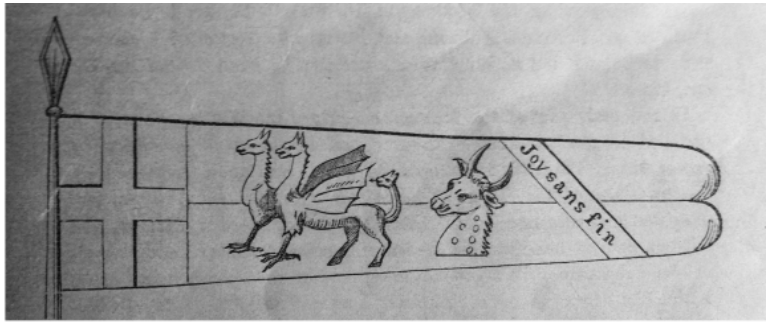

Northern Catholic History

William Widdrington, 1st Baron Widdrington (1610–1651)

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JOY SANS FIN: THE EARLY WIDDRINGTONS 1100-1700AD

Karenza Storey

> The Widdringtons rose to opulence and influence during the reign of the Norman and Plantagenet Kings. For seven centuries there was scarcely a transaction in war or peace in which some of them weren't concerned. Their prowess and virtues became interwoven with Northumbrian legend.[1]

The place-name Widdrington derives from Vuderintuna, i.e., Widuhere's named settlement. During the reign of Henry I (1100-1135), Widuhere and his kindred were displaced by a Norman-French family from Poitou who created their lineage from the manor of Widdrington. [2] Linguistic variations and even family signatures show a differentiation of spelling, and provide an almost tangible record of their speech patterns,

> All the language of the Northumbrians … is so sharp, piercing, rasping and unformed that we Southerners can rarely understand it … the reason for this is because they are near to foreigners and aliens who speak in strange ways, and also because the Kings of England have always lived far away from that country.[3]

For the purposes of this article the modern orthography, Widdrington, will be used.

John de Widdrington is first on record as holding, for one knight's fee (i.e. military service) the vill of Widdrington and Druridge in the parish of Woodhorn, and half of Burradon in the parish of Earsdon. He died in 1162 and his son, Bertram, was named as rightful heir by Walter, son of William fitz-Walter, baron of Whalton in the Umfraville lordship of Redesdale. Bertram encountered a problem the resolution of which could have sent the family reeling back into anonymity. His entitlement was challenged by a deponent, William Tasca of Druridge. The procedure in law, introduced into England by the Conqueror and known as the writ of right, sanctioned a trial by battle in the baron's court with batoons (cudgels). The belief was that Heaven would award victory to he who had justice on his side. Since it was a game of chance in which either combatant might lose his life, substitutes or 'champions' were permitted. The prowess of the substitute was dictated by economics. With great solemnity they swore on oath:

> Hear this ye judges – that I have neither eat, drank, nor have upon me neither bone, stone nor grass, nor any enchantment, sorcery, or witch-craft, whereby the power of the word of God might be diminished, or the devil's power increased, and that my appeal is true, so help me God, and his saints, and by this book. [4]

On the day appointed William Tasca and his henchman failed to turn up. The court judged in Bertram's favour. Thus, the family from Poitou stepped into the annals of English history.

Galfrid was next in line. A hint of the family's financial struggle (or lack of business acumen) comes with the reminder in 1219 that ten marks advanced to them by the King before leaving Poitou was still owing. Theirs was to be no meteoric rise to wealth and fame. Throughout the thirteenth century Galfrid's successors sought to enlarge the family's assets with insignificant purchases of land, often in a disputatious manner, and coming into conflict with the priories. That the family was not yet of prominence in Northumberland is evidenced by the absence of their seal on the Ragman Rolls, a document registering proof of loyalty to Edward I when he held his 'model parliament' at Berwick in 1296 having brutally slaughtered its residents and claimed himself overlord of Scotland. Edward's legacy was three centuries of almost continuous misery on the Border, gangs of thieves and desperadoes committing murder and robbery, and burning and destroying day and night. Large areas of tillage lay uncultivated. [5]

From the first apportionment of land by William the Conqueror, military service against the Scots seems to have been included in the tenure. As early as 1318 officials from the northern aristocracy were indentured as Wardens tasked with guarding and governing the Border across its three Marches: east, west and middle. Queen Elizabeth I would speak of the East March as 'the fairest jewel in her crown', whilst keeping its garrison at Berwick short of funds. Aided by soldiers from the lesser gentry, a Warden's power and responsibilities ranged wide. The Widdringtons were to rise up gradually through this hierarchy of paid offices.[6] Not until they married wealthy heiresses in the fourteenth century did they acquire more land, and the power and influence that went with it. The historian John Hodgson, writing in an era of industrial and mercantile expansion in the nineteenth century, is somewhat disparaging of the process by which the family gradually achieved success:

> Gratifying their desire to add field to field they did not condescend to gather the honey of trade with their own hands, but did not refuse to intermarry with families that earned their fortunes in the counting house.[7]

John de Widdrington made one such judicious marriage, in 1318, to Christiana, co-heiress of her father Adam de Swynburne. She inherited in 1327. The heir to this fortune was their son Gerard.

In 1341 Gerard (who was knighted by 1328) was granted by Edward III license to crenellate his two-storey hall-house against incursions by the Scots. He constructed a substantial tower with overhanging corner turrets

decorated with ornamental finials.[8] A debate in modern times is that given these hall-houses were really castles in name only, were such crenellations more about social aspirations than defence.[9] From its exposed position close to the north sea the tower made an imposing landmark, a fine example of feudal architecture given legendary significance by Walter Scott in his heroic poem *Marmion*, and by Bishop Thomas Percy in his ballad *The Hermit of Warkworth*.

Following the family tradition of adding field to field, Sir Gerard laid claim to the manor of Haukeslaw (Hauxley) which had belonged to the priory and convent of Tynemouth since the twelfth century. He threatened the prior's life, and seized and tortured some Augustinian friars. A 'trial by battle' was called. However, the aristocratic prior, with suitably aquiline nose, had friends in high places; the Lady Mary Percy announced her plan to deputise Sir Thomas Colville, a knight of great renown, to stand in for him. Sir Gerard, unlike Bertram his forebear, lost heart and withdrew from the contest.[10] He displayed greater courage at the battle of Neville's Cross near Durham in 1346 taking prisoner two of the Scots. But the true hero was John de Coupland who captured the Scots king David II. Flailing his gauntlet at his captor the king knocked out two of his teeth before having a couple of arrows removed from his head, and being incarcerated in the Tower. During his imprisonment the Borders experienced a brief decade of peace. [11]

Sir Gerard died without issue in 1362 and his brother Roger inherited. Roger married the heiress Elizabeth Acton, daughter of a prosperous Newcastle merchant. To his great sorrow Elizabeth and their son John predeceased him. When his second wife, Agnes, gave birth to a son, also baptised John, exuberant celebrations at Widdrington resulted in one drunken reveller sustaining a broken leg. Before the year was out Roger died, leaving the infant John as heir. John became an MP in 1404 – the first in the family. Despite his position of honour he was not above a bit of thieving and Parliament had cause to reprimand him for helping himself to a cargo of merchandise from a shipwreck off the Northumbrian coast, a punishable offence in March Law which had been first compiled in 1248. He somehow escaped execution for treason when convicted as a conspirator in the 'Southampton Plot' of 1415 to assassinate Henry V with armed support from Scotland. But his transgressions continued and he instigated a heated dispute with the Abbot of Newminster, the monks complaining about his rapacity as a landowner. Nonetheless he was granted a portable altar by Pope Martin. The Widdrington estates in Northumberland were now extensive and when Sir John died in 1443 at the age of seventy-two they extended into Tynedale and Cumberland. [12]

After John came Gerard then Roger. In 1438 Roger was appointed Lieutenant of Redesdale by Walter Taylelboys, and Constable of his castle at Harbottle,

> as well as for war as for peace abiding and dwelling in his proper person with his mesnie and household within the dungeon of the said castle.

The situation on the Borders was rapidly deteriorating. Harbottle, a major fortress, would play an increasingly significant role not only in defence, but in maintaining law and order against the thieves of Tynedale and Redesdale whose fast moving raids to acquire booty and wreak destruction were becoming a greater threat to peace than the Scots.[13]

Roger, who married Elizabeth Grey (daughter of Sir Thomas Grey, executed for his part in the Southampton Plot) died in 1451. Ralph, son of Roger and Elizabeth, married, circa 1480, Felicia Claxton, heiress to Dilston, Horden and Claxton.[14] In 1859, W. H. D. Longstaffe of the Society of Antiquaries reported the chance find by an elderly lady on the roadside at Washington, Co Durham of a finely decorated gold ring engraved with the motto JOYE SANZ FYN which was authenticated as belonging to Felicia's time. That motto, along with a studded bull's head and a double-headed dragon, embellished the standard of the Widdringtons as recorded in the Herald's Visitation of 1575. Longstaffe , tongue-in-cheek, offers this aside:

> put the matter as favourably as I may, my courage half fails me in suggesting the bare possibility that the motto of the Widdringtons (Joy sans fin) alluded to Felicia and her acres.[15]

In 1503 the family enjoyed a royal moment when Sir Ralph, regaled in splendid livery at the head of one hundred horse, escorted Princess Margaret Tudor between Alnwick and Berwick on her progress from London to Edinburgh for her marriage to the King of Scotland, James IV. Henry VII had high hopes of peace between the two kingdoms. Henry VIII had other ideas. Two years after the death of James IV at the battle of Flodden, 1513, King James' young widow, Margaret Tudor, unhappily remarried to the charming but scheming Earl of Angus, fled Scotland. She was eight months pregnant. Following a harrowing journey she gave birth to the Lady Margaret Douglas (future grandmother to James VI & I) in Harbottle Castle. The Warden, Lord Dacre, moaned about the expense and the inconvenience; he was a soldier not a nursemaid. [16]

Ralph died in 1504 to be succeeded by his son Henry who died in 1517. Henry's son, John, inherited. John's attributes were noted as being a good housekeeper and a true man, ready to serve the King with one hundred men. His defects were being self-willed and readily offended. As Deputy-

warden of the Middle March and Keeper of Harbottle Castle he warned, in 1538, that the castle, the chief strength of the Middle March, was just not habitable. No diplomat then, but something of a soldier. In 1549 he and others, under the Warden of the Middle March, 'laid fire to a town in the Merse, slew a monk, and hurt others with bowes and handgonnes'. His two marriages brought John seventeen children, and his maidservant two more.[17]

Chibburn, a house adjacent to the castle at Widdrington, which belonged in 1023 to the Knights Hospitallers of the Order of St John had become, in 1313, a Preceptory on the pilgrim route from Durham to Lindisfarne. After the dissolution of the monasteries John was granted, in 1553, the manor of Chibburn.[18] This particular grant raises a question as to his professed faith. Sir John added a Dower House to the old structure and his widow, Dame Agnes, moved there upon the death of her husband in 1571.The Widdrington women remain as cyphers up to this point, their credentials in the history books slanted towards fecundity and wealth. Agnes comes out of the shadows. No frump with regard to fashion, as her will testifies: she leaves to her eldest daughter, Jane, the best in her wardrobe and also a French howde. Anne Boleyn introduced the French hood to the English court as being more elegant and flattering than the angular English style. The gentlewomen of Scotland had long followed French fashion, and a Spanish traveller of the late fifteenth century, Pedro de Ayala, thought Scotswomen had the handsomest head-dresses in the world. Spending money on one's wife's appearance was an important border custom.[19]

Henry, the firstborn of Sir John's nineteen children, was appointed in 1580 Marshall and Deputy Governor of the garrison at Berwick; the Governor, Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, was cousin to Queen Elizabeth. Widdrington took up residence with his second wife, the seventeen-year-old Elizabeth Trevanion from Cornwall. Berwick had finally come under permanent English rule in 1482. Consequent upon Hunsdon's protracted absence at court and the queen's grudging refusal to meet the garrison's financial needs, relations within the garrison, and between the garrison and the town, deteriorated. Opprobrium was directed at Henry: 'A man utterly unable for that place he has allowed the garrison to grow so weak it could not possibly resist an invading army.' Widdrington sent a message of despair to London:

> The poor garrison at Berwick remayne of 2 years pay behynde … poor men have been on their knees crying out that they cannot have their daily sustenance ... For 6 years in the absence of the Warden, other officers and 40 servants all at court, I have born the burden and am unable to endure it any longer. We are short of 100 men.

Elizabeth and her advisors had come to regard Northumberland as a back-water.[20] Sir Henry exhibited mixed messages, a soldier capable of compassion and seemingly incapable of torture. Hunsdon, a tough, boisterous character more given to hanging than to hunting or hawking, issued Widdrington with stern advice:

> If a man will not confess the truth you may threaten him with the rack, if that will doe noe good you may use some other torment unto him, as mannickeling by the fingers …

More criticism came Henry's way with a rumour that he had taken to drinking, dicing and over-eating: 'a right epicure which has filled him with diseases and distempers – his body has been bedridden for three or four years.'[21] Unredressed bills (legal complaints) for slaughter, wounding, theft and burnings with which the Wardens' courts had to deal were mounting up: on the English side 197,000, and on the Scots side 41,000. Sent north to investigate, John Carey, son of Hunsdon, verified Henry's claims to ill health but refrained from diagnosing the cause. Not a man for the borders himself, unlike his youngest brother Sir Robert, he requested to return south as the problems in the north seemed insurmountable. His request was refused.[22]

The Widdringtons harboured many an exiled Scots reformist preacher. One such, James Melville, preached three times a week in Berwick and Lady Widdrington attended his sermons. Accusations led to the conclusion that the marshall and his wife had severed ties with the established church: 'In his religion he is an atheist seldom coming to church to hear sermons or prayer.' [23]

Henry doodled in the margins of his official correspondence and, following the herald's visitation of 1575, was given to appending JOY SANS FINE after his signature with the occasional drawing of a bull's head. In his will he spells his name 'Woddrington' followed by the monogram JSF. He instructs that he be buried in the church at Widdrington amongst his ancestors. He died without issue conveying generous bequests to his extended family. His nephew and heir, Henry, was to receive 100 marks per annum provided 'he use with all courtesy and kindness my loving wife, the lady Elizabeth allowing her to be possessed of Widdrington during her life.' His exotic wardrobe, one imagines long mothballed, included 'a dublitt and hose of tawnye sattan waved with gowld lace woth £.6.13.4d, gowld buttons' worth £7.14s, and 'a sattan cloke garded with velvet and gowld lace', £4. He also left a pair of virginals.[24]

The forthright and practical Lady Elizabeth Widdrington was no cipher. Accused of interfering in her husband's duties in Berwick she penned a

strong letter in her own defence to Burghley, Lord Treasurer, asserting she knew her place and never stepped beyond the domestic role. Present at the birth of James Melville's child she rapidly observed the infant was 'not lively', thrust her handkerchief into the fire and held the singed fabric to its nostrils. The baby drew breath and survived. She later tackled King James on the draconian treatment being meted out to the young Prince Charles by the royal doctors. Charles, Duke of York, a weak child with a speech impediment and lame ankles caused the king some irritation. The physicians advised his legs be encased in irons, and the string under his tongue be cut. She spent many patient years as his governess curing him from what, some years later, would be diagnosed as rickets.[25]

Having vacated Berwick she married, just three months later, Sir Robert Carey who came to live at Widdrington. Theirs was reputed to be a real love-match; in the face of criticism from the Queen he said: 'I married a gentlewoman more for her worth than her wealth'. Robert Carey was the youngest son of Lord Hunsdon whose mother Mary Boleyn, was sister to Queen Anne Boleyn. Hunsdon's own sister had married Sir Hugh Trevanion, Elizabeth's father. Elizabeth and Robert were cousins. One might compare the nature of her previous husband's distress with the frequent presence on the borders of the energetic, adventurous, charismatic Sir Robert who found the stirring world of horseback more to his liking than passing time in court circles. In 1603 Elizabeth, Robert, and nephew Henry, played host to King James at Widdrington during his progress through England for his coronation where

> he was received with all duty and affection: the house being plentifully supplied for his entertainment. Besides for scituation and pleasure it standes very delightful. [After resting] he was delighting himself with the pleasure of the parke, he suddenly beheld a number of deere neare the place. The game being so faire before him he could not forbear, but according to his wonted manor forth he went and slew two of them, which done, he returned with a good appetite to the house where he was most royally feasted and banketted that night.

Before resuming his journey the King bestowed knighthoods, one recipient being Henry of Widdrington. Henry was a figure of some note and notoriety in the military and political affairs of the Anglo-Scottish borders during the late Elizabethan-Jacobean era. He conducted unauthorised raids into Scotland, quarrelled with rival landowners, and refused to work with his superior, Lord Eure. [26]

Sir Henry married Mary Curwen, daughter of Sir Nicholas Curwen of a prominent Catholic recusant family from Cumbria but, like his father and his uncle, he appears to have conformed though he was accused of having

Catholic leanings. It was noted in 1607 that he no longer attended church regularly. In 1598 he became Deputy Warden of the Middle March and Keeper of Harbottle Castle, a fortress deemed 'a prison unfit for felons and a house unfit for anyone'. He complained to his cousin, Warden Robert Carey: 'I pray you to order the repair of Harbottle… it gives me nothing but hazard and charge and you best know its necessity.' Carey responded with a letter to Lord Burghley stating that unless it be repaired, for men and horse to lie in for defence, it was impossible for him to persuade local inhabitants to return to their long abandoned dwelling places and cultivate the wasted country. Henry was appointed to parliamentary select committees and became involved with investigations and proceedings, displaying a talent for political administration and he rose to become a senior member of the Commons. When King James began to sell baronetcies to men with incomes over £1000, regardless of the worth or ability of the purchaser, he incurred ill-will, including from Sir Henry who said in Parliament: 'it grieved him to see skipjacks prank before men whose ancestors have gained a place in the commonwealth by blood…' [27]

Earlier in his career, following acrimonious disputes with Warden Lord Eure who had had him imprisoned along with his brother Roger, Henry left Northumberland and in 1597 set sail for the Azores with the second earl of Essex. They aimed to intercept and rob the Spanish treasure fleet. The expedition failed but it proved to be a great Elizabethan adventure – and an almost tragedy. Whilst at anchor, Henry and some youthful crewmen planned a day excursion to the nearby island of Flores hoping to find exotic fruits and animals. But the beach they landed on was bare of interest. A storm blew up and they were stranded for five days. Close to starvation, John Taylor, a London wherryman, self-styled the 'Water Poet', ventured off and discovered a cave-like hovel with a stockpile of loaves which he shared around. Henry felt honour-bound to repay the poet for saving his life. In 1618 a chance encounter took place between the two at Burntisland on the Firth of Forth. Taylor wrote:

> I came across the noble knight Witherington who in requittal of a loaf of bread I had given him 2 and 20 years before, because I would have no gold or silver, gave me a bay mare.[28]

(Since King James' brief return in 1617, Scotland had curiosity value for English travellers. One of them, Ben Jonson, the literary star of his age, was met at Ogle by Henry who escorted him to Widdrington and took him out hunting.)

Henry died at Swinburne in 1623, his wife having predeceased him. He entrusted his brother, Roger of Cartington, with the tuition and upbringing of his five young daughters and son, the thirteen-year-old William, heir to Widdrington. The Government spent a year attempting to remove the

children from the care of this 'dangerous recusant'.[29] Roger, also a beneficiary of their Uncle Henry's will, received a legacy of £100 towards the maintenance of his study and library. Few of the gentry took any interest in learning and literature and only a few could write, even fewer could sign their names. Drawn to astronomy, theology, mathematics and architecture, he shared an interest in scholarship with Lord William Howard of Naworth, Earl of Morpeth. In 1599 Roger was bailiff and steward for the Regality of Hexham. A year later he took up office as assistant to Sir Robert Carey, Warden of the Middle March and married Mary Radcliffe of Dilston. The couple lived there until 1611 when they inherited Cartington. They moved into the old feudal tower, Roger carrying out extensive alterations and designing 'a complex and sophisticated later medieval hall house arguably of national rather than merely local significance.' [30]

Having witnessed the martyrdom of John Boste at Durham in 1594, Roger became a Catholic, a life-changing decision with challenging repercussions. To the annoyance and frustration of hostile Protestant clerics he remained stoical, intransigent, fearless and courageous, characteristics of many of his ancestors. 'He hath the brains of the Northumbrian serpent in his head ... and is a professed enemy to true religion', said Archdeacon William Morton, Vicar of Newcastle, who reported that the number of recusants in Northumberland had increased alarmingly and laid the blame at the door of Roger Widdrington. [31] After years of being vilified, hounded, exiled, placed under house arrest, and financially penalised he found himself, in 1625, a recusant convict awaiting the course of justice at the Court of the Star Chamber. He was released on bond and his case summarily dismissed due to the unreliability of the witnesses. Secretary Winwood, annoyed at not achieving a conviction, grudgingly remarked that Widdrington might be a Catholic but he was also a clever Catholic. [32]

Mary died around 1627 and in the summer of 1632 Roger, now aged sixty, married a thirty-year-old widow with a ten-year-old son: Rosamund Reveley of Newton Underwood (related to Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, who was a signatory to her marriage settlement). Riding out from Cartington the couple headed for secluded Cuthberthope, on the Scots side of the Border, to be married by a Jesuit priest – in the words of the late King James 'one of those venomed wasps and firebrands of sedition' whom he would banish from the kingdom. They rode back the same day. The couple's romantic, but clandestine, marriage resulted in a summons that Roger appear before the Court of High Commission at Durham. He failed to oblige.[33] Employed by Lord Howard de Walden as bailiff and steward of his estates in Redesdale, he purchased from him in 1635 the redundant castle at Harbottle with its long Widdrington connections. He

quarried its heroic stone to build a mansion in a secluded spot down-river. This Jacobean house remained unaltered for almost two centuries, yet neither pictorial nor documentary records have been discovered.[34]

The Earl of Clarendon, historian, statesman and royalist, reflected on 1630s England as a period 'which enjoyed the greatest calm – but the country was ripped apart by civil war – the State, figuratively and literally cut off its own head.' Whereas James had divided his opponents by making innovations gradually, Charles united them.[35] He attempted to impose the English prayer book on the Scottish liturgy in 1637 and the National Covenant, signed by forty thousand Presbyterian sympathisers was finalised in 1638, and the Covenanters crossed the border pillaging the homes of known Catholics. The Widdrington's peaceful idyll was shattered. They packed up their valuables and took them to Woolley, one of the Wentworth's manor houses in Yorkshire. In January 1641 Roger fell seriously ill. Rosamund penned a letter of despair to her brother, John, at Woolley:

> Dear brother … my husband is very weake and I doubt you will heare of his death earlong, we are daily putt in feares of the Scots coming in againe, ... Jesus send him health and me patience.
> Your truly affectionate sister
> Rosa: Widdringtun February

Robert Carey acknowledged Roger Widdrington as

> a courageous and disciplined soldier, a very fit man, an honest and discreet man, and as a borderer he hath not his fellow; his good services to me since I was placed there have been a great cause of the quiet of this country. [36]

William Widdrington was born in 1610 and upon reaching his majority he commanded the garrison at Berwick under his cousin Lord Ogle. He moved back to the family home at Swinburne to escape the recusant persecutions which plagued his Cartington relatives. What little evidence there is suggests he became a church papist. In 1629 he married Mary Thorold an heiress from Blankney in Lincolnshire. He was knighted in 1631 and elected to Parliament as MP for Northumberland in 1640. The House registered its distaste when he made reference to the Scots being 'invading rebels' (perhaps a subconscious throwback ingrained from boyhood). He retracted the statement, carefully acknowledging them as 'the King's subjects.' A year later he was involved in a skirmish with the Serjeant-at-Arms who mistakenly brought candles into the House, it growing dusk and the house still sitting. William took it upon himself to violently seize the candles and reprimand the Serjeant. This transgression of Parliament's formal procedures resulted in a week's imprisonment in the

Tower for contempt. At the start of the first Civil War in 1642 he was expelled from the House for raising arms in support of Charles I. The King rewarded his loyalty by creating him Baronet Widdrington of Widdrington. In 1643 he was elevated to the Peerage as Baron Widdrington of Blankney. The Earl of Clarendon, who presumably knew him, thought William one of

> the most goodly persons of that age, being near the head higher than most tall men, one of a rare and exalted kind who fought with distinguished bravery and zeal on the side of Charles I. [37]

Following the defeat of the Royalist army at the battle of Marston Moor near York in 1644, William fled to France with the Duke of Newcastle. Parliament declared him a traitor in 1648 and placed a death sentence on him. His estates were confiscated but his determined wife successfully reclaimed them for their eight sons and two daughters. William remained in exile in the Netherlands until 1650. He travelled to Scotland with the future Charles II and shortly afterwards became engaged in the Third Civil War. He received life-threatening injuries at the battle of Wigan Lane, 1651, and was taken prisoner. Colonel Robert Lilburne, that stout tempestuous soldier, had lined the lane's hedges with infantry and unsuspecting Royalists were met with a volley of musketry. Lilburne wrote to Cromwell:

> Wigan 15 August 1651 The Lord Witherington cannot live long.

It was not until twelve days later that his burial was recorded in the parish church at Wigan:

> August 27 1651, my Lord Witheringeton de Northumberland.[38]

He was aged forty-one. In September 2007 a gold ring, inset with a hexagonal sapphire and engraved with the motto JOYE SANZ FYN, was located by a metal detector just seven miles from Wigan.[39]

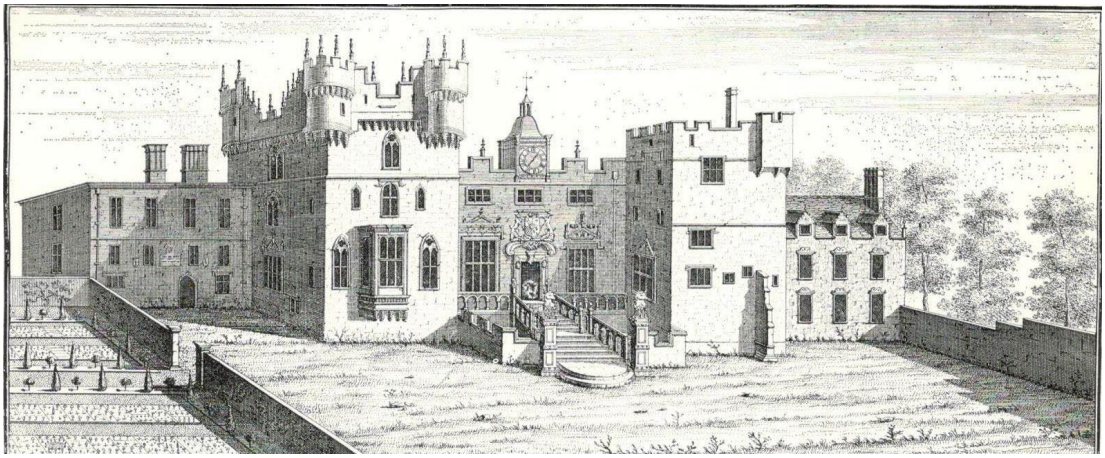
In 1654 William, second Baron Widdrington, aged twenty-three, married Elizabeth Bertie, aged twenty-four, heiress of wealthy Peregrine Bertie of Evedon, Lincolnshire. She became a Catholic. The couple had four sons and eight daughters and moved to Berwick where William was acting Governor. When he inherited Widdrington, the castle consisted of a north and a south tower with a connecting hall. At some date the hall had been rebuilt and heightened to provide that necessary Elizabethan status symbol, the long gallery. His attention focussed on the castle's entrance where he designed a majestic flight of stone steps with imposing piers, the balustrades sculpted with a bull's head. He added wings to the two towers, enclosed a forecourt, and laid out an elaborate south-facing walled garden in the latest Dutch style. This would be the ancestral home's finest hour. John Horsley, historian and Presbyterian minister, observed:

> The castle having been built at several times lacks true regularity and uniformity. But yet it has an agreeable situation and somewhat looks grand and significant.[40]

Lord Widdrington died in 1675:

> December 1675 My Lord Witherington brought on shore at ye Low lights this day and carried in a coach etc to Witherington, to be interd there. He died in London and was brought down in one of his Maties Catches.[41]

He was aged forty-four. His widow, Lady Elizabeth Widdrington, lived on for forty years; she died in 1715 aged eighty-three.[42]



Widdrington Castle, originally the 'Tower of Widdrington', c. 1341.
(Drawing by S & N Buck, 1728. Demolished.)

Notes & References

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[5] Hedley p. 94; D. D. Dixon, *Upper Coquetdale,* 1903, p.276; Coquetdale Community Archaeology *Newsletter*, March 2016

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[10] G. Neilson, Trial by Combat (1890) part V, pp.149-152.

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[12] Hedley, pp. 96-97.

[13] The Archaeological Practice Ltd. Newcastle University, 2004, *Historic Village Atlas, Harbottle*, p. 42

[14] Hedley, p. 98

[15] *Archaeologia Aeliana*, [*AA*] 2nd series, 1859, vol.111.

[16] Richardson, vol.1, p.179; K. Storey, 'Lady Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox, 1515-1578', *Tyne &Tweed* (Nov. 2009) vol. 63 pp. 9-16.

[17] *Historic Village Atlas,* p. 62; *Harbottle Castle, A Documentary Survey,* 1998, p. 65; Bain, p.138; Hedley, p. 99; J. Scott, *Berwick-upon-Tweed, A History of the Town,* 1888, p.129.

[18] *AA,* 3rd series, 1903, vol.1, no. 10.

[19] Fraser, p. 40, note 7; W. W. Tomlinson, *Life in Sixteenth Century Northumberland,* 1897, p. 71.

[20] Bain, 1580, 370; ibid, 30 Oct. 1590, 692; ibid, 19 April 1587, 605; S. J. Watts, *From Border to Middle Shire Northumberland 1586-1625,* 1975, p. 95.

[21] *AA* 4th series, 41, p.125; Hedley, p. 99; Scott, pp.172, 175-6.

[22] Bain, 18 April 1593, 824; ibid 452. 27April 1593. 826.

[23] Scott, pp.175, 178; Hedley, p. 99.

[24] Durham Wills, DPRI/I/1593/WII, 20 April 1593; Bain, 370, 30 Oct 1590, 692.

[25] D. L. W. Tough, *The Last Years of a Frontier,* 1928, p.33; Tomlinson, p.193; G.H. Powell, ed. *Memoirs of Robert Carey*, 1905, pp.167-8 (on-line); Hedley, p. 139.

[26] W.W. Tomlinson, *Comprehensive Guide to Northumberland,* 1888, p. 282; Hedley, p. 100; F. Graham, *The Castles of Northumberland,* (1976), p. 354.

[27] Fraser, p. 23; C. H. Hunter Blair, 'Harbottle Castle', *History of Berwickshire Naturalist's Club*, vol. xxviii, p. 224; *Harbottle Castle, A Documentary Survey*, p. 74. *History of Parliament:* Sir Henry Widdrington of Swinburne Castle, online.

[28] J. Taylor, *Pennyles Pilgrimage* (1618)

[29] *Proceedings in Parliament: House of Commons*, 6 March 1626, p. 207 (W. B. Bidwell)

[30] P. Ryder, *Cartington Castle, A Statement of Significance*, September 2010.

[31] *AA*, 3rd series, 1903, vol. 1, no. 10 p 84; Watts, p. 244; J. Nichol, *Life in Redesdale in Bygone Days,* 1914, pp. 20-21.

[32] J. A. Guy, 'The Court of Star Chamber', *Public Record Handbook* No. 21; House of Lords: *Main Papers, Supplementary,* HL/PO/JO/10/13/3 (1606).

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[34] Hedley, p. 108; *AA* 3rd series, viii, p.30.

[35] Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2013, p.1; J. D. Mackie, *A History of Scotland,* 1969, p. 204

[36] Northumberland Collections Service, NRO 1954/41-49, folder of material relating to Catholic recusants: Roger Widdrington, compiled by A. M. C. Forster.

[37] P. R. Newman, *The Royalist Army in Northern England 1642-45*, vol. 2, p.226; 'Verney's Notes of The Long Parliament', p. 91, online; Hodgson, pt. 2 vol. 2 pp. 226-7

[38] D. Sinclair, *A History of Wigan* (1883) vol. II.

[39] Cf. *Warrington Guardian*, 26 April 2008. The coincidence begs the question of how it came to be there. Could it be grave booty? It was sold to an anonymous bidder at Sotheby's in 2009 for £70,850 and has once again gone to ground.

[40] *Widdrington Castle*, Historic England List, No. 1014770; J. Horsley, 'Materials for the History of Northumberland, 1729-30' p.25' in *AA* 3rd series, 1903, vol.1, no. 10, p.83. Pevsner, on the other hand, describes it as 'more folly than house', cf., N. Pevsner, et al, *Northumberland*, (Buildings of England, 1957, rev. 1992) p. 630.

[41] A simple inscription on a stone slab above the Widdrington vaults, which were sealed in 1874 reads: 'Sophia 1668 – 1671 buried Widdrington church'. A book of Lady Elizabeth Widdrington's recipes and memoirs entitled *Elizabeth Bertie, her Booke* in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, (MS. Eng. Misc. d.436) shows that Sophia was a Widdrington: 'An account when the children of the Right Hon. William Lord Widd. by the Lady Elizabeth his wife was borne, being all baptised the eighth day: Bridget Nov 12 1654, William Jan 26 1655 [third baron, d. 1695], Mary April 20 1657, Elizabeth April 10 1658, Anne Sept 301659, James Jan 18 1661, Peregrine May 21 1663, Dorothy July 10 1665, Ellenor, Henry May 3 1668, Sophia 1668, Edward Jul 27 1671, Roger May 22 1673, Katherine May 5 1675.

[42] Hedley, p. 102; Tynemouth Parish Registers.

CATHOLICS IN ST OSWALD'S, DURHAM, IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A. I. Doyle & L. Gooch

At the turn of the eighteenth century, the city of Durham was regarded as something of a hot-bed of Catholic recusancy. On a visit in 1697, Celia Fiennes observed that there were 'many Papists in the town, popishly affected and daily increase'. In 1703 Robert Booth, Archdeacon of Durham, remarked that the Catholics were 'the most formidable of all the dissenters both for Quality and Great Estates'. The Jacobite Simon Frazer, Lord Lovat, came to Britain from St Germain that year to gather intelligence on support for the Stewart cause, and found Durham 'full of good Catholics of the gentry of the country, who were very faithful to the King his master.' On his return journey he stayed with 'the King's friends who confirmed what they had said before he went into Scotland'.[1] Not surprisingly, reports and comments of that sort coming to its notice made the national government very nervous. Two contemporary documents (hitherto unpublished) relating to St Oswald's allow us to assess this evidently alarming situation and the threat to church and state it might have represented from the principal parish of the cathedral city at the heart of this major Anglican diocese.[2]

In March 1705 the House of Lords ordered the Anglican parochial authorities to conduct a census to ascertain the extent of Catholicism and Jacobitism. [3] The power and influence of the Catholics was of greater interest than mere numbers or religious practice, for the census was entirely concerned with their 'qualities, estates and abodes' rather than with any arrangements for their spiritual care, hence there is no reference in the St Oswald's return to priests or chapels. There was, however, some anxiety that Papists might have had the presentation of Anglican livings in their gift, and information on that point was specifically required. The Vicar of Hurworth said that John Jenison 'pretends to an alternate right of presenting to this parsonage', but he was the only incumbent in the county to report having a Catholic patron, showing that this particular concern at least was unjustified. The full return from St Oswald's is as follows:

> *An account of ye Papists inhabiting in St. Oswald's Parish, Durham, together with their Qualities, etc.*
>
> *Imp. There is no Papist has any visible Estate within this Parish (above ye value of a House & a Garth) nor have they ye Presentations of any Livings, so far as I know or have heard.*
>
> *2ndly. These following Gentlemen have Estates in other Parishes, to ye value whereof I am a Stranger. Note, They & their families are all Papists.*

Mr. John Forcer, wife & family
Mr. John Lamb, wife & family
Mr. John Jenison, wife & family
Mr. Anth. Witham & family
Mr. Geo. Johnson, wife & one servt.

3rdly. The rest have no visible Estate any where yt I know of:

Mr. Wm. Salvin, Wife & Family
Mr. John Gerard, Wife & Servts.
Mr. John Seaton, Wife & Servt.
Mr. John Hodgson, Wife & Servt.
Mr. Loving, Painter & Wife
Wm. Douglas, Innkeeper, Wife & Family
John Bellamy, Mason & Wife
Thomas Thomson, Horserider & Wife
Henry Liddel, Barbr, Wife & Family
Oswald Comyn, an old man, Brother & Servt.
Wm. Kirkley Senr. Tayler & daughter
Clement Reah, Mason, Wife a Protestant
Henry Reah, mason & wife
John Palmer Senr. Mason, Wife a Protestant
Mrs Martindale, Wife or Widow, lately turned Papist
John Palmer Junr. Mason lately turned Protestants
Anne Palmer spinster do.
Wm. Kirkly Junr. Taylor do.

Pexall Forster Vic. St. Oswald.

The corresponding returns from St Mary le Bow, St Nicholas and St Giles list twenty-four Catholics in all. Taken with the St Oswald's list of some twenty families and servants, the Catholic population of the city probably numbered about one hundred. Around half of the heads of household are termed 'Mr' (but not 'Gent'), the rest are all clearly plebeian. The census thus showed that the Catholics of Durham could hardly be described as powerful or rebellious, but James Mickleton (the Younger), a diocesan official, wrote a report, probably to accompany the census returns from the county, in terms obviously calculated to raise alarm – in the capital if not in the castle on Palace Green – by drawing the attention of the authorities to the inroads made by the Catholic mission which he observed all around him.[4] After listing the chapels in the city parishes:

Mr Ra. Mare in Gillygate Durham. Mr Rivers ye priest there perverted
Tho Nicholson, Mr Markingdale & others lately
Mr Rowells in Durham & a School taught there.
Mr Pudsey in Durham
Jo Forcer Esqr House in Durham
Hen. Grey Esqr at Sunderland Bridge
Gerrard Salvin Esqr at Croxdale where 20 familys almost all ye

> inhabitants of that parish are lately perverted

he complained that ‘priests appear publickly’, that Catholic children are being sent abroad for their education, that considerable sums of money are being collected ‘for what ends are unknown’, and that there is

> not the least notice taken at ye Bps late visitation of these matters altho’ they are notorious & publick. These people are more countenanced & favoured publickly than ye protestant Dissenters. And Mr Archdeacon of Durham was publickly slighted and affronted for taking notice of them & endeavouring to Suppress ye Schools & Chappels & Discouraging their perverting of protestants.

Moreover,

> There is now a Building at Durham a noble Structure said to be for Madam Ratcliffe but really designed for a Nunnery (as at York) for entertainment of young Ladys of that perswasion.

The cautionary reference was to the Bar Convent, at Micklegate Bar, a well-known convent-school founded some twenty years earlier. The suggestion that Lady Mary Radcliffe had similar ambitions for Durham was not altogether implausible given that some of her great-aunts, aunts and sisters had entered the religious life, but the building was never anything other than a private residence. (Lady Mary was not listed in 1705 because her new house was not completed until the following year.)

Mickleton’s main purpose was to show that within a mere fifteen years of the revolution not the slightest notice was being taken of the penal laws by either Catholic or Protestant, apparently running counter to Bishop Nathaniel Crewe’s recent visitation. There was, however, sufficient ambiguity about the policy of the Jacobite-inclined bishop to embolden the Catholics to bank on his disinclination to insist on a rigorous pursuit of a religious minority with which he had some sympathy. In any case, numerically and socially, the Catholics formed an insignificant part of the population, and that being so, they were not constrained from practising their religion openly even, as Mickleton indignantly sought to make out, brazenly. It comes with little surprise that in 1710 Luigi da Cugna could report to Cardinal Paoluci that the only penal laws in operation were those on double taxation and the tests. Otherwise[5]

> as regards the exercise of their religion itself, [the Catholics] enjoy complete freedom. There is no person of distinction who wishes and is able to keep a chaplain, either in the city or in their country house who does not have one...

*

After being a student at Durham School and Cambridge, Thomas Rud (1667/8-1733) was headmaster of Newcastle Grammar School from 1699 to 1709 and then of Durham School before being made Vicar of St Oswald's in 1711 on the presentation of the Dean and Chapter of Durham, and he retained tenure when they also appointed him as their Librarian in 1716, a post he held until his appointment as Vicar of Northallerton in 1726. In due course, this 'scholar and exemplary cataloguer', completed a fresh catalogue of the mediaeval manuscripts, excelling any previously done in England.[6]

At Bishop Crewe's diocesan visitation in 1713, Rud compiled a list of Catholics living in St Oswald's and copied it into a notebook which has other entries in his hand from the beginning of his incumbency of the parish.[7] The list shows that, although they were unsure about one or two individuals, he and the churchwardens knew the identities of the Catholic occupants of the households and their attachments street by street. (The Forcers appear elsewhere in the notebook in a list of tithes due and paid.) Interestingly, while he could not identify the Jesuit missioner – Thomas Pearson – at Mrs Pudsey's in 44-45 Old Elvet (in recent numbering) he could name the two secular priests, the Yorkshireman Anthony Jackson and the Durham-born Augustine Jenison, the latter having lately come to the city to succeed Ferdinando Ashmall (*ob*. April 1712). Rud seems to imply that Jenison practised in the parish in addition to his chaplaincy duties but it is unclear whether he meant by that to prompt the bishop to take restraining action as Mickleton had done earlier. Rud wrote:

> *an account of the Popish Dissenters in the parish of St Oswald in Durham as I presented them at the Bishops Visitation, August 28th. 1713.*
>
> in Old Elvet.
>
> Mrs Rowel and two boarders. Mrs Thornton & two servants
> the Lady Mary Ratcliff, and servants
> Mrs Pudsey, a boarder, and servant.
> Mrs Hixon. Mr Bulmer, servant, and two daughters
> Mrs Bellasis, & her servant.
> James Dawson and wife. Malt-maker.
> John Bellamy & wife. Mason. qu.
> Mr Coxon, wife & 2 servants
> Mrs Johnson Qu. Mr Bains, wife & servant
> Christ. Donkin & wife
> Will. Mason, a poor criple Ralph Trotter & wife qu. Laborer
> Mr Forcer, Wife, three children of Age, three four servants.
> Dr Brown, Wife & servant. physician
> Mr Metcalf, wife, son, & servant. Writingmaster
> Mrs Tod, & niece

in New Elvet

Widow Moihil and two servants. In-keeper
Geo .Hob's wife Cooper
Mrs Smith
Nic. Hercules and wife Taylor
Jn Hercules and wife Taylor
Andrew Morton's wife and daughter. Wheel-wright
Mr Tourville. John Harrowmond's wife.
Mrs Greenwell & servant and a kinsman.
Sarah Hercules poor
Tho. Thomson & wife. Horse-rider
Elis. Winter servant to Ant. Watson
Geo. Bowes, wife and servant. In-keeper
An. Bentley. poor
Mrs Errington Wid.
Rob. Hall, wife and mother. Carter
Mrs Errington, a sojourner with John Fisher

in Church-Streat

Wm Kirkly taylor
Matth. Hunter. Wheel wright
Ralph Bilton, Wheel-wright, & wife
Mr Mich. Johnson, wife, 3 daughters, & two servants
Wid. Lamb, poor.
John Palmer, mason

in Hall-garth streat

Mrs Swale wid
Jane Polson, a poor Widow.
Hen. Rea, wife, two sons & two daughters
El. Gainforth wife to Will. Gainforth Mason.
Mr Witham, wife and servant.

out of the town

at the Stone-bridge house
John Thomson wife, and two servants.

priests

Mr Jennison with the Lady Mary Ratcliff.
Mrs Pudsy
Mr Jackson - - Mrs Johnson
Mr Jennison often in the parish

Rud's list showed that the Durham Catholics still formed a small though well-founded group of unremarkable people of no particular social let alone martial significance. That probably accounted for the continuing relaxed attitude to recusancy in the cathedral city, and this was but two years before

the Jacobite Rising. Indeed, when the Rising did break out in October 1715 at Dilston in Hexhamshire, the Durham Catholics were conspicuously absent regardless of their previously expressed fervour for the Stewart cause and despite the potentially influential presence in Old Elvet of the Lady Mary Radcliffe, aunt of the third Earl of Derwentwater who led the Rising. Their lack of aggression could have been predicted by the Anglican clergy and local officials though it could not have been seen other than as a betrayal by the exiled Stewarts.[8]

In any event, whatever the fears of some diocesan functionaries, such as Mickleton, no real danger was to be apprehended from the small recusant community of Durham; this was certainly no place to look for Jacobite counter-revolutionaries or radical papists, and the Catholics of the city were left to follow their unassuming and non-threatening lives. Daniel Defoe, who once remarked that 'an Englishman hates Popery, not knowing whether it is a man or a horse,' visited the city in 1724 and noted that 'notwithstanding the residence of so many dignified protestant clergy' Durham was

> full of Catholics who live peaceably and disturb nobody, and nobody them. For we being there on a holiday, saw them going as publicly to Mass as the Dissenters did on other days to their meeting-houses.[9]

At about the same time, a French visitor observed that the Catholics lived 'in perfect peace and security, with every facility for celebrating their religion publicly'.[10]

Notes & References

[1] C. Fiennes, *Through England on a Side-Saddle in the Time of William and Mary* (1888), pp. 173–182; C.S. Terry, *The Chevalier de St George* (1901) p. 31, 40; C.E. Whiting, *Nathaniel Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham (1674-1721) and his Diocese* (1940) p. 362.

[2] The fullest extent of the then parish extended south to Croxdale and north to Harberhouse, cf., R. Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham,* (1816-1840) vol IV, pt 2: *Topographical History of the City and Suburbs of Durham,* pp. 72-158; *including the Chapelry of St Margaret with Harberhouse,* pp. 147/8; *Victoria County History of Durham*, vol III, pp. 144 ff.

[3] *Journals of the House of Lords 1705–1709* (1774), XVII, pp. 685/686, 720/721. A transcript made by the late Revd Fr W.V. Smith has been used here. Citations from the returns are identified by reference to the parish.

[4] Durham University Library, Mickleton and Spearman Manuscripts, No. 91, f. 135.

[5] E. N. Williams, *The Eighteenth Century Constitution, 1688–1815* (1960), p. 340

[6] W. P. Courtney, 'Rud, Thomas (1667/8–1733)', rev. A. I. Doyle, *ODNB* (2004)*;* S. Hingley, 'A Well-run Library in the Early Eighteenth Century: Durham Cathedral Library under Thomas Rud, 1717-1725', *Library & Information History* 32/1-2 (April 2016) pp. 8-19. (Dr Hingley acknowledged Dr Doyle's advice when writing her article.)

[7] Durham County Record Office, D/X/952/1 ff. [6r-7r]. The significance of the two columns is unclear, but it may be to indicate opposite sides of the street. We are most grateful to Miss E. M. Rainey for checking the transcript of this document and for other help.

[8] Lady Mary and Jenison, her chaplain, were questioned after the Rising but released immediately without charge; Jenison, perhaps scared off, resigned in 1716 and left the city to be replaced by the Northumbrian Luke Gardiner (*al.* Carnaby and Mitford). She died on 3 March 1725/6 and the chaplaincy closed; Gardiner moved to the Maire's house and chapel in Gilesgate.

[9] D. Defoe, *Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1734), pp. 9, 658.

[10] M. V. Muyden, *A Foreign View of England in 1725–1729* (1995), p. 203, quoting a letter of M. de Saussure.

St Oswald's, Durham, in the 1830s before
Ignatius Bonomi's restoration

THE KIRK HOUSE OF EGTON

Nicholas Rhea

Dom Bede Camm, in his *Forgotten Shrines* (1910) was one of the first to write at length about Blessed Nicholas Postgate of Egton near Whitby. In doing so he helped to create a substantial part of a myth that survives to this day. In his chapter 'A Martyr of the Yorkshire Moors' he wrote 'Nicholas Postgate was born at Kirkdale House in the parish of Egton near Whitby'. He continued: 'Kirkdale, or Kirk House, our martyr's birthplace, stood near Egton Bridge'. He followed with 'A writer describes it in the year 1838 as now literally a cattle-shed', adding 'It must have been but a poor cottage in spite of its high-sounding name'. This suggests that Camm did not realise that Kirkdale was not a dwelling but a small valley within Egton parish a few miles from Egton Bridge. It may be noted that there are three other Kirkdales in the district of the North York Moors: near Ebberston, Scarborough; near Ellerburn, Pickering; and near Kirkbymoorside None can be linked to the martyr although they all feature ancient churches formerly known as kirks. Egton's old kirk of St Hilda dates from the thirteenth century and is now Egton Mortuary Chapel.

One of Kirkdale's fields was named Kirkdale Banks and near its summit stood a farm known as West Banks, now part of the Mulgrave estate. Kirkdale Banks is important in the life of Nicholas Postgate because there is ample evidence to show that it was the location of the Postgate family home even though the house may not have borne a name – few houses did so at that time, they were identified by their occupants and/or location. There was no Kirkdale in or near Brigg Holme, the former name of Egton Bridge, but there was a derelict Kirk House. So how did Bede Camm come to believe that Nicholas was born at Egton Bridge, several miles away? He may have been misled because in his time the Egton Kirkdale did not feature on Ordnance Survey maps (and indeed does not feature today) and, lacking detailed local knowledge, he is unlikely to have discovered its existence. But Kirkdale Banks is clearly shown on a hand-drawn map of The Lordship of Egton dated 1636 (although the map is difficult to reproduce with clarity).[1]

One explanation is that the name of Egton's Kirkdale had already been altered to Church Dale, the name it now bears and which appears on modern Ordnance Survey maps. It is possible that the change of name occurred during the initial map-making survey in the early nineteenth century; in other words, this noted Catholic Kirkdale may have been deliberately erased from official maps. Whether this was due to anti-Catholic prejudice is a matter of conjecture but such feeling did persist around that time. Air-brushing the name of this renowned focus of Catholic

resistance against the established church may have been a political manoeuvre. When I checked with Ordnance Survey, I was told that all records had been destroyed by an enemy bomb in World War II. This does not, however, answer the next question: why did Camm believe Nicholas Postgate had been born at Kirk House, Egton Bridge? As stated earlier, a Kirk House *did* exist when the area was called Bridge Holm or Brigg Holm. Only yards away was another location called Holm Wath where a ford (*wath* in its Old Danish origins) crossed the River Esk. *Kirk* features widely in the North Riding dialect, meaning a church or chapel. It stems from the Old Norse (*kirkja)* and Old English *(circa* – with a 'hard' *c)* It is still widely used in Scotland and it features in northern English place-names. Similarly, *wath* appears in some place-names such as Briggswath.

The name Egton bridge, with a lower-case *b*, initially referred to the bridge itself, not to a hamlet or settlement. It is uncertain when the locality was formally named Egton Bridge – the railway station of c.1857 described it only as Egton without reference to a bridge. As late as 1928 it was known as Bridge Holm even if local people referred to it as Egton Bridge. Bridge Holm is a derivation of Brigg Holme or Brig-Holm, its fourteenth-century name.[2]

References to a bridge at Brigg Holme over the Esk indicate the importance of the crossing for pilgrims and wayfarers. It was one of a few crossings of the river and it was this ancient bridge with its accompanying chapel that brought a succession of priests to Brigg Holm and probably contributed to its reputation as a devout village dating to the fourteenth century or earlier. Grosmont Priory, founded c.1205, little over a mile down river, may have been decisive in the creation of the bridge since many monastic establishments regarded building bridges as prayerful acts. It allowed regular communications from Grosmont Priory to Byland Abbey, Rievaulx Abbey, Rosedale Priory, Whitby Abbey and others in York and elsewhere. A chapel built as either part of the bridge or nearby also served as home for the resident priest, some having extra space to accommodate pilgrims and other travellers. Bridge chapels existed at Catterick, Grosmont, Helmsley, Whitby, York, probably Beckhole, and further afield at Bradford, Rotherham, Wakefield and beyond. It was the duty of the resident priest to celebrate Mass daily but also to collect tolls from all travellers, the income being used to pay for the priest's upkeep, to maintain and repair the bridge, or to replace it after severe damage.[3]

Both bridge and chapel suffered regularly from heavy floods and the chapel probably ended its active life during the Edwardine Visitations (1547-53) when ancient churches and chapels were ransacked, many being rendered dangerous and unusable. For many years afterwards the disused Egton bridge chapel was little more than a ruin, eventually becoming a

source of dressed stones ideal for recycling in new buildings and there can be no doubt that that was what happened. Over the years, the dwindling pile was shown to local children and visitors to the area as all that remained of Fr Postgate's birthplace.

The writer 'J.W.' who described it as 'literally a cattle shed' quoted by Camm may have been the Whitby freelance, John Watkins (1808-58) but I have not located the source of the quotation. The stones were featured by Ella Pontefract and Marie Hartley visited Egton Bridge following the disastrous floods of 1930/1 when they commented on the number of stones littering the nearby tea-gardens in their *Yorkshire Tour* (1939). It is also likely that the chapel (in a better state of repair) makes an appearance in the painting of Egton Bridge's three chapels (1800), the work of Fr Thomas Talbot, a priest of Egton Bridge. A little building with a chimney can be seen near the bridge and it may be the Kirk House. (The picture is held in Middlesbrough Diocesan archives.)

Because the chapel served as both a home and a chapel/church it was known as the Kirk House – a description rather than a name. That term is still used in Scotland to denote the home of a clergyman which is either attached to or near a church or chapel. Even now, references to the Egton bridge chapel appear in the literature featuring Fr Postgate where it is generally described as a house and his birthplace but recorded as a pile of stones. Another account has

> There was a bridge at Holm Wath and a chapel on it previous to the year 1400, also a chapel at Grosmont Bridge and a third, I believe, at Beckhole. These chapels would be dedicated to St Anthony, though all record of them is lost. The modern survival of the bridge at Holm Wath is Egton bridge which did not get its name before the 16th century. It was, of course, the old packhorse road to Rosedale Abbey, thence to Pickering and York.[4]

It is highly likely this bridge chapel was a ruin around the time of Fr Postgate's birth in which case we can dismiss it as his true birthplace.

Beyond all doubt, and in spite of local tradition, there is ample evidence to show that he was born at the family home in Kirkdale, the small valley to the west of Egton. At that time, the old church of St Hilda at the head of Kirkdale stood atop Kirk Cliff, surrounded by Kirk Fields, Kirkdale Intakes and other indications of its location including a churchyard known as a kirkgarth from the Danish *kirkegaard.* Today, addresses and locations featured in the recusant returns for Egton Parish are prominent in the former Kirkdale: Westonby, Shortwaite, West Banks and Egton Banks with Horse Mire Head, Limber Hill, Grosmont and Egton nearby. Known formerly as 'districts', each area had its own pew in St Hilda's chapel, the

then parish church for Egton within the parish of Lyth. The whereabouts of those pews is unknown.

Other sources can be cited in support of identifying Kirkdale Banks as the home and birthplace of Nicholas Postgate. West Banks features in the 1604, 1611 and 1614 Recusant Returns for Egton Parish: in 1604, Jane Postgate of Kirkdale, 'widowe'; in 1611 the widowed Margaret Postgate's address is shown as West Banks along with the eighteen-year-old Anne Postgate, an employee. Taken together, the recusant returns and the map of 1636, which depicts three buildings as small black marks on Kirkdale Banks, is probably the only surviving evidence of the Postgate family home alongside those of their recusant neighbours, the Whites and Smithsons. Kirkdale as a whole returned a remarkably high number of recusants for such a remote area – 130 in the Return of 1614. Fr D. Quinlan wrote that: Nicholas Postgate's 'mother is definitely identified as Margaret by the conveyance of a farm or small-holding which she worked at Kirkdale Banckes (*sic*) in 1620'. Quinlan gives no indication of the whereabouts of Kirkdale Banks but does not suggest it was at Egton Bridge. Fr William Storey writes: 'Nicholas Postgate's father was apparently the son of William Postgate of Kirkdale.' He adds that 'Father Postgate was born in 1596 at Kirkdale House in the parish of Egton' but (in deference to Camm) he adds that the house was *probably* near the bridge. Clearly he did not realise its true location but, of course, Kirkdale Banks was the site of the family home.

Camm refers to 'William Postgate of Kirkdale' who taught children. William, Nicholas' grandfather, was a retired farmer so it is likely that he had farmed the family small-holding at Kirkdale Banks, handing it on to his son James whilst continuing to live there in retirement and teach. James continued to live there following his marriage to Margaret Watson; he died in 1602/3 but his widow and sons continued to live there. Margaret later inherited the small-holding which she "worked". When she died in 1624 aged around forty-four or five, it was inherited by her eldest son, Matthew. It is not known what happened to it afterwards. At the time of his father's death, Nicholas was about three years old with two older brothers, Matthew and William. G.W. Boddy writes: 'Nicholas Postgate … was born in 1599, son of James and Margaret Postgate of Kirkdale Banks, Egton Bridge.' (This despite the error of believing Kirkdale Banks was at Egton Bridge.) Margaret Urquhart states: 'James Postgate, the father of Nicholas Postgate, lived at Kirkdale Banks, Egton. In fact, he died there when Nicholas was an infant'.[5]

So did the Postgates *actually* live at West Banks Farm which stood – and still stands – at the top of Kirkdale Banks to the west of Egton? The field once known as Kirkdale Banks slopes down from West Banks Farm to

form the shoreline of Stonegate Beck where it enters the River Esk near Rake Farm, Glaisdale. On Ordnance Survey map OL27, West Banks Farm is close to MR 783066. And West Banks Farm has a Glaisdale postcode. I have yet to find anyone who claims Nicholas Postgate was born at Glaisdale!

Notes and References

[1] North is at the foot unlike modern maps where north is at the top. The map is at North Yorkshire County Record Office, Northallerton, reference ZW(M) 1/5: MIC 1293. Nicholas Postgate would be around thirty-six years old when the map was produced and serving as chaplain to the Hungates at Saxton near Tadcaster.

[2] J. E. Morris, *The North Riding of Yorkshire* (1906) refers to Egton Bridge not as a village but as a station on the Stokesley to Whitby Railway Line. It is referred to as Bridge Holme in *Place Names of the North Riding,* (English Place-Name Society, 1928)

[3] J.J. Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages* (1889); W. Andrews, *Old Church Lore* (1891)

[4] www.blackburnkitchingancestory/home/heartsofoak/contents/ts270611

[5] D. Quinlan, *The Father Postgate Story,* (*Whitby Gazette*, 1967); W. Storey, *Ven. Nicholas Postgate* (CTS 1928); G.W. Boddy, 'Players of Interludes in North Yorkshire in the Early 17th Century', (*North Yorkshire County Record Office Publications* No.7, Journal No.3, 1976) p. 123; M. Urquhart, 'Was Christopher Simpson a Jesuit?' *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society,* No 21, 1992.

‘A MAN OF DEEDS RATHER THAN WORDS’: WALTER LEE (1872-1945)

Kevin Kennair

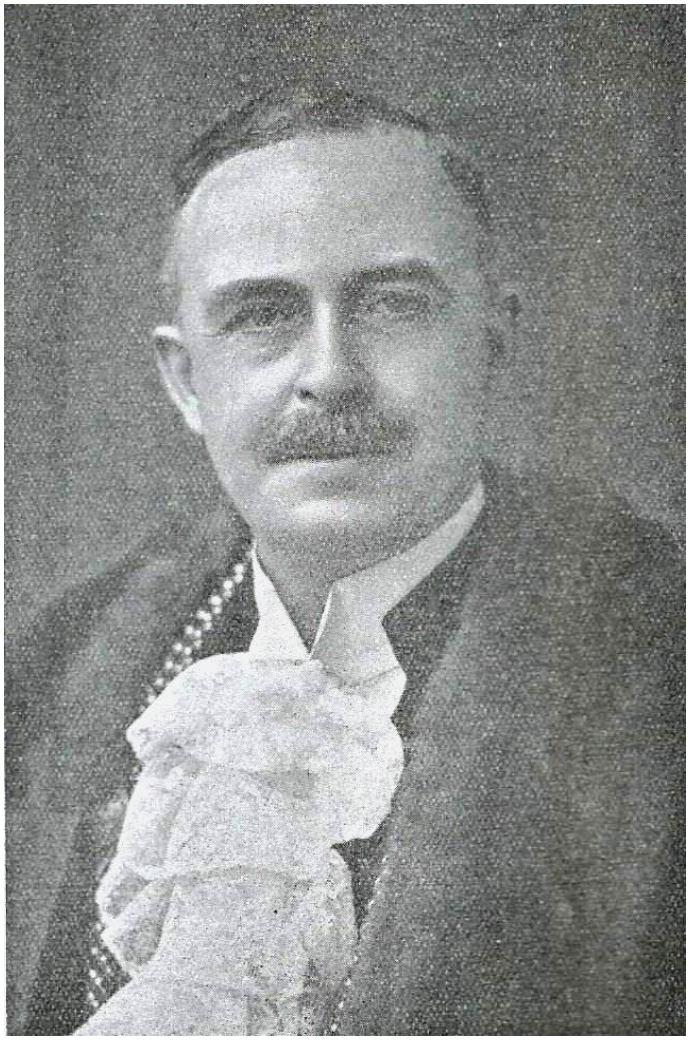
In the aftermath of the Great War, in addition to the enormous loss of life, vast areas across Europe were left devastated. The discarded paraphernalia of war had to be removed before the blighted land could be returned to agricultural and industrial production. Homes, schools, churches, business and civic premises needed to be restored or rebuilt. The basic infrastructure to supply mains gas, electricity, clean water and sanitation was an urgent priority. The displaced inhabitants began to return, determined to re-establish their communities. The enormity of the task stretched resources to the limit.

In spite of the complex difficulties facing local authorities in Britain: lack of housing, poor health, rising prices and unemployment, it was suggested that British towns could give some support to the French and Belgian people torn by war. A meeting was arranged at the Mansion House in London to which mayors and senior civic officials were invited. Representatives from forty towns and cities attended and agreed to give financial assistance to needy areas. On 30 June 1920 the British League of Help was inaugurated to co-ordinate various projects.

Among those at the Mansion House meeting was Walter Lee, Lord Mayor of Newcastle (left). The *Newcastle-upon-Tyne Official Blue Book, 1920*, a compendium of municipal and social information, included a brief biography of him. A Novocastrian, he was born in 1872 and was educated in the city; he married Mary Ann Roche at St Dominic’s in 1895. The family lived at 2 Queen’s Road and later at Deneholme, Clayton Road, Jesmond. He carried on an old-established business as a Ship’s Purveyor from Lee’s Buildings, 14 Sandgate on the Quayside. In the early twentieth century Newcastle was a bustling port with major shipyards, armament and engineering factories and vast quantities of coal were exported through the Tyne. As a purveyor, he provided essential supplies and equipment for a wide range of vessels operating on the river. In addition to being a J.P. he was a Director of the Newcastle Permanent Building Society. His wife Mary Ann was an active member of the Board of Guardians, administering relief to the poor; she also became a magistrate. On 20 December 1904 he was elected to the City Council for the St Nicholas Ward and

> three years later he was chosen by his colleagues to fill the ancient and important office of Sheriff of the city. In an arduous year he lent new dignity to the Shrievalty.

(His term of office was distinguished by a royal visit.) In 1910 he was one of the founder members of Newcastle 5 Catenian Circle – the tenth to be formed by the Association. He was Lord Mayor of Newcastle 1919-20 and 1924-25.



Lee proposed that Newcastle should ‘adopt’ the town of Arras. His choice was based primarily on the spirit of peace building and friendship but, like Newcastle, it was a commercial centre and shopping town surrounded by mining villages, factories and farms. The fact that hundreds of north eastern families had so many men buried in that vicinity also gave rise to deep feelings of shared loss. He made it clear to the City Council that the idea of adoption did not imply that the municipality of Arras was unable to cope, or that the extension of financial help would continue for an indefinite length of time. He organised a small delegation to visit Arras and assess the situation at first hand. He felt this might reassure those who still had any lingering reservations about the proposed plan. They crossed the Channel from Folkestone to Boulogne on 18 August 1920. On board at the same time was the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, who praised them for their admirable initiative. On arrival in Paris the deputation was met by

Monsieur Lamba, Secretary to the Association France-Grande Bretagne. He took them to meet the British Consul General who arranged a briefing session at the Ministry of the Liberated Regions. The aims and objectives of the visit were discussed in a positive and encouraging manner.

On Friday 20 August, accompanied by Monsieur Lamba, the group set out for Arras. They travelled through countryside wrecked by war and visited Senlis – the nearest point to Paris that the German forces managed to reach, and the railway junction in the Forest of Compiegne, where the Armistice was signed. They then made a detour to Peronne, La Boiselle and Bapaume, remembering the Tyneside Battalions decimated in the Battle of the Somme (1916). In Albert they viewed the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Brebières. The statue of Mary and the infant Jesus, designed by sculptor Albert Roze and known as the *Golden Virgin,* atop the Basilica, had been hit by a shell on 15 January, 1915, and it had slumped to a near-horizontal position, and the church was dubbed 'the basilica of the Leaning Virgin' thereafter. The statue survived until further shelling in 1918 destroyed the tower. A number of legends surrounding the statue became current among German, French, and British soldiers: the British said that whoever made the statue fall would lose the war, whilst the Germans thought the opposite. The Leaning Virgin became an especially familiar image to the thousands of British soldiers who fought at the Battle of the Somme, many of whom passed through Albert, which lay three miles from the front lines.

After staying overnight in Amiens, the party reached Arras, capital of the Pas-de-Calais Department. Arras was one of the finest towns in northern France, renowned for its tapestries in the Middle Ages and its restrained Flemish-style buildings. Prior to the war it had a population of twenty-five thousand, but by late 1919 fewer than fifteen hundred citizens remained. The Grand Place, the Cathedral and Bell Tower, the Abbey of St. Vaast, the ornate Town Hall and over five thousand houses and homes, many dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had been obliterated. In 1920 the town looked like a large building site, with heaps of rubble in every corner but the number of inhabitants had increased dramatically to forty-eight thousand. This was largely due to an influx of workers, and the arrival of families from the surrounding villages, many of which had been so comprehensively destroyed as to be considered not worth rebuilding. This situation posed overwhelming problems for the Municipal Council of Arras. The Bureau de Bienfaisance, which relied on voluntary contributions, could hardly cope with even the basic needs of so many claimants, so Arras welcomed with open arms the promise of help offered by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle. In the discussions with municipal officials all aspects of practical assistance were covered, from

administrative procedure to the need for clothing, bedding, furniture and tools.

The arrival of the Newcastle deputation coincided with the Arras Festival, being held for the first time since 1913. Walter Lee and his party were given places of honour alongside the civic and military authorities. A military band led the way to the Cemetery of Faubourg d'Amiens. Flowers were laid on the graves of French and British soldiers. Lord Mayor Lee placed garlands on or near those of men from the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Durham Light Infantry. In his address at the cemetery he stated that

> no difficulty should separate us. In the presence of these ruins and before these crosses we feel ourselves to be indissolubly united to you.

Returning from his fact-finding mission to France, Walter Lee sounded out his Catenian friends and colleagues. They guaranteed to give him substantial financial support. Funds would also be raised by voluntary donations and collections across the city and county of Newcastle. On Friday 10 September, 1920, he presented his report to the City Council. He concluded by proposing that the adoption of Arras would be in keeping with the dignity of Newcastle, and that its citizens would rise to the occasion. He added that no additional expense would fall on city ratepayers. The motion was carried unanimously. Of all the forty towns and cities in the British League of Help, Newcastle raised the largest contribution in relief funds – over £12,000. In current terms the figure could be worth at least ten times that amount.

Before he left Arras, the Lord Mayor invited representatives to visit Newcastle. The Mayor of Arras M. Leroy, the former Mayor M. Minelle, the Chairman of the French National Union for ex-servicemen, M. Dalattre, L'Abbe Foulon, representing the Bishop of Arras, and several members of the Municipal Council, duly arrived. They were made welcome and given guided tours around the region's scenic and historical sites. Several courtesy visits were undertaken, especially to local schools. Civic hospitality was extended with a Reception and Formal Dinner in the Banqueting Hall at Jesmond Dene. During the course of the evening Walter Lee presented the Mayor of Arras with a bound volume listing the names of Newcastle citizens who fell during the War. The support and financial intervention from Newcastle was received with deep gratitude in Arras.

Over the following years close contact was maintained as the reconstruction progressed. The rebuilding actually lasted until 1934. In recognition of his achievement and the generosity of the city, Walter Lee was awarded France's highest decoration, the Chevalier de La Legion d'Honneur. It was extremely rare for a foreign civilian to receive such an

acknowledgement from the President of the French Republic. The wearing of a decoration awarded by a foreign government required permission of the Crown. The Royal Warrant was duly granted. Walter was overwhelmed and humbled on receiving such a distinctive honour. He promised to wear the medal in dedication to the brave men and women who gave their lives for the peace of the world.

Mary Ann died on 2 December, 1940, and Walter Lee on 31 October, 1945. Both are buried in Ashburton Catholic Cemetery, Gosforth. He was a true Catholic gentleman and a loyal Catenian. The writer in the *Blue Book, 1920*, had captured Sir Walter's character when he wrote

> He has devoted himself with energy and thought to the problems arising for consideration by the Corporation Committees and is known to his fellow councillors as a man of deeds rather than words.

Sources:

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The Journal 18 and 26 March 2010.

THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM IN THE NORTH-EAST 1906-2016

The Community*

The Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom was founded by the French priest Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort (1673–1716), a noted preacher and educator of poor children, and his co-founder Marie Louise Trichet, who was running the General Hospital in Poitiers and who became the first member of the Order as Sr Marie Louise of Jesus. Montfort told the first sisters, 'Call yourselves Daughters of Wisdom, for the teaching of children and the care of the poor.' The Congregation lives a spirituality rooted in biblical wisdom. Today they serve on five continents, especially among disadvantaged people. The Sisters (formerly known in the north east as the Sisters of La Sagesse) have been a presence in the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle for approximately 110 years. From humble beginnings in a single community in Gateshead to three communities at their height in Newcastle, Ushaw, and Seahouses, their ministries have varied from education in Newcastle to domestic care in Ushaw. What follows is a brief chronology of their presence in the region.

Gateshead

In December 1905 Fr Joseph Davidson, a Redemptorist priest in Sunderland, gave a charity sermon in Liverpool and, having met some of the Daughters of Wisdom there, he invited the Congregation to send some Sisters to work in Gateshead. Sr St Augustin, Provincial, visited Gateshead and was welcomed by Fr Joseph Newsham, parish priest of St Joseph's, and she agreed to send Sisters when suitable accommodation was found. On 1 June 1906, with the approval of the bishop, Thomas W. Wilkinson, Sr Maurice du Sacre Coeur and Sr Veronique de St Jean moved into Summerfield, a small house on the Roman Road (now known as Durham Road). By November of that year the community had increased by six, one of whom was the newly professed Sr Roger de la Croix, remembered still by many past pupils. All of the early Sisters would have been French nationals and for many years those who were from Great Britain and Ireland would have taken French names, having taken their vows in France. It was only in later years that English names would have been used or kept.

The Sisters had been invited to work both in the parish school as catechists, and to help in various activities. They opened two schools, one private and one parochial. The archives record:

> The children are good. Some of working class, with less income and with homes less well furnished. We have 10 boarders who

> scarcely cover the costs of their keep. The rest are supported by charity as they pay very little towards their expenses.
>
> French and music lessons help our finances. We see little hope of expanding the boarding school but other non-remunerative works make life worthwhile. Two sisters are sacristans in our parish church of St Joseph and also in All Saints, the chapel of ease.

But quite apart from financial difficulties the house was not really suitable for a school. By the end of the first year a search was begun for larger premises. Eventually a new property, Ferndene (also in the parish of St. Joseph), was rented on a five-year lease and the community moved in on New Year's Day 1907. The school they started there grew to over eighty pupils by 1911. There were then ten Sisters in the community, among them was a young Sr Jeanne Marie de La Sagesse. But, when the lease expired and as the grounds were unsuitable for development, the Sisters once again began to search for a larger property.

Newcastle

Both Fr Thomas Reilly of St Charles, Gosforth, and Fr Joseph Aloysius Johnson of Holy Name, Jesmond, invited the Sisters to their parishes and Jesmond was chosen because of the potential for development. The community leased 68 Jesmond Road for a month while Fr Johnson negotiated the purchase of North Jesmond House and on 31 December 1911 the Sisters entered their new convent and opened a school for girls on 15 February 1912 with nineteen pupils on the register and Sr Jeanne Marie de La Sagesse as headmistress. The Sisters gradually added to the curriculum and the number of pupils increased. World War I brought many Belgian refugees to the town and their children were cared for at the convent. Added to this, two Sisters were assigned to replace two night school teachers in Gateshead who had been conscripted. They travelled by tram to teach French, not returning until late. When blackouts and other difficulties meant there were no trams, they walked.

By 1918 there were eleven Sisters in the community, two lay teachers and 170 pupils in the school. As the school and community numbers increased, the decision was taken in 1921 to buy the whole estate and construction began to build school buildings separate from the convent. By 1925 the school had grown to 232 pupils and expansion continued on the grounds. The school was granted official recognition in 1938.

Coldstream

At the outbreak of World II, the Ministry of Education advised the Sisters to evacuate the children to a safer place in the countryside. In September of 1939, 315 children were sent to the Ursuline Sisters at Berwick-upon-Tweed, but when the area began to be used by troops to

practice manoeuvres, Lees House, Coldstream was rented as alternative accommodation. This finally became a holiday home for both Sisters and pupils. The Jesmond properties in the meantime were used as a first-aid post, an incendiary station, and an emergency feeding post.

Newcastle

In 1946, Jesmond Towers, the adjacent property to the school was purchased and the Sisters took possession on 20 July 1947, the day that Louis Marie de Montfort, the founder of the Order, was canonised. The building was officially opened and the secondary part of the school was transferred to The Towers on 15 June 1948. In December that year, the first school building was given over to the Junior School. Pupils numbered 424 day-scholars and 326 boarders. By 1959 there were over one thousand pupils, and in 1960 a Nursery block was constructed.

In 1963 a house of studies was opened at Bermersyde Drive, allowing newly professed Sisters to take courses at local colleges. As the number of Sisters increased, the house next door was purchased and the community flourished until 1972. From here we look to one of our historical publications, *Wisdom's Way* (2011), for an explanation of the ensuing years:

> In 1971 the Newcastle Education Authority switched to a comprehensive system of education, but after many problems, the School retained its status as a single sex school. In 1974 preparations were begun to form the School as a self-supporting Trust and by September it became a Limited Company. In 1975 the first lay head teach of the Junior School was appointed, and by 1988 the Senior School also appointed a lay head teacher. From September 2002 boys were admitted to the Junior Section of the School.

In 2001 the La Sagesse school was closed but Bishop Hugh Lindsay asked the Sisters to undertake other work in the diocese. They began to work with the diocesan social and education departments and the Diocesan Rescue Society. Sisters trained as nurses and midwives and served in local hospitals and others continued as teachers in diocesan schools. The community at Jesmond closed in 2007 and the site was sold in 2009. Two Sisters still live in Benton, Newcastle.

Seahouses:

In 1963 Lees House in Coldstream was replaced as the holiday home by Shoreston Hall, Seahouses which was initially rented. In 1964 the Sisters were able to purchase the property and Sr Louise Anastasie and Sr Joseph de St. Anne went to live there permanently. In 1970 they were joined by Sr.

Jesmond Towers. Built in stages in the 19th century and bought by Charles & Anne Mitchell (ship-builder) in 1869. Sold to the Congregation in 1912.

Then and now - Sisters at recreation: at the seaside and Durham Castle

Madeleine de la Resurrection and by 1973 Seahouses became a fully established community with its own superior. Five more Sisters: Sr Antoine Marie, Sr Mary Christopher, Sr Louise-Marie de Montfort, Sr Marie Theresa de Montfort and Sr. Elizabeth Gray joined the community, which was mostly made up of retired Sisters. It also functioned as a retreat centre for Sisters from other communities.

Wisdom's Way tells us that the Sisters were involved in ecumenical activities in the area, training catechists and in 1987 assisted with Scripture courses. The community was formally closed in 1997. Many Sisters are buried in the Seahouses cemetery.

Ushaw College, Durham:

In 1958 the President of Ushaw College, Mgr. Paul Grant, was looking for Sisters to be responsible for the domestic management of the College. He wrote initially to 73 religious congregations and eventually the Provincial of the Daughters of Wisdom decided to send four Sisters: Sr Joseph de St Anne, Sr Georges de St Anne, Sr Brigide Marie and Sr Olympie de Jesus to form a community, replacing the Sisters of St John of God. The new arrivals faced the daunting charge of over thirty domestic staff, four hundred students, and thirty-two professors. They were able, however, to participate in the various liturgical ceremonies of the College. In 1963 a nursing Sister joined the community to work in the school infirmary. The Sisters cared for the younger boys until 1972, at which time the hierarchy of England and Wales decided to retain only the Senior Seminary at Ushaw.

Two events in the way of life of the Daughters of Wisdom had an impact on the College staff and students. Firstly, on 2 February 1974 the Sisters' renewal of Vows were celebrated during High Mass in St Cuthbert's Chapel and, secondly, in 1980 the final profession of two Sisters was made in the presence of the Mother General and Provincial, with more than thirty priests concelebrating the Mass. In 1983 the Sisters celebrated twenty-five years of service to the College. By 1985, however, the lack of Sisters able to cope with the physically demanding work required, caused the community to close.

*Contributed by the Congregation's archivist Kirsten Mulgrew with additional material from an article by Sr Shelagh Docherty published in *Northern Cross* June 2015.

A PILOT, A PRIEST, A FOOTBALLER & A MAYOR: SOME MEMBERS OF THE O'CONNOR FAMILY OF JARROW

T. Swales

This is a short account of the lives of David and Hugh O'Connor, two Jarrow lads who distinguished themselves in the First World War, and of their father Terence who, after the war, played a prominent part in the history of the town. Shortly after war broke out, David, the older brother, completed his grammar school studies at Ushaw College. He did not wait for the enlistment of church students to be clarified but immediately volunteered with thoughts of duty, king and country. With a few other 'S. Cuthberti' students he joined the Reserve Battalion of the Tyneside Irish, officially the 30th Northumberland Fusiliers. Like thousands of other young men he was sent to France. He survived many over-the-top charges and after one of them he was promoted to sergeant on the battlefield. In 1917, he was shot in the leg and foot, the latter being the more serious wound which troubled him a lot. However the injury ensured his survival. For the remainder of the war this brave soldier was based at Bisley training new recruits.

Meanwhile, his brother, Hugh, was too young to volunteer at the beginning of the war. Eventually he proceeded to King's College Medical School but not for long. Whether it was patriotism or his harum-scarum nature, and much to the chagrin of his father, he lied about his age in order to join the Royal Flying Corps to become a fighter pilot. In those days aircraft were in shorter supply than men and when Hugh crashed a plane the inevitable Inquiry ensued, but he talked himself out of trouble, his forte, and lived to fly again. When the war ended he returned to medical school with the financial help of his new wife, a nurse called Mary O'Neill. She is reported to be the first woman in Jarrow to speed down the main thoroughfare on a motorbike. The couple did not settle in Jarrow but moved to North Wales where Dr Hugh set up a medical practice in Holywell. During the Second World War he served as a Surgeon Commander. They continued to live in Flintshire after the war until their deaths in the early eighties. Mary and Hugh left no surviving children.

When the 1914-1918 War ended, David returned to Ushaw to continue his studies in philosophy and theology and he was ordained priest on 29 June 1924. His expectation and indeed his hope, after seeing so many deaths of comrades and so much suffering of the injured and their families, was to support people in a local parish but the diocese had other plans for the newly ordained priest. He was needed back in the College to be a professor of Classics, not his choice, which he was to read at Cambridge

during the next few years. His loyalty was tested but in 1928 he returned to the seminary in Durham. His own great love was music and he had a fine singing voice. It is reported that his students loved him. He was set for a long, successful career and soon adopted a modern approach to teaching.[1] But tragedy struck eighteen months later. Fr David died of appendicitis aged thirty-two. By the time he was admitted to a Newcastle Hospital, the appendix had turned septic – peritonitis. What a strange irony for his short life to come to this sudden, inexplicable end after surviving slaughter in the trenches. An anonymous college biographer complained that 'Death should be allowed such a wanton act of robbery'.

According to that same source, Fr David O'Connor's body was taken to St. Bede's Church, Jarrow, where a dirge was sung by the diocesan clergy to coincide with a similar service at Ushaw. The next morning, 16 April 1929, there was standing-room only at the sung Requiem Mass where the panegyric was delivered by one of David's senior colleagues, the Revd Dr G. Wheatley. In the afternoon, his body was met by staff and pupils outside the west end of St. Cuthbert's Cemetery for a final farewell, and Ushaw College became our hero's resting place. Terence O'Connor was the father of these two splendid young men, a reason for any man to feel a sense of pride. Was it enough to allay the sadness of having lost his beloved wife Rose in 1919 at the relatively young age of forty-six? Little did he know then, that further deep sorrow awaited him exactly ten years later?

At a time when Catholics were still suffering discrimination, layfolk were urged by their parish priests to take an interest in public affairs. Terence O'Connor, among other stalwarts, was among the first to respond. He successfully stood for election to the Jarrow Town Council where he would gain membership of important committees: welfare, the guardians and several pressure groups, for example, 'Keep the Marist Brothers in our Senior School'. He became a county councillor, alderman, magistrate, and later, chief magistrate of the town. More honour came to him when in 1939 his colleagues voted him Mayor, the first Catholic to hold the office.[2]

However it was possibly when he held the position of Deputy Mayor that Mr O'Connor served his fellow citizens so magnificently.[3] No doubt there was a committee of councillors, perhaps under his chairmanship, investigating channels which enabled Jarrow, 'To rise like a Phoenix from the Ashes'. Sir John Jarvis Bt. MP for a Surrey seat was rightly called the saviour of Jarrow. But it was Terence O'Connor who responded to him in 1934, as a personal letter in Sir John's own handwriting reveals. 'It is remembered that but for your prompt action, more than 4 years ago, I might never have come to Jarrow'.[4] This letter was dated 5 December 1938, by which time O'Connor had parted company with the Labour Party and sat as an Independent; all his life he was a staunch Irish Republican but that

probably had nothing to do with the split. Sir John urged his 'old friend' to come to a forthcoming Reception on the S.S. *Berengaria* where he intended to present to him with a brochure with an illuminated cover. The letter concludes, 'I send it now, with my grateful thanks for all the help you have given me in my task'. *Berengaria* was to be broken- up, like other ships before it, to provide employment for Jarrow workers – one of the many Jarvis initiatives.[5]

The Brochure was a retrospective compilation by friends of Jarvis commemorating the 'Opening of New Industries' at Jarrow and Gateshead in 1938. These were Jarrow Metal Industries, Jarrow Tube Works, Armstrong Whitworth (Pneumatic Tools) and Sir W. G. Armstrong Whitworth (Iron founders). Separate telegrams were received from King Edward VII and Queen Mary, a message from the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government and a letter from the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence.[6] Sir John's was the first speech about the new Industries followed by the Duchess of Northumberland's short address as she performed the official opening ceremony. Much was made of the fact that that St Bede's Day, 27 May (before the Church brought it forward by two days) was chosen for the great occasion. Jarvis talked of this:

> Saintly man who had worked and died in Jarrow made his town the cradle of Christianity, the centre of learning and the beginning of industry. Eleven centuries have gone into history since he passed on – his work is not finished, but only beginning. Today Jarrow with its noble river, its network of transport lines, its nearness to the best coal, its unique location for home and foreign markets and its large pool of willing labour – is ready to carry on the work begun in bygone days, is eager once more to prove its worth. With good courage, good workmanship and good will, I believe it will succeed.

No grand event is without a feast. A luncheon was held at the Old Assembly Rooms, Newcastle, at the end of which there were two toasts: Sir John Jarvis Bt., proposed the 'THE KING' and Alderman T. O'Connor, proposed the 'THE CHAIRMAN'. This latter was seconded by Tom Magnay, M.P. for Gateshead, and Colonel J. A. C. Younger of Surrey.

The official list states that Alderman Terence O'Connor was Mayor of Jarrow in 1938 although the histories of Catholic Jarrow mistakenly state that he was Mayor 1939-1940, for by then his health was poor and he died on 8 September, Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1939. He had been born sixty-eight years before on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. A very devout man, he attended Mass daily and was a member of the Third Order of St Francis. Pictures of his frequent visits to Lourdes, where he was

a brown strap (brancardier) as opposed to the lower rank cloth strap, showed him wearing his Franciscan robe. In business he was generous to a fault. Everybody got 'tick' at Connor's: 'Just put it on the slate'! These were hard days when most Jarrow people had little or no money and certainly no work. The Jarrow March of 1936, was sponsored by the Town Council, of which Terence was a senior member, and supported by the Churches.

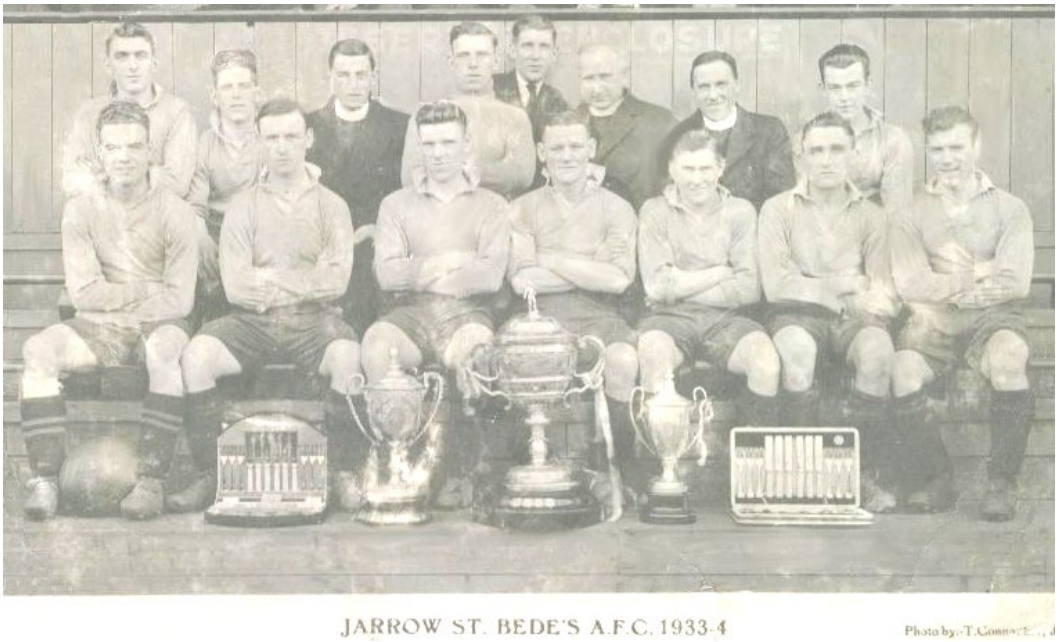
In Terence's annual pilgrimages he was always accompanied by Molly his beautiful, fun-loving, middle daughter wearing her calliper and crutch; this was the result of contracting rheumatic fever at the age of seventeen. Altogether my grandfather had six children of which my mother Winifred, a teacher who started her career with sixty senior boys at the East (Low) Jarrow School, was second to David, the eldest; Hugh was followed by Molly then Terry who took over the grocery business on the verge of bankruptcy; Rosie, who married a wealthy Portuguese caterer, and lavishly entertained a number of priests from the Hexham and Newcastle diocese (not least Canon Wilfred Blenkin) at the *Tamaritz*, their exclusive seafront restaurant, in Estoril.

My grandfather started life as an impoverished miner somewhere north of Durham City but ended life owning more than a few properties. He married Rose Doyle whose older bachelor brothers were pawnbrokers. The main anxiety in life of her favourite Uncles Johnny and Davy, according their niece, was that 'Connor would inherit their money'! After forty years, his will was finally settled but properties owned by Terence had to be sold off in the intervening years to finance legal costs. A small headstone, made in Liverpool marks his grave in Jarrow Cemetery. The beautiful cross mounted on top of the gravestone of Fr David's Ushaw burial site, was the result of a £35 (1939) bequest.[7]

The absence of Fr David and his brother from Jarrow for very different reasons, created a kind of generational vacuum. Two streets away lived contemporaries, Raymond and Mary O'Connor, their first cousins and well-known citizens of the town.[8] The former a talented footballer, who in his youth played for Portsmouth, and afterwards, for St. Bede's Men – a much feared club because it usually fielded veterans from higher divisions, making it difficult to beat. Mary played the organ at St. Bede's most of her life and was associated with its magnificent choir which sang throughout Europe; she was also headmistress of the Infants School. During the War when half-day schooling was common and gas-masks compulsory, Mary taught children in her own home including the author and maybe his sibling, an older sister Bernadette. There was a third O'Connor grandchild David, son of Terry.

A final reflection on our two Great War combatants is offered. Dr Hugh to the best of my knowledge never returned to Jarrow. However, early in the war when barrage balloons and anti- aircraft guns were deployed to defend Jarrow and the Tyne against German bombers, an extended family visit was made to North Wales. My father Bede remained at home.[9] He was head of maintenance at Baker-Perkins, ensuring the conveyor-belts were never still. This was one of the two 'Jarvis' factories opened fortunately in 1938 and was a major bomb maker; the other, Tube Investments, made torpedoes. At this time Hugh's young nephew got to know his uncle. My best memory was when leaving the highroad on to Pennyball Hill, steep with hairpin bends to Holywell's main street, he would throw his vehicle into neutral shouting 'Hang on tight'.

Fr David died four years before I was born. My mother had told me a lot about him but my life-long admiration for a devout young priest was confirmed by the account of his short life in *Ushaw Magazine*. Moreover, while accompanying friends to a Catenian Dinner in Crosby, I met Edward (Ted) Lawler, who, after leaving Ushaw in 1924, had worked at St Mary's College as the Senior Latin Master until his retirement. Fr David, he said, apart from being a brilliant teacher, was the holiest person that he had ever known.



At Campbell Park. Back row (l to r): John Woods, Phil McGee, Fr Cronin, Pat Melia, Frank McGuckin, Fr. McDonald, Fr. Corboy, Joe Devlin. Front row (l to r) Joe Brown, Frank Duffy, - Kelly, Teddy Edgar, Percy Charlton, Raymond O'Connor, J. Lindsay. (Photograph by courtesy of Godric Page)

Jarrow St. Bede's — "youngest ever"

By FRANK BRENNAN

A SUCCESS story in the world of bowls comes to me from Walter Charlesworth, honorary secretary of Jarrow St. Bede's.

During the past season they won the Evening Chronicle North East of England Rink Championship. The winning rink consisted of Martin O'Connor, age 14, Andrew Whalen (22) and skip, Raymond O'Connor, who is Martin's father.

This is the youngest rink to have won this premier competition, Mr. Charlesworth tells me, and when you consider that over 380 rinks took part you will appreciate how magnificent their feat was.

Also in rink competition, St. Bede's won the John Ralph Championship, while Raymond O'Connor won the Coates Cup in individual competition amongst some of the best bowlers in the Mid-Tyne area.

The winning rink in the Ralph competition was R. Melvin, G. Paxton and H. Brennan.

Jarrow St. Bede's Bowling team—Standing, left to right: R. Melvin, G. Paxton, R. O'Connor, H. Brennan. Sitting: A. Whalen, M. O'Connor.

(1966)

Notes & References

[1] *The Ushaw Magazine* No. 116, July, 1929 pp. 118-129. Thanks are due to St. Cuthbert's College Librarian, Matthew Watson, for photocopying, e-mails and scanned photographs.

[2] M.J. Young, *[A History of] Catholic Jarrow*, *St Bede's 1860-1940*: *The Story of our Parish, Church, and Schools,* (1940) pp. 41, 60-1.

[3] P. Brennan, *Catholic Jarrow* 2005. (This is a computerised version of Young's work. It includes additional comments with an added 10-page chapter to include the stewardship of Canon W. Blenkin.) Cf. www.donmouth.co.uk/local_history/St_Bedes/catholic_jarrow.html

[4] Letter to Terence O'Connor, handwritten and personal, from Sir John Jarvis of Hascombe Court, Godalming, Surrey. 5 December, 1938

[5] Letter to Terence O' Connor, typewritten business re affairs of nursery school, Bede Burn Road, from Sir John at same address. 4 August 1939.

[6] *Opening of New Industries at Jarrow and Gateshead, 1938,* p. 11.The Deputy Mayor's speech is included as an extra page/appendix as it clearly outlines all that Jarvis accomplished in Jarrow (with the backing of the Surrey Fund, the Nuffield Foundation and grants from public funds.)

[7] Will of Mr T. O'Connor of Burnholm Surrey Street, Jarrow, 13 Sept. 1937

[8] John O' Connor, the father of John, Raymond and Mary is mentioned in relation to Church and Public Office in the histories.

[9] Bede Swales was a World War I veteran of our much forgotten Merchant Fleet. Torpedoed twice while transporting vital fuel and before leaving seafaring, he was shipwrecked on Burbo Bank, one nautical mile from the writer's present home. The *Verand*, a new tanker broke its back, cf. *Liverpool Echo* 1928.

THE RISE OF THE IRISH WORKING CLASS IN NORTH-EAST ENGLAND

G. F. Duffy

Introduction

There is no doubt that the seminal event in the history of nineteenth-century Ireland was the Famine, in which one and a half million people died of hunger and disease, and over a million emigrated in the years 1845-1851.All thirty-two counties were affected, particularly those in the west.[1] As the famine continued many people realised that their only course of action, if possible, was to flee Ireland, to Britain, or America. Some famine Irish already had relations in America willing to pay their passage money, and many availed themselves of the offer. In time the newly arrived immigrants were also able to pay the passage fare for those left behind. Some Irish came to Britain with the idea of emigrating to America but only a few managed it.

I have researched many stories of the Irish who settled in Britain, including my own ancestors, and I have found that most of them lived normal and uneventful lives. Certainly at times, like many other Irish folk, they struggled in abject poverty and dangerous occupations. However, they never forgot Ireland or the Famine and through the years they eagerly watched political and economic developments. The Irish in America and Britain supported and participated in Irish political movements, with the aim of establishing a free and fair Ireland, ultimately independent. The stories of the Irish who were successful in America have been well publicised, but those in Britain less so, and those in north-east England less still. Yet their impact was significant. After the Famine the fourth largest area of Irish settlement in England was the north-east.[2]

It seemed to me that out of the thousands of Irish who settled here some would have become renowned and remembered and it would be interesting to investigate some of them and tell their stories. Undoubtedly many more exist and I hope other researchers will endeavour to discover who they were. The examples I have chosen here were all Catholics and included a merchant, a publisher, a mayor and a coal-miner. They were committed to their faith and the type of Christianity that embraced their fellow human beings with compassion and charity. They were successful in their line of business, and held positions of influence and prestige. They won the respect of the disadvantaged as well as the wealthy and powerful. They never forgot their commitment to the Irish fight for justice, freedom and independence. Primarily they reached out to the Irish community, and later to the north-east population in general. They disseminated Irish politics

through their writings, but they were activists as well as writers and were not shy of direct action.

Bernard McAnulty, 1816-1894

At Bernard McAnulty's Requiem Mass in 1894, at St. Andrew's, Newcastle upon Tyne, Mgr McCartan said that Bernard was born in County Down in 1816 and that 'he was descended from old family, that of the McAnultys, and on his mother's side from the equally old family of McAleavy.[3] He arrived in Newcastle in the 1830s. He was gregarious, well educated and had business acumen. He appears in the 1841 census,

working as a draper with a group of Irish drapers living at Dog Leap Stairs in Newcastle.[4] I formed the impression that for Bernard his trade was a steady source of income but that his main mission was to be involved and publicise Irish political movements for self-determination.

He was a supporter of Daniel O'Connell who advocated Catholic Emancipation and the Repeal of the Union with Britain. Initially, like O'Connell, he believed the route of non-violence was the best way to achieve Ireland's independence. However through the years he began to support more militant groups involved in violent methods to achieve these aims. Although he was most comfortable acting as chairman for locally based groups with Irish national interests, such as the Repeal Association (1843), Young Ireland Confederate Club (1845), Felon Repeal Club

(1848), Tenant League (1850), and the National Brotherhood of St. Patrick (1859). The 1860/70s was a period of intense Fenian activity and the Fenian Outrage in Manchester in 1867 was still fresh in the public's mind. However there was sympathy for the Fenian aspirations nationwide. A rally was held on Newcastle's Town Moor for the release of Fenian prisoners, which attracted over ten thousand people. Bernard spoke at the rally and at a meeting to raise funds for the relations of Fenian prisoners. Some of the speakers at the rally went on to found the Irish Literary Institute in Newcastle on 2 April 1871, the precursor of the Newcastle Irish Club.[5]

He and Mary Milburn were married at St Mary's Cathedral in 1858 and in 1860 his son Bartholomew was born.[6] In 1871 Bernard and his family were living at 2, Claremont Place, Newcastle, where he remained for the rest of his life. His democratic and political road was being accepted by the Newcastle establishment, and in 1877 he was elected as a Poor Law Guardian, and described as a merchant. In the same decade he was elected a councillor on Newcastle City Council, the first Irish Nationalist to be elected to an English council. Bernard's commitment to the cause of Irish self-determination was maintained, and in the following decades he continued to chair meetings for Home Rule, the Irish Land League, and others. He met the militant Michael Davitt, Joseph Cowen, MP, and the Prime Minister W.E. Gladstone. He was not just a self-made man but one dedicated to a free and independent Ireland and he was perhaps best described by John Denvir in 1892:[7]

> working his way by the sheer force of ability and integrity into the very front rank of life, in the town of his adoption, there has been no more ardent champion of his native land for over half a century.

Hundreds attended his funeral in 1894, which was reported in numerous newspapers. He was buried in Old Jesmond cemetery where a traditional Celtic cross marks his resting place.

Charles Diamond, 1858-1934

Charles Diamond was born in Tamnymullan, Maghera parish in County Derry, in 1858, the son of Laurence Diamond and Sarah O'Neill. They had a fair sized family but had 'sufficient wealth' to provide a good education for their six children. In 1881 the twenty-two-year-old Charles was living in Newcastle on Tyne as a Paper Merchant. Also in the household were his widowed mother and his sister, a pupil teacher. Charles married Jane McCarthy in 1882 at St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle. He appears in the 1891 census, in greatly improved circumstances: aged thirty-two he was resident at Walsingham House, in the Strand, London, and described as a Newspaper Proprietor.[8]

His first newspaper was *The Irish Tribune*, published in 1884, especially for the Irish in Britain. He published separate editions for Newcastle, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and London. His main motive in launching the paper was political, not financial, although he did become a successful and wealthy publisher. In an editorial he wrote that *The Irish Tribune* would

> become the organ of Irish national thought in this country, to represent and possess the confidence of all Irishmen – priest and laymen, labourers and merchants, rich and poor – who on the broad national platform can meet and work together.

He also published the *Glasgow Observer* (1887), *Catholic News*, which he merged to form the *Catholic Herald*, *Catholic Educator and Manchester Citizen* (1888) and others. By the end of his career he had launched thirty-seven weekly newspapers.

Diamond became a lifelong friend of Joseph Cowen, and sought his advice and editorial expertise. In turn Cowen became convinced of the case for Irish Home Rule and Irish land reform. He advocated the cause in Parliament, and used his own *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* to publicise it. Diamond became secretary of the Newcastle branch of the Irish National Land League, and later its president. Although the Irish National League was in essence an Irish organization, branches were being established throughout Britain and their meetings and activities advertised in *The Irish Tribune.* Many branches were formed in north-east England; for example, in 1885 Cowen received a letter:

> I am directed to send you the following resolution passed unanimously at a meeting of Irishmen held here on the 9th inst. 'Resolved That we establish a Branch of the Irish National League at Washington, and call upon every genuine Irishman in the district to enrol himself a member, and that we call it the Joseph Cowen Branch.
>
> Yours obediently, Matthew Roddy [9]

Whilst continuing to work successfully as a newspaper proprietor, from 1892 to 1895 Diamond sat in Parliament for North Monaghan as an Anti-Parnellite Nationalist. In 1920, he was put on trial for publishing an article in the *Catholic Herald,* in which he was charged with inciting the killing of Lord French and others. He was found guilty and was sentenced to six months in prison. In 1934 he died at his home in Princes Gate Court in London. He left a wife but he was childless.[10]

Mary Gunn, 1883-1958

Mary Hanlon was born in Sunderland in 1883. Her parents were John Hanlon and Bridget McGuire, and were born in Ireland. A story was told in the family that Mary Hanlon had rescued her future husband from a life of drink on Scotswood Road in Newcastle. She appears in the 1901 census as a domestic servant and resident at the home of John and Lizzie Cooney who ran a beer house in Elswick. In the same census Mary's future husband, Hugh Gunn was working as a barman at the house of Robert Hoy who also ran a beer house in Elswick.[11] However, Hugh Gunn's link with the beer trade could be traced back further in time to the 1891 census, when he ran the *Skiff Inn* at Dunn Street, Elswick, with his brothers, Patrick and James Gunn, all of whom were born in Ireland. More significantly, in the same census there was an Edward Gunn, publican of the *Ordnance Hotel*

on Scotswood Road, born in County Fermanagh, and the brother of the Gunn brothers, and that the 1911 census specified that Hugh Gunn was born in Knockninny, County Fermanagh. Hugh married Mary Hanlon at St. Philip Neri Catholic church, Dunston, in 1904; she was twenty-three, he was forty-five. All the brothers, at one time were Bar Managers, including Patrick, who ran The *Melbourne Hotel*, in Shieldfield, in Newcastle. The hotel was

> often called the 'Verger's Arms' because it wasn't far from St. Dominic's, and the end of 11 o'clock Mass coincided with the pub's Noon opening. Much of the *Melbourne*'s Sunday trade was derived from men moving from one to the other.[12]

The opening decades of the twentieth century saw the rise of revolution, socialism and nationalism culminating in World War One. Both the Gunn and Hanlon families were against the conflict, and espoused the causes of Irish nationalism and Home Rule. They became involved in the nascent Labour Party and later the Irish Labour Party of Gateshead. Mary Gunn walked the streets of the Teams with her children preaching the merits of socialism, while James Gunn in 1919, with the support of the Labour Party, Trades Council, Trades Union Affiliated and Irish Labour Party was elected as a Gateshead councillor. Mary Gunn, with her sister Annie Hanlon, were also elected Gateshead councillors in 1920. It was said in the *Gateshead Labour News,*that 'the very names on the register indicated that many of the sons and daughters of Erin were living in the vicinity.'[13] In 1942, after a number of years working as a Labour councillor, Mary Gunn was elected the first woman mayor of Gateshead. She died in 1958, with many tributes in the local papers.

John Patrick Mulcahy, 1866-1939

Mulcahy was a lesser known public figure but received recognition in his life time and a glowing obituary in the local newspaper. He was born in 1866 in Sunniside, near Marley Hill colliery, County Durham. His parents were John Mulcahy and Ellen Fleming of Kilmeaden parish, County Waterford. He moved in social, welfare and educational circles, and was a devout Catholic. Like other Irish nationalists in north-east England he took an interest in Irish politics and joined the Irish National League, and he knew T.P. O'Connor and John Redmond. He was also a reporter working as a representative for *The Irish Press.*

Not much was written of his early life but he came to public attention as the joint honorary secretary of the Tyneside Irish Brigade in 1915, and later in that year one of his sons was killed in the Dardanelles. John Mulcahy was also the local organiser of the United Irish League, for over a decade. However, he kept his business activities going when he launched with his sons a bakery and grocery stores enterprise *Mulcahy and Sons* in 1912. In 1914 he was Diocesan President for the League of the Cross, and president for the Catholic Young Men's Society. His funeral was at St. Joseph's Catholic church in Birtley in 1939, and was well attended by friends and family.[14]

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[8] Allen, J., *Joseph Cowen and Popular Radicalism on Tyneside 1829-1900*, (2007); 1881 Census, Newcastle upon Tyne, RG11/5048, folio 110, p. 33; St. Mary's RC parish registers ref. C.NC77, m/f, Tyne & Wear Archives. Newcastle upon Tyne;1891 Census, London, RG12/217, folio 49, p. 7. See also R. Swift and S. Gilley, eds., *The Irish in the Victorian City* (1985).

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[10] *Dundee Courier*, 10 March, 1920.

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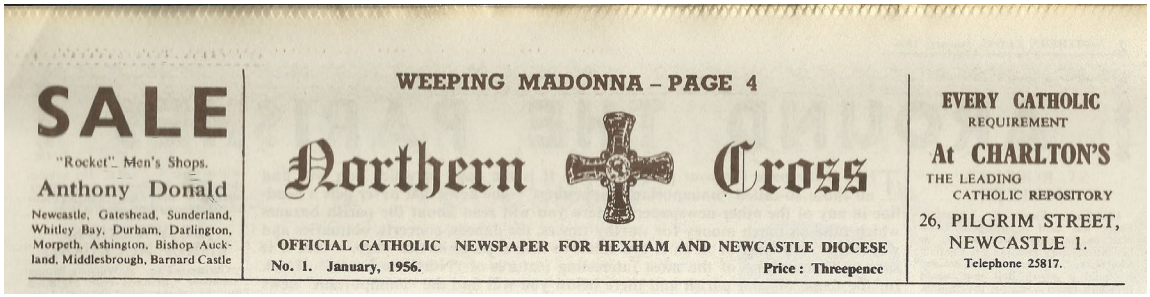
THE ORIGINS OF *NORTHERN CROSS*

John Bailey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"Rocket" Men's Shops.
Anthony Donald
Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, Whitley Bay, Durham, Darlington, Morpeth, Ashington, Bishop Auckland, Middlesbrough, Barnard Castle

WEEPING MADONNA – PAGE 4

Northern Cross

OFFICIAL CATHOLIC NEWSPAPER FOR HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE DIOCESE
No. 1. January, 1956. Price : Threepence

EVERY CATHOLIC REQUIREMENT
At CHARLTON'S
THE LEADING CATHOLIC REPOSITORY
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Telephone 25817.

A small group of enthusiasts for communicating news, views and information about the Catholic Church in the north east of England is just concluding its celebrations to mark six decades of activity: the regional branch of the Catholic Writers' Guild of St Francis de Sales, and the diocesan newspaper *Northern Cross.* What follows is an outline history of the origins of the paper and the Catholic writers who got it going.

In its day *Northern Cross* was a pioneer, the first journal (so far as has ever came to notice) to be published for an English, Welsh or Scottish Catholic diocese which was recognisable as a newspaper. What made it unique was its style and approach, almost certainly due to the fact that it was written, edited and produced by working journalists, helped by many others in the trade. They applied the same skills that earned them their bread and butter from secular journalism to the entirely voluntary job of sharing news and pictures about local Catholic churches and parishioners.

Newspaper journalism then and, indeed, business and working practice in the Britain of the 1950s, had more time and management tolerance for charitable work to be done alongside the day's work. Photographer Tom Mackin, whose work for daily and Sunday newspapers published from Thomson House, Newcastle upon Tyne, took him to every town in the north east from time to time and therefore to most of the one hundred and eighty parishes in the diocese of Hexham & Newcastle, illustrates the point:

> If Lord Thomson knew how many photographic prints and how many carbon copies of stories were slipped quietly to *Northern Cross* about church news, he'd have become a Catholic!

Tom is sure the Canadian publisher will have earned his place in heaven. The local newsmen and one or two women writers took great pride in producing the *Cross* for their own publisher, the trustees of the newly-formed Hexham & Newcastle Branch of the Guild of St Francis de Sales – in effect, the diocese. The paper had the blessing and full backing of Bishop Joseph McCormack who, as close as he could come to it, took on the role of 'owner' or, in Fleet Street terms of those days, the 'magnate' or

‘press baron’ of Worswick Street, home to this new example of Catholic journalism. In welcoming its publication, he said:

> The purpose of the ‘Northern Cross’ is to give live Catholic news, practical Catholic guidance and clear Catholic teaching to those living in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

He congratulated all who had made the paper’s appearance possible and was pictured with three journalist members of the Guild: James Dollan (Chairman), David Sacco (Vice Chairman) and Joseph Cummings (Secretary). His Lordship had a ‘manager’, of course, to ensure proper oversight of this adventurous but risky experiment – a trusted priest with printer’s ink running through his veins and a passion for the printed word: Revd Dr Edward Harriott of St Andrew’s, Worswick Street in the centre of Newcastle. In the early 1960s the *Cross* dropped the word ‘official’ from its original title ‘Official Catholic Newspaper for Hexham and Newcastle Diocese.’ But thereby hangs a tale to be included in the full history of the paper. At any rate, the relative independence of the *Cross* has been and is of great value to the paper in doing its job.

Michael Morrissey penned his reminiscences of Guild meetings in the late 1950s, and Frank and Mary Swales, Chairman and Secretary/Treasurer of the Guild respectively for eleven years, wrote an excellent digest of the Guild’s history for the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the branch in September 2015 in which they wrote:

> The present North East branch of the Guild was revived in January 2003, after a lapse of several years. It was founded originally in September 1954, the first meeting being held in The White Bull pub in Newcastle upon Tyne. Mr Frank Davey, National President of the Guild, met with local Catholic journalists to discuss the setting up of a Newcastle branch.
>
> One of the founder members was Mr. Terence Wynn, based in Newcastle. At the invitation of Bishop Joseph McCormack, Terry and some fellow journalists embarked on the production of a newspaper for the diocese of Hexham & Newcastle, *Northern Cross*, which saw its first issue in January 1956 with Terry as Editor.
>
> The Northern Cross continues to this day, and is acknowledged to be one of the best diocesan newspapers. The links between the revived North East branch of the Guild and *Northern Cross* are still very strong indeed, with several members of the Guild involved in the production of the paper each month, from the contribution of articles to distribution of the paper to parishes.

> Some of our current members include editors and former editors of various publications, journalists, authors, reporters, a BBC (Look North) producer, and others who contribute articles to *Northern Cross*.
>
> Activities in those far off fifties' days included a monthly Mass and outings; our present Guild meets officially 3 times a year; during our meetings we sometimes enjoy talks from fellow members and we enjoy an annual dinner or lunch. We organise an annual outing, and promote – with *Northern Cross* – an annual competition for Young Writers. We meet on other occasions outside of our normal programme too.
>
> A strong link exists today between the first Guild and the revived Guild: a founder member and chaplain to the Guild was Revd Dr Edward Harriott, whose endeavours helped the Guild to flourish in those early years. Our present chaplain is Dr Harriott's nephew, Fr Richard Harriott, whose hospitality at our meetings is legendary; Fr Richard hosts our Guild meetings in his parish of St. John the Baptist, Annitsford, Northumberland. Fr Richard's brother, the late John Harriott, S.J., was for several years a contributor to *The Tablet* and other publications.

Terence Wynn worked for the *Daily Sketch* at the time (and he would later become editor of *The Universe*). He was based in Newcastle and his district reporter's job took him on assignments all over the north. He often referred to his worry that he would be out of town for production week when the *Cross* was being put to bed. But he never was and that good fortune he put down to the influence of the Holy Spirit – Holy Ghost, in those days, of course – and said that was, for him, the 'miracle' of the monthly *Northern Cross.*

Two original Guild members survive: Frank Swales of Jarrow and Michael Morrissey, of Saltburn-by-Sea. Sadly, a third survivor into the twenty-first century, Tony Pelton of Catterick, North Yorkshire, and well known as a local councillor, died in June 2016. He was honoured at the Guild's sixtieth anniversary celebrations in September 2015 although he was unable to attend as he was in the Friarage Hospital, Northallerton where messages wishing him well were sent.

Six decades is just about long enough to be a valid period to pen a history while there is still a living memory. More well-founded, some would say, because those years were in that part of the twentieth century which saw rapid change in society as well as in technology, food, dress, manners and much more. In the case of a newspaper, it is not just what made the news at the time interesting: choosing events, accomplishments,

comings and goings to report, airing opinions and providing suitable entertainment, but the style and language used to report and illustrate it. The first splash lead of the January 1956 issue of *Northern Cross,* for instance, featured uncompromising criticism of the Prime Minister of the day, Sir Anthony Eden, for the forthcoming visit of Russian leaders Marshal Nikolai Bulganin and Nikita Khrushchev (the famous Mr B and Mr K) and the Government's invitation to them for a ten-day visit that April. The message was unequivocal: *Invite to Top Reds is "folly"*. Editor Terence Wynn was setting out his stall.

Similarly, where now would you read that ten people were 'taking instruction' as a result of talks to non-Catholics held in St Augustine's Schoolroom (note the capital letter) in Darlington. It was a down-page story on the front page, which rounded off the news with information that forty people were regulars and that the talks were 'preceded by an evening Mass held on the Feast of The Motherhood of The Blessed Virgin Mary at which the faithful were asked to pray for the success of the talks.' Or being able to report with certainty that Sunderland was to elect a Catholic as its Mayor in 1956 and that Alderman Thomas Henry Cavanagh, a seventy-six-year-old retired shipyard worker and parishioner of St Hilda's, Southwick, was the first Catholic to hold the office in 123 years. Alderman Cavanagh had four daughters and a son, all born, we were told, on Sundays. But we might still be able to concur with the new Mayor's exhortation to a *Northern Cross* reporter: 'There is a pressing need for Catholic young people to take an interest in civic, political and trade union affairs. Our young people are apathetic in these matters, which is very disturbing.' Or, still in Sunderland, that they were having a good year at Corby Hall Jesuit Retreat House and that during Marian year in the previous twelve months the number of men on retreat was running at 1,600. Fr W d'Andria, SJ, reported that the target was being raised to 2,000 now that the new *Northern Cross* monthly newspaper was there to help.

The Rosary is the Real Answer to Communism, one headline assured readers. Workers in Catholic Action had arranged for the display of three large cribs, forty small ones plus three hundred Christmas posters in Newcastle shops, cinemas and factories during Advent. The report of the appointment of Fr Cecil W. Phillips to the Cathedral Chapter in Newcastle, beneath the headline, *Accountant now a Canon,* noted that it 'had given great pleasure to all his friends, both clerical and lay. Their prayer is that he may be spared for many years to come to work for the glory of God in this diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.'

Our Lady featured prominently in two page-lead stories for markedly different audiences. A half-page was devoted to the 'forgotten' shrine of Our Lady of Jesmond with an interesting picture of a student from the

Convent of La Sagesse in Newcastle; former students may remember the pilgrimage to Jesmond during the Marian Year of 1955 to revive interest in the ruin, or the *Cross* photograph of a vase of flowers being placed in a niche at the shrine. The second story, flagged at the top of page one with the line *Weeping Madonna - page 4,* starts with the phrase: 'All human beings love a thrill …' The report was filed by Dr Philip G. Fothergill of King's College and relates the phenomenon and public interest in 'The weeping Madonna of Walker', a plaque with an image of Our Lady holding the Infant in the fold of her right arm that had made headlines in newspapers on Tyneside reporting that the 'Madonna opened its left eye and shed tears'. Dr Fothergill took up the story after he accompanied *Cross* features editor Kenneth Hughes to examine the plaque.

This was an era of 'nibs' – news in brief – items on fund-raising events in a nearly forgotten language of parish dances ('close on 1,000 people attended – and thoroughly enjoyed – St Mary's dance held at the Seaburn Hall on December 19'), church bazaars, whist drives, rummage sales, fayres, jumble sales and sales of work. Today, the smart language may be to 'sell it on eBay' or at a car boot sale. But you would be hard pressed to outdo the value of an old-fashioned sale of work. Take Crook branch of the Catholic Women's League at Our Lady and St Cuthbert's, for instance. Their 1956 sale of work 'resulted in £100 being raised for parish funds'. According to the Bank of England's inflation calculator, £100 of goods and services then would cost £2,251.65 today. That puts a new light on the page 5 newsbrief headed *Guild for Poor*, which reported the Marie Reparatrice Needlework Guild for Poor Churches – does that still exist, we wonder – had presented 'our Bishop' with vestments and altar linen worth £250; the modern value of over £5,600.

The language of the sports reporter keeps evolving. To pick a simple example, what was once a 'goalie' soon became 'the custodian' then a 'keeper. Frank Brennan, Newcastle United and Scottish International centre-half, brought his own style to the paper. Perhaps he had some assistance with the words, but certainly the sentiments were his own. He credited his decision to choose football as a career path to the advice and encouragement he received from Father Dooley, the curate at Coatbridge St Patrick's in Lanarkshire when he was still a fourteen-year-old schoolboy. Frank joined the 'renowned' Catholic Boys Club four miles from his home. Frank recorded in his first column for the *Cross* Sports page: 'Father Dooley, at the club, helped tremendously. His advice was always good and he helped me make up my mind to become a professional footballer.' He rounded off his piece with a recommendation to any Catholic youngster wanting to become a footballer: 'start playing for a Catholic boys' club, as I did. There you will find the comradeship and sportsmanship that I found

to be so advantageous.' That would be hard to follow today when the hurdle would be to find a Catholic boys' club. In the same January 1956 issue the *Cross* began to search for playing surfaces to launch a knock-out cup for youth soccer. It was the beginning of a much greater story of the Bishop's Cup – still going strong in its sixtieth year – with the champion of schools' football Jack Foster still involved in the organisation and his by-line still appearing on Cup reports for the *Northern Cross* back page.

The sixtieth anniversary provides a useful opportunity to observe the style of reporting, the language used by those day-off reporters and a small indication of what they thought was considered important. The glimpse of some 1956 stories here can be repeated seven hundred times over in the years that followed yet there is still another dimension. Nothing has been said here about the swings and roundabouts of ecumenism, of growing congregations and building churches to accommodate them, rallies of the faithful for big-event Masses in the grounds of Ushaw College, Durham, youth events and the establishment of Hexham & Newcastle's now famous Youth Ministry Team; nothing about the impact of the Second Vatican Council, clergy numbers, increasing workloads, broadening the base of lay help across the diocese and the new, still emerging, more obvious evangelism with its change of emphasis and style from the quiet example of good manners and conscientious observance of the past. All are important parts of the story and good reasons for attempting a fuller and more rounded history of *Northern Cross*.

Raising these matters provides a chance to appraise the recent history of the Church in this region, not via some great academic research project for a university dissertation, but through the enthusiasm of a group of Catholic reporters and photographers and the readers who fed them the stories. In order to help paint a broader canvas than the history of *Northern Cross*, we would appreciate it if you would send your memories (and photographs) of the way things were in the 1950s: fasting from midnight for Mass on Sundays, maybe keeling over on the sanctuary as an altar server, the prayers you said, the churches of another denomination you dared not enter out of fear of being told off for doing so, no way would you eat meat on Fridays and how your favourite café or fish and chip shop had your supper waiting, how grace before meals was a must, what you read, the films you went to see at 'the Pictures' and so on. It would all help to colour in the history – still in preparation – not just of the paper but of the Church in Hexham & Newcastle it served and faithfully reported. Please forward any contribution to: *Northern Cross*, St Anne's Presbytery, 43 Welbeck Ave., Darlington, DL1 2DR or John Bailey at thesloopjohnb@dsl.pipex.com

REVIEWS

L. Gooch

H. Shankland, *Out of Italy: The Story of Italians in North East England* (Troubador Publishing, 2014)

In both historiographical and sociological studies Italian immigration into this country has fared less well than Irish migration. But this book has rectified that lack of attention comprehensively.

The story of Italians in the north east begins, of course, with the coming of the Roman army in the first century and their departure at the end of the fourth century, followed by the arrival of the Roman Christians at the end of the sixth century. Britain was fully absorbed into the mainstream of Roman culture by the seventh century.

Italian influence in England has been apparent mostly in the arts and crafts – Shakespeare set a third of his plays in Italy. In the eighteenth century numbers of decorative artists (not least Antonio Canaletto) were at work around the country embellishing the houses of the gentry who routinely visited Italy on the Grand Tour. In this region, the fourth duke of Northumberland hired Giovanni Montrioli to completely redesign the interior of Alnwick Castle and the finest Italian carvers, painters, sculptors and stuccatori were brought in; indeed, these interior decorators came to be known as the 'Alnwick School'. There were many other craftsmen in the region – Leone Bulletti, Giuseppe Cortesi, Filippo Daniel, Pietro-Natale Lafranchini, among them. Architects, too, were engaged by the northern gentry and the Church; Ignatius Bonomi is perhaps the best known: St Cuthbert's, Durham, St Mary's, Sunderland and Burn Hall were his chief Catholic commissions. Then and in later years small Italian businesses of barometer-, clock- and watch-makers, jewellers, framers, glass-makers and toy-makers flourished.

Italian independence and the Papal States were of consuming interest in the mid-nineteenth century and the north-east played its part with visits by Mazzini and Garibaldi which served to raise pro-Italian sentiment on Tyneside. The pope too had his supporters, typified by Canon Thomas Wilkinson who raised a group of Zouaves in Crook sworn to defend the Holy See.

Although mass emigration from Italy occurred every year from around 1875, only a few hundred people chose to come to Britain. An Italian Consul-General remarked in 1901:

> …there is no notable exodus of Italian emigrants to the UK at present, nor is there ever likely to be; the [English] national character is too reserved and impenetrable for our emigration; the

> sky less refulgent; workmates too dour and unforthcoming; the language is hard to learn, and it is not easy to adapt to the way of life, the food, the drink; and crucially work is not easy to come by …

Moreover, few Italians were then regarded as other than 'ineradicably bad', as one vice consul put it. Hence most Italians coming to Britain worked as self-employed street entertainers and vendors of different sorts, or in the catering and confectionery trades where unionisation was weakest and hostility to foreigners least. Indeed, most people became familiar with the sight of colourful Italian ice-cream vans or street-sellers of plaster statuettes in all corners of the region. But, they were evolving into a respectable and respected community. Before long increasing numbers of Italian ice cream parlours, cafes and so on were being opened in urban centres. The migrants were no longer working-class itinerants but a settled and upwardly socially mobile community.

As will be expected, this history includes the experience of local Italians in the two world wars and the rise of fascism with its associated anti-Italian feeling. The book does not, however, treat religious practice in any detail, except to observe that St Andrew's in Newcastle seemed to be the parish of choice for Italian Tynesiders.

Serendipity is a wonderful thing. Last summer, when visiting a local museum, an Italian friend and I came across a pamphlet describing the graves in the cemetery at Wheatley Hill among which he recognised that of Angelo Baldasera, the father of a Sister of Mercy in my parish. Later, on receiving this book, knowing it would be of interest, I passed it to her and she was amazed and delighted to find in it her father's wedding photograph (West Hartlepool, 1903) as well as one of him proudly wearing British Army uniform in 1915 when he served in the First World War. Similarly, the book mentions Gianbattista Lertoria, *padrone* of a company of street musicians in the mid-nineteenth century. Fr David Milburn, past chairman of the North East Catholic History Society, is a Lertoria descendant. You, too, may find ancestors in the book, but even if you do not, you will be familiar with many of the names in it and will probably have fond memories of Italian cafes and ice cream parlours in which you met and perhaps did your courting.

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M.H. Turnham, *Catholic Faith and Practice in England 1779-1992: The Role of Revivalism and Renewal* (The Boydell Press, 2015)

This book examines how Catholic faith and practice developed from the last years of the recusant era into the period of emancipation and Irish migration, on to the Second Vatican Council and after, in the diocese of

Middlesbrough (comprising the old North and East Ridings of Yorkshire, Hull and York).

'Revival' is the most overloaded word in English Catholic historical studies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Here we have it elevated into an *-ism* to explain every development since the Relief Acts of 1778 and 1791 to the Second Vatican Council. It is as if English Catholicism lurched from one near-death experience to the next and was saved from expiry only in the nick of time – there is barely any allowance for continuity in the term. Certainly, the combined effects of industrialisation, Irish migration, the Oxford Movement, the Restoration of the Hierarchy, and so on, altered the ecclesial and social structure of English Catholicism to an extent that it became unrecognisable from what had gone before. But this was not a *revival* – the Church was not somehow resuscitated or regenerated, for it had been growing and gathering strength for much of the eighteenth century. Rather, it built on existing structures and was reorganised to meet altered circumstances as, for example, when it had to assimilate new members from different traditions – Irish and Anglican convert. Thus, innovations or the introduction of new devotional practices cannot be described as a revival if they had not been there in the first place to suffer the decline from which, supposedly, they had to be brought round. The new town of Middlesbrough had no history at all, secular or ecclesiastical, so that the demographic and socio-industrial changes which brought its existence about in 1830, resulted in a Catholic body, uniquely perhaps, 'suddenly gathered together … from every town in England and Ireland' formed wholly of the working-class – no middle class or gentry, and no tradition or practice to revive.

Having said that, Turnham provides a substantial and readable historical study of the Church in north-east Yorkshire. She starts in the late eighteenth century when the custodians of the faith in England were the vicars apostolic, the gentry and their chaplains, located mostly in the rural areas of the country, and the people followed the restrained devotional manner of John Gother and Richard Challoner. Within fifty years, however, this native, self-effacing, gentrified church was transformed by industrialisation and Irish migration into a more prominent, urban and proletarian entity. Moreover, the ordinary English hierarchy was restored with the concomitant adoption of 'a more flamboyant devotional life' – 'Ultramontane practices that sought to impose upon the Catholic world the religious practices of Rome.' People now walked behind Luigi Gentili and Augustus Welby Pugin. Perplexingly, she adds: 'Revivalism brought a renewed sense of Catholicity to the English Church.'

The creation of the Middlesbrough diocese in 1879 reflected the need for a new infrastructure to cope with the phenomenal growth of Catholicism in

the region. Bishop Richard Lacy 'initiated the biggest church- and school-building in the country at that time' so as to solidify the faith of practising Catholics and to recover the lapsed. It would take some time to gather all the resources to do so but by the time of his death in 1929 there were parishes with a church and school in every major centre of population in the diocese as well as numbers of confraternities, guilds, sodalities, and so on, to provide opportunities for added devotional practice and facilities for cultural and social activity. This was the period of the emergent 'fortress church' – inward looking and unchanging, yet with a growing self-confidence about its rightful place in English society.

Lacy's aim was 'to establish a Catholicism native to Yorkshire and England.' His successor, however, 'very much a man of Ireland', discarded those concerns to concentrate on his Irish constituency. While continuing with an extensive building programme of churches, Thomas Shine placed a body of mainly Irish clergy in them to enforce 'his brand of Irish Catholicism.' – hierarchical, highly disciplined and much given to extra-liturgical devotions. Such was his success that when he died in 1955 his 'legacy could be summed up as Irish Catholic triumphalism…', not just a fortress but an Irish fastness. As Turnham points out, it gave rise to a 'myth of a golden age in English Catholicism that is still a pervasive notion in the minds of older Catholics'.

In fact, the Church in the immediate post-war period was showing symptoms of decline due partly to the break-up of old communities and various secular pressures. Furthermore, Turnham remarks that the English Catholic bishops had become so accustomed to the existing model of their Church that they remained largely unaware of changes taking place in European Catholicism and so were 'totally unprepared for the Second Vatican Council' and its spirit, which Pope John XXIII referred to as *aggiornamento.* Turnham, of course, regards the Council as 'a Revivalist exercise of the highest order' although she notes that Pope Paul VI preferred *rinnovamento* or renewal. Renewal is an ongoing process and is more likely to resonate within Catholicism than revival. In any case, she suggests that in the Middlesbrough diocese the Council was more a source of contention and disarray and that, while external observance of its provisions was upheld, internal engagement was lacking, 'leaving a pre-conciliar mind-set inside a post-conciliar liturgical structure'.

This, then, is a comprehensive, and by no means uncritical, treatment of the history of the Middlesbrough diocese (sometimes known as the 'Dead See') and it will have a well-deserved place in the ranks of English diocesan histories.

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