Nicholas Postgate the last Catholic priest to be martyred. His father was a Protestant wine-cooper, who died early in Challoner's life after which, his mother took a job as housekeeper to the Catholic Gage family in Sussex. Whether or not she was a Catholic is unclear, but Challoner was thirteen before he was received into the church at Warkworth Northamptonshire, the home of the Catholic Holman family. Their chaplain was John Gother, a leading Catholic controversialist and writer. He taught the young Challoner Catholic Doctrine and helped prepare him for his entry into the seminary at Douai in 1705. It was twenty-years later that Challoner left Douai after being a student, a professor and finally Vice-President. Challoner arrived at Douai at an inauspicious period of its history, as it was enmeshed in accusations of Jansenism amongst its senior members, a controversy which dominated his first ten years there. He was so gifted that he completed the twelve-year preparation course in eight and in 1708 took the college oath that he would return to England to serve on the mission field when called to do so. He was ordained priest in 1716 at the age of twenty-five and graduated from the University of Douai in 1719. His success as a teacher lay in his gift of being able to enforce the spiritual realities of the doctrines he was teaching. The experience he gained at Douai helped him as bishop to adopt a practice of Cardinal Archbishop Charles Borromeo of Milan (died 1584) by hosting weekly conferences for the priests. These were designed to help them keep the habits of theological study and also provide a forum for discussion about issues of conscience that had arisen in the confessional.

In England

In 1730, Challoner received the long-awaited call to serve on the English mission and travelled to London where he served as a missioner until

1741. Though the Penal Laws were no longer enforced with any severity, it was still a difficult time for Catholic priests. Challoner, like most priests at this time, dressed as a layman and would celebrate Mass in obscure temporary chapels often above alehouses or other places where Catholics could meet without attracting attention. It should be noted however, that the choice of venue was more a sign of the impoverished and improvised nature of the London mission in areas away from the Embassy chapels and their respectable congregations.

The Georgian Catholic Church has been unfairly characterised as being in decline most notably by John Henry Newman in his Second Spring Address in1852, but there were, in fact signs of growth by the middle of the century. London itself had a Catholic population of around 20,000 and encompassed the whole gamut of society. The wealthy aristocrats worshipped at the Embassy chapels, particularly the Sardinian chapel, which was considered to be the equivalent of a Catholic cathedral. Its liturgy approached the Baroque splendour of post Tridentine worship with music that attracted non-Catholic visitors. Alongside the aristocrats was a middle-class bourgeoisie made up of professional people, merchants and tradesmen who were either born in London or found their way there from the shires or abroad. Finally, there was a working-class stream ranging from weavers and dock workers to the Irish poor particularly found in the East End areas of London living in Dickensian-type poverty. Mullet points out that by 1780 there were already 4000 Irish in Wapping and Bossy states the social profile of Georgian Metropolitan Catholicism laid the foundation of opportunities and challenges for a priestly apostolate in the urban Victorian Britain of the C19th.[1]

Challoner as Bishop

In 1741 Challoner was consecrated bishop of Debra i*n partibus fidelium*[2] and coadjutor to Bishop Petre, the Vicar Apostolic of the London District. Shortly after this, Bishop Petre retired to his family's estates leaving Challoner in charge of the District, which he took over formally

[1] Mullet, Michael Catholics in Britain and Ireland 1558-1829 (MacMillan 1998) 152ff Bossy, John, The English Catholic Community 1570-1850 (DLT 1975) 310;
[2] In partibus fidelium , which means in the regions of the infidels was used in a bishop's title after the name of a diocese conquered by a power of another faith.

in 1757 after the death of Petre. Challoner's first priority was a visitation of the district, the first methodical visitation of which there is any record. The district included ten counties, besides the Channel Islands and the British possessions in America--chiefly Maryland and Pennsylvania and some West Indian islands. Obviously, the foreign missions could not be visited, and even the home counties took nearly three years. An important part of the Visitation was administration of the sacrament of Confirmation, which had fallen into abeyance during the early stage of the Penal Age.

Challoner had problems with the Regular clergy who served on the Mission field, for they owed their allegiance to their Superior rather than the bishop. These problems were especially acute in relation to the Jesuit Order who were very independent minded and whom Challoner had treated with some suspicion since his time in Douai. One approach derived from ch XIV of the Council of Trent which placed delinquent members under episcopal control. Challoner was also worried about the quality of education students were receiving at the English College in Rome (the Venerabile) insisting that it was to be of the highest quality and in 1759 petitioned Rome to end the Venerabile's control by the Jesuits. A third problem lay in oversight of the Ambassadorial chapels as there were diplomatic exemptions to episcopal authority. Both the Portuguese and Bavarian embassies were served by Jesuit and Capuchin priests, which compounded the problems as they claimed they were autonomous and did not need episcopal permission to hear confessions. In 1753 Challoner and the other Vicars Apostolic won papal backing by means of the Papal Bull *Apostolicum Ministerium* which enabled them to overcome the challenges to their episcopal rule and confirmed the scope of a bishop's jurisdiction as set out in the documents of the Council of Trent.

Challoner had high expectations of his priests, which he himself led by example, and looked back to the disciplinarianism of the Council of Trent. Mention has already been made of the weekly conference, but alongside that the priests were set seven more tasks to fulfil in their work. Regarding their spiritual life, they were expected to spend part of each day in meditative prayer, attend an annual retreat and spend the evenings at home so people would know where to find them. Additionally, they were told to catechise children, hear confessions,

preach at every service with a congregation and minister to the poor *per gratis*. For his role as bishop, Challoner also looked to the Tridentine documents and strove to be apostolic, vigilant, diligent, resident and exemplarily austere. To sum up his episcopate it can be described as paternally solicitous and pastoral towards both his priests and his people.

But Challoner's importance in the Georgian church is much more than his purely episcopal duties for he was a born educator, and this is shown in two very different ways. First, although Penal Law forbade Catholic education, Challoner founded three schools in his District, one of which (St Edmund's Ware) is still operational. More importantly, he was an able writer, and his devotional works in particular were very approachable and long lived. In 1740, he produced what became one of the staple works for a Catholic to buy, namely, *The Garden of the Soul*. Leo Gooch's study of Yorkshire Clergy finances reveals that purchase of the book was a common expenditure by priests on arrival at a new mission.[3] Bishop William Ullathorne, in his autobiography reveals that his copy was in his sea chest when he left Scarborough to go to sea and that his father used it to conduct services for local Catholics in Scarborough when no priest was available to say Mass.[4] Bossy described it as achieving for the English Catholic a 'comprehensive devotional structure which maintained the continuity of tradition while it renewed and adapted its data into forms appropriate to the situation.'[5] Elsewhere, its many readers have been described as 'strong in the faith, somewhat reticent, solidly instructed and devout with a deep interior piety'.[6] Although undergoing many revisions, it never lost its basic premise based upon the Salesian spirituality of the way to holiness being found in the 'bits and pieces' of everyday life and living them with constant love and the awareness of God's presence. The manual provided a means for a Catholic to spend the day with God beginning with

[3] Leo Gooch, Paid at Sundry Times: Yorkshire Clergy Finances in the Eighteenth Century (Ampleforth 1997).

[4] A. Drane (ed.), The Autobiography of Archbishop Ullathorne with Selections from his Letters (London 1891) 13, 30.

[5] Bossy, English Catholic Community 364.

[6] [6]J.D. Crichton, 'Richard Challoner; Catechist and Spiritual Writer' Clergy Review, 66 (1981) 269

Morning Prayer and ending with Night Prayer. Instructions and devotions for the laity to perform whilst hearing Mass were provided as well as a translation of the Mass; within the 'Ordinary Actions of the day and the spirit with which they ought to be performed' the Catholic was encouraged to work hard: 'fly idleness as the mother of mischief…that the devil may never find you idle'.[7] Perhaps the major failing of the manual is that it was a manual for the educated. It required a depth of literacy that increasingly, as its share of the population grew, fewer Catholics in England possessed. Instead, they embraced the newer forms of devotions that were in essence of a more repetitive and responsorial nature. In this might lay the reason for the oft-cited criticism that Garden-of-the-Soul Catholics were devotionally deficient in the light of the Ultramontane Catholicism of the Victorian period.[8] Challoner's literary output was designed to promote an English Piety, there were translations of spiritual classics including from St Francis de Sales, whose theology greatly influenced Challoner as noted above. His 1753 book *Meditations for every day of the Year* was translated into both Italian and French and another work to which Challoner devoted much time and energy was preparing a revised version of the Douai Bible and Rheims New Testament. He excised obscure and literal translation of the Latin and any obsolete words and arranged the verses to be printed separately. The first edition of the New Testament appeared in 1749 and the Old Testament with a second edition of the New Testament was published in 1750. A later even more revised edition was published in 1753. Duffy claims that this work was designed to persuade English Catholics to read more scripture, but it failed.[9] He also prepared a version of the Catechism of Catholic Doctrine for his people to use.

When Challoner became Vicar Apostolic in 1758, he was nearly seventy years old and in ill health. He applied to Rome for his own coadjutor which was granted. The younger man was able to take over the Visitations while Challoner stayed in London and continued to write and administer the large district. In 1778, the first Catholic Relief Act was passed by Parliament which brought to an end the fear of priests

[7] Richard Challoner, The Garden of the Soul (Belfast 1860 edition) 182.
[8] Mary Heimann, Catholic Devotion in Victorian England 5-17.
[9] Duffy E., (Ed) Challoner and his Church (DLT 1981) 21

being imprisoned for saying Mass. However, it also fuelled violence two years later when the Gordon Riots broke out and the mob searched for Challoner with the intention of dragging him through the streets. Fortunately, Challoner was able to escape to Finchley where he remained for the week it took the riots to die down, but he never fully recovered from the shock. Six months later after a series of strokes, he died aged eighty-nine and was buried in the vault of a friend in Milton Berkshire. In 1946 his body was transferred to Westminster Cathedral.

Challoner was a man who displayed a somewhat narrowness of view; he had no interests outside religion and, unable to think imaginatively in a situation he would stick to the rules or ask for guidance from Rome. His daily routine never varied following the same path he laid down for the priests in his district. As Duffy says, to Challoner truth was old, only error was new.[10] Therefore, he preached the old religion to new hearers and embodied a priesthood taught by wise men. He translated the works of the saints into English for the benefit of the people. He brought nothing new to the recusant church but fulfilled its aspirations. To quote Duffy again, Challoner was 'a perfect model of a Missionary Priest'.[11]

Dr Margaret Turnham

The Priesthood Window

One of the great glories of pre-Reformation English churches was their stained-glass. However, it's not so well-remembered that 'new' Catholics, many of them converts, were among the driving forces behind the dazzling and innovative period of religious stained-glass in Britain post-1910. For them, the great art of the Middle Ages was the inspiration, but they also fused it with a quite modern, quite twentieth-century approach. In the textbooks, this period is dubbed the 'Later Arts & Crafts'.
It is therefore sad to report that a huge window from this period, perhaps even the culmination-work of this period, is rotting in

[10] Op cit 26
[11] Ibid.

an abandoned and derelict chapel, unseen and untended to. This is the 'Priesthood Window', one of the last pieces made by Margaret Agnes Rope. The situation is made more parlous because the chapel, Grade 2-listed though it is, has been put up for sale, as an 'investment opportunity'.

Sister Margaret

Margaret Agnes Rope, who became Sister Margaret Of The Mother Of God when she entered a Carmelite monastery in her forties, was born in 1882. She studied at Birmingham School of Art where she was much influenced by the theories of Christopher Whall, a convert like her, and a great stained-glass practitioner in his own right. Her immediate next move was to take a workshop in some 'women-friendly' studios in Fulham, London. She followed her career here for a dozen years before entering the Carmelite order - though she continued to work as a nun, just as prodigiously, even behind the walls of her enclosed convent. By the time she died in 1953, she had produced some sixty major windows for churches across the world, including the extraordinary West Window in Shrewsbury Catholic Cathedral. Around the early 2000s, after years of neglect, her standing had a boost with a surge of interest from art-historians. A major exhibition followed, a dedicated archive was set up, and leading American museums started to buy her works (even though the only available items were early, student pieces).

Up Holland

It is curious to think that Sister Margaret never saw her Priesthood Window in situ, constrained as she was by her vow to stay behind the walls of her order. Nevertheless, we know she must have very much wanted the commission because she had to enter a competition to get it.
The competition had been organised to celebrate the golden jubilee of St Joseph's Seminary at Up Holland in Lancashire, which had been built (in a giddy rush of blood to the head, one thinks) in the 1880s by the Catholic authorities. Set in its own 400-acre grounds, it looks less like a school than a palace, meant to rival the historic colleges of the old universities. To add to its grandeur, a large chapel was built on to it in

the 1920s by Pugin & Pugin – and it needed a west window. Sister Margaret's successful design was installed there in 1938. It is this same window which is in an endangered state today.

Priesthood

Nearly all Sister Margaret's windows contain an esoteric religious symbolism, reflecting elements within her own strong faith, and fed by the hours of reading and research she undertook. Academics spend many hours poring over the windows, seeking, and sometimes finding, clues to her meanings. (The scholar Roger Hall has written a lengthy monograph on the meanings within the window; it is available online on the official Margaret Rope website).

The Priesthood-Window is more overt in its message than most though, as it is meant to speak clearly to the young seminarians who would gather beneath its light for services. In brief summary, this very large window (which comprises over thirty separate 'lights' or panels) has four prominent figures in it: Melchizedek, the 'Modern Priest', Moses and the 'Bishop' – the former two representing Sacrifice, and the latter two representing Teaching. Tradition is emphasised by the presence of the two Old Testament figures. Within the small tracery panels are many other indications of the significance of priesthood. Professor Canon Hanrahan, the official historian of St Joseph's, called it "a meditation on sacramental theology".

It is a sad situation that the window is not better known but, actually, not surprising. Because it was inside a private institution, and because there was never a professional photograph of it, it remained virtually unknown to the wider world. Even the image that accompanies this article is a work of reconstruction: high-level photographic editing has created it, using blurred amateur photos and some of Sister Margaret's own vidimuses (which are the almost-final designs on paper).

Endangered

The tragedy is that the future of this window is in great doubt.

In the 1990s, St Joseph's had outlived its purpose. Its seminary functions had been moved elsewhere and its subsequent life as a school was marked with great difficulties. But what was to be done with such a huge Gothic-Revival of a place? Fortunately for the Church, the Catholic benefactor and entrepreneurAlbert Gubay stepped in to buy the whole 400-acre site. This should have seen the beginning of a new start, but wrangles over what constituted legitimate development meant that the entire site's buildings, almost immediately abandoned and closed off to the outside world, simply rotted over thirty years – including the chapel and its west window. As architectural experts know, stained-glass without maintenance, even that of the modern period, goes into steep decline after about eighty years. Photos of the exterior of the chapel (which is deemed too dangerous to be entered), show parts of the window bending and even snapping.

In 2016, the Victorian Society nominated St Joseph's as one of its top ten endangered buildings. St Joseph's has now slipped off the list, presumably because the society no longer consider it endangered, as they consider it to be worse than that, i.e. to be derelict, beyond hope.

The issue has now been exacerbated, not just with the death of Mr Gubay but with the news that the part of his business that he tasked to find a solution to the issues of the site gave up the unequal task in early 2024. It put the property, lock stock & barrel, up for sale. At the time of writing, it's believed a buyer has been found, though there are no details.

What to do?

One must assume that any new buyer must be more confident of getting a development proposal past the planning authorities than the current owners, which begs the question: what happens to this window?

There is no doubt of its significance, not just in the history of art but in the story of the century of Catholic Revival in England post-1850. A number of institutions, recognising the window's importance, have

already said they would take all the sections of the work into archival storage, to wait for the day when it be reconstructed elsewhere.

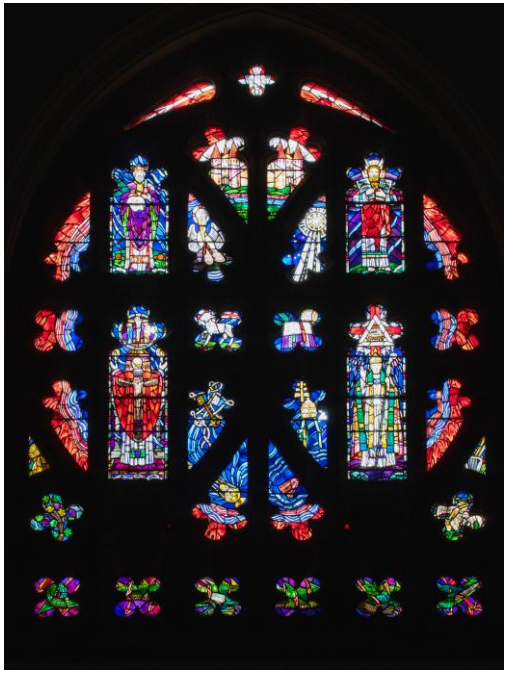
The issue at hand is therefore threefold. Will the new owners respond to a suggestion that they freely donate the window to an institution? (It should be noted that the current owners never did). Secondly, if not, can the new owners be persuaded that it is of utmost urgency that they carry out a full maintenance programme on it? And third, if a way forward were to be agreed, where will the money come from to pay for it?

However, the alternatives – irretrievable decay or destruction – are quite dreadful to contemplate.

Mark Stewart



St Joseph's College at Upholland



The priesthood window

The Margaret Rope Official Website (http://www.arthur.rope.clara.net/) would welcome any comments on this article

References

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St Joseph's up for sale:
https://www.loopnet.co.uk/Listing/Stoney-Brow-Skelmersdale/31453131/
https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/derwent-looks-to-offload-325-acres-in-lancashire/

St Thomas More and the Canterbury Connection

"Christ knitteth up all the whole matter with a very short substantial lesson: 'If you know these things, blessed shall you be if you do these things.' In which words our Saviour well declareth that the bliss of heaven will not be gotten by knowing of virtue but by the use and doing thereof. For as no man can come at Canterbury by the bare knowledge of the way thither if he will sit still at home, so by knowing the way to heaven, we can never the more come there but if we will walk therein."[12]

Perhaps, it was a deep sense of holiness that made Canterbury seem important in More's mind when writing those sentences. That ecclesiastical importance came from its being the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, added to which was its role as England's premier pilgrimage destination at the shrine of Thomas of Canterbury. The city was associated with St Augustine of Canterbury, St Mildred and St Alphege. The churches of St Dunstan's to the west, St Mildred's, which stood near the south gate of the city, and St Alphege's towards Northgate, were all in existence by the Conquest and were all dedicated to saints with strong local connexions, two archbishops and the founder of the religious house on the Isle of Thanet at Minster; Mildred's remains had been transferred to Canterbury in 1033. One might note that St Dunstan's, dedicated to an early man of learning drawn into the contentious politics of his time, became a fitting a place for the head of Thomas More to lie.

Sir Thomas More. Lord Chancellor of England, refused to acknowledge the king as Supreme Head of the Church of England, and the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. After refusing to

[12] More, T *Treatise upon the Passion*.

take the Oath of Supremacy. He opposed King Henry's separation from the Catholic Church.

The moment that More and his family had long feared came on 12 April 1534 in the form of a summons to appear at Lambeth Palace to swear the Oath of Succession, which recognised Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn's children as legitimate successors to the Crown and declared Princess Mary to be illegitimate. The next day, More stood before the King's commissioners, including Cromwell and Cranmer, and declared that although he was willing to accept Henry's new wife and the succession, he refused to swear the oath, the preamble to which also renounced papal power and affirmed the Royal Supremacy. More was arrested for his act of disloyalty to the King and imprisoned in the Tower along with John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester and active supporter of Katherine of Aragon, who had also refused to swear the Oath of Succession. His wife, Alice, visited him in the Tower of London and begged him to reconsider what he had done. It had no effect on Thomas More's resolve to go with his convictions and his resolve to oppose the Henry VIII's plans.

On 1 July 1535, Thomas More stood trial for treason, and he was condemned to death for 'maliciously denying the royal Supremacy'. Five days later, while Henry hunted at Reading, More was beheaded on Tower Hill, proclaiming himself 'the King's good servant but God's first'. He was beheaded at Tower Hill on 6 July 1535.

Thomas ascended the scaffold saying to his executioner, "I pray you, Mr Lieutenant, see me safe up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself." Then he desired all the people assembled to pray for him, and to bear witness with him, that he should then suffer death in and for the faith of the holy Catholic Church. Having done so, he knelt, and after his prayers turned to the executioner and with a cheerful smile said to him, "Pluck up thy spirits, man and be not afraid of thine office, my

neck is very short. Take heed thou shoot not awry for saving thine honesty." [13]And with those final words, the axe fell.

In 1521, Margaret married William Roper, a pupil of Thomas More's and who lodged with the family, Roper owned Well Hall in Eltham as well as property in St. Dunstan's, Canterbury of which the gateway still stands. His brother Christopher Roper owned the Lodge, now called Lynsted Park as well as another house in Lynsted which has vanished. The Ropers made their home at Well Hall. Margaret was a highly educated young lady as Thomas More had insisted that all his children, both male and female, be as learned as they could be in the circumstances. Famous people such as Erasmus, the humanist thinker, stayed with the More family and mealtimes were opportunities for prayer and earnest discussions on matters of faith or current affairs. Margaret More was educated in Latin, Greek and other areas of knowledge and learning. At the age of nineteen, she translated

More's hagiographer, Thomas Stapleton, writing in the 1580s, tells us that the head, by order of the king, was placed upon a stake on London Bridge, where it remained for nearly a month, until it had to be taken down to make room for other heads. The head would have been thrown into the river had not Margaret Roper, who had been watching carefully and waiting for the opportunity, bribed the executioner, whose office it was to remove the heads, and obtained possession of the sacred relic. There was no possibility of mistake, for she, with the help of others, had kept careful watch, and, moreover, there were signs so certain that anyone who had known him in life would have been able now to identify the head. Stapleton also says that up to her death in 1544, Margaret with her kept the head, preserved in spices. GK Chesterton said that there

[13] Roper, W, The Life and Times of Sir Thomas More, First Rate Publishers. William Roper was Thomas More's son in law and his account appears to be an accurate one.

was a commonly held belief in Lynsted, an estate owned by the Roper family that Margaret Roper, the daughter of Sir Thomas More, carried the head of her father to Lynsted in a bag on the way to Canterbury. We may never know for sure what happened. It might have been at that time or later after the death of her eldest daughter, Elizabeth, Lady Bray, in 1558 or on the death of her husband William the same year that it was placed in the Roper vault under the Chapel of St. Nicholas in St. Dunstan's, Canterbury.

What we do know though, is that their son, Thomas, had his mother's body reinterred there. The inscription Hic iacet ... Gulielmus Roper et Margareta uxor (here lie William Roper and Margaret his wife) can still be seen there. William, who survived her by thirty-three years, never remarried and honoured her memory by living a life devoted to learning, beneficence, and piety. The skull was set in a niche in the family vault. A skull 'in a leaden box' was seen in the vault of the chapel in 1715 and again in 1835 and was assumed to be his.

If it is indeed More's head, there is the curiosity that one of the family thought it appropriate to bury him in a church which was, by the date his head arrived, committed to the Elizabethan settlement which he would have reviled, even if it is in a private family chapel. Whatever happened to his head, Saint Thomas More remains a shining example of fidelity and courage, standing almost alone against the actions of an evil tyrant much as his namesake Thomas Becket had done in 1170. But every year on 6 July, the date of St Thomas More's execution, St Dunstan's church holds a commemorative civic service, which is attended by the Lord Mayor, local Catholic clergy and members of the legal profession, with an address by a scholar, lawyer or public figure. All agree that they can unite behind, and cherish, the memory of St Thomas More, a man of courage and integrity.



St Dunstan's seen from the Roper Chapel of the 1520s (image courtesy of Canterbury Historical and Archaeological Society)



The memorial to St Thomas More, St Dunstan's church, Canterbury

Courtesy of https://edwardpentin.co.uk/the-case-for-preserving-and-exposing-the-head-relic-of-st-thomas-more/

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Sherry L. Reames, *Saints' Legends in Medieval Sarum Breviaries: Catalogue and Studies*. York Medieval Press (Boydell & Brewer), 2021. xxi + 352 pp. £125.00

This book's high price calls for a synoptic review which will both provide a more detailed overview of its contents and provide the reader with some more detailed information.

The Use of Sarum (Salisbury) was the liturgical form used in most of England in the later Middle Ages, while the breviary gives most daily church services, the offices, apart from the Mass.

Reames has provided a thorough introduction to the frequent appearance of legends of the saints in Sarum breviaries, usually in the readings and prayers. Her detailed catalogue includes at least 103 manuscripts, from about 1300 to about 1500, and 12 early printed books. She takes as her main working text Procter & Wordsworth's 1879-86 edition of the 1531 printed folio breviary – well known and accessible despite not being always typical.

But the breviaries differ much from each other, partly because saints' lives vary more than the homily texts which the books can also provide. The breviaries were mostly written for use by the clergy, though one finds the occasional one written for a lay aristocrat. MS London, British Library Royal 2.A.XII is a likely example of that. So too is MS Cambridge, St John's College H.13, clearly compiled for Margaret of York (1446-1503), whose motto repeatedly appears in it. The condition of all the manuscripts much varies: so many have lost leaves, sometimes plundered for illuminations.

Reames provides an interesting chapter on 'Key findings on the Major Textual Families' (pp. 231-253). Also, such texts as MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library Dd.x.66 combine material from different families of manuscripts. Although many Sarum manuscripts were immediately out of date in terms of liturgical decrees, one can sometimes gain an idea of a manuscript's date by its calendar. The presence or absence of St Anne, included in fourteenth-century texts and often added to a manuscript later, is helpful here; so is the presence of proper,

that is, distinctive, readings for SS. David, Chad, Winefride and John of Beverley from the early fifteenth century.

Likewise, the occurrence of a proper office or prayer for a particular saint may indicate the area for which the text was destined or where it ended up. For instance, MS London, British Library Harley 2785 seems destined for East Anglia since it gives proper readings for St Margaret, a martyr widely venerated there. Again, texts with a proper office for St Erkenwald, Bishop of London from 675 to 693, can well be connected with that diocese. MS Edinburgh, University Library 27 has had later saints added to its calendar which show that it was used in or around Aberdeen.

Similarly, the occurrence of a full office, which usually had nine readings, and a later second set of nine proper readings, all for St Patrick, in MS Dublin, Trinity College 79 help signify an Irish connection.

Some other examples of saints from outside the Sarum calendar are MSS Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales 21604A, with numerous Irish saints and British virgin saints; Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland 21247, with proper texts for different Scottish saints, and Cambridge, Emmanuel College 64, with numerous Irish saints added to the calendar by different scribes. Most of all, Reames quotes 71 feasts of saints connected with Scotland, including offices for some, in a printed Aberdeen breviary of 1509-10. In practice, the readings were usually abbreviated or condensed.

Reames provides a section on the saints' days in different manuscripts which exceed the Sarum office's usual provisions (pp. 254-277); this underscores the major importance of such texts. This is mainly because the addition of proper offices for many non-Sarum saints meant the introduction of their legends to replace the readings from the Church Fathers, that is to say, theologians before about 800, given in the Commons of saints.

As used here, the term 'Commons' denotes the prayers and readings for use on feasts of saints of any one type, martyrs, holy women and so forth, which lack proper offices. For example, the 1516 and 1531 printed Sarum folio breviaries 'supply full complements of proper lessons' (p. 232), not only for almost all the saints which the Sarum calendar gained in the fifteenth century but also for some outside the Sarum Use.

Meanwhile, the addition of non-Sarum saints increased because, to save money, parishes sometimes bought secondhand books even if they were not Sarum books – one parish had monastic office books of which two-thirds of the contents were saints' legends. The process of addition meant further cross-fertilization from different traditions. It occurs in reverse in MS Nottingham, University Library 250, a book perhaps acquired secondhand by the church of Wollaton, Nottinghamshire, which began as a Sarum book but later gained additions from its use in the non-Sarum York diocese.

Not only will Reames' work serve as an excellent guide but, coming from one who previously 'had no formal training in the study of liturgical manuscripts' (p. ix), this is a *tour de force* indeed.

Fr Nicholas Paxton

The Monastic World by Andrew Jotischky. Yale University Press, p 410, £25

Life can be a tense experience. Anyone who takes even a cursory glance at religious history could be forgiven for seeing it primarily as a chronicle of spiritual aspirations colliding uncomfortably with the realities of human society. The word *monk* derives from the Greek word **μόνος** meaning "alone". As such, you could be forgiven for thinking that a book about the world of monks and nuns offers a narrative as introverted as the view through the grille in a convent parlour. Andrew Jotischky spends six chapters trying to do the exact opposite. His aim is to show monasteries and convents as places which develop both because of monastic tradition and the influences emanating from the rather turbulent world outside. Jotischky feels that monastic life can only be appreciated in the context of not just medieval England, but as a broader phenomenon which crosses cultural and even confessional boundaries. To this reviewer it seemed a very ambitious undertaking, bearing in mind that David Knowles tackled medieval English monasticism in a multi-volume work and James Clark produced a doorstopper of a book, just on the Dissolution. Jotischky tries to take us on a journey of personalities and geography from the beginning of monasticism to an epilogue that arrives in the 21st century.

For readers of this newsletter, there will be a familiar feel to some of the vignettes offered in this book. An English element is found both in the text and the accompanying images. Stops on this broadly chronological journey include Rievaulx Abbey and a house near the A303. But the overwhelming impression is of the wide range of this publication. Our readers may feel familiar with hearing from William of Malmesbury at his desk in Wiltshire, but less so with St Christodoulos of Patmos on his Aegean island. This book tries to give equal attention to both East and West and doesn't shy away from fundamental differences in outlook between Latin Catholic and Greek Orthodox monks. Reading this book, you will be encouraged to see the monastic world as a parallel one to the neighbouring world of wars, crusades and power politics. But rather than monasteries being a blissful counterweight to all of this, they are instead shown as benefiting, cultivating or fearing their secular neighbours. Verbal illustrations of this range from King John overstaying his welcome as a guest, to the sacking of the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem and the martyrdom of its Georgian superior.

There is much here to interest the student of English Catholic history and the depth of research is clear, especially on the rules for monastic behaviour and the fact that many of the photographs of monastic sites were taken by the author. One notable absence is that of any maps. As this book seeks to ground monasticism in a world which stretches from Somerset to Saidnaya, that would be an addition worth considering in any future edition.

William King

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2025, 7:30pm – Jade Scott *via Zoom*
Lady Anne Percy

MONDAY 10 MARCH 2025, 7:30pm *via Zoom*
Fr Terry Tastard-Florence Nightingale, the Nuns and the Crimean War

MONDAY 7 APRIL 2025, 7:30pm *via Zoom*
Diane Monier – Moore–Deo Gratias:
A History of the French Catholic Church in Jersey 1790-2007

MONDAY 12 MAY 2025,7:30pm *via Zoom*
Dr Joseph Shaw – The Latin Mass and the Intellectuals:
The Petitions to Save the Ancient Mass from 1966 to 2007

TUESDAY 10 JUNE 2025, 7:30pm *via Zoom*
Peter Harrison – Clifton Cathedral Story:
The Building and its People

TUESDAY 8 JULY 2025, 7:30pm *via Zoom*
Jean Maynard – East End Catholics:
A force to be reckoned with

MONDAY 11 AUGUST 2025, 7:30pm *via Zoom*
Dr James Kelly
'The Other Reformation: From an early modern border town to global Catholic reform'