Northern Catholic History

Revd W.J. Finn, CF, MC (1875-1915)

No. 59 **2018**

North East Catholic History Society

North East Catholic History Society

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The Society was founded in 1974 to foster interest and promote research into the history of the Catholic Church in North East England – a geographical term which is interpreted generously. A yearly programme of talks and outings is arranged. The present annual subscription to the Society is £7 individual (£11 joint) which includes a copy of the annual journal *Northern Catholic History*. Details of the availability and price of back issues can be obtained from the Editor who welcomes offers of articles for future editions.

Northern Catholic History

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CONTENTS

Page

Editor's Introduction

USHAW COLLEGE AT WAR 1914-18
Rev D. Milburn

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DOUAI STUDENTS FROM THE DIOCESE OF DURHAM
Revd W.V. Smith

ESTELLE WHITE (1925-2011), HYMN WRITER
Veronica Whitty

***'AN OPEN ROAD TO HEAVEN'*, JOHN LINGARD & SYDNEY SMITH ON CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION**
Leo Gooch

THE CATHOLIC BOOK TRADE IN NORTH-EAST ENGLAND: Part 1, JOHN BELL (II)

Nelson Hogan

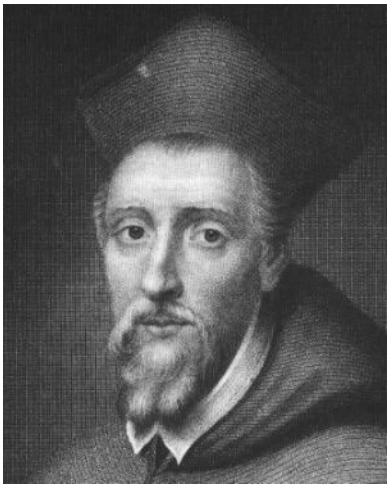
BIBLIOGRAPHY & NOTES

Front cover: Revd Fr W. Finn, CF, MC
Back cover: Ushaw College War Memorial
(Photographs by courtesy of Ushaw College.)

Editor's Introduction

In 2018 the nation commemorates the end of the First World War, and the English Catholics celebrate the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the foundation in 1568 by William Allen of the English College at Douai in Flanders for the formation of secular priests to serve in post-Reformation England. The college flourished until it was forcibly closed in 1795 at the time of the French Revolution. Professors and students were repatriated and members of the college from northern England established a temporary seminary at Crook Hall in north-west Durham until 1808 when it moved to its permanent home and was opened as St Cuthbert's College, Ushaw. (Members from southern England ejected from Douai were re-established at St Edmund's College, Ware.)

It is fitting, then, that this edition of *Northern Catholic History* marks these important anniversaries, representing as they do a remarkable record of service: many Douai priests became martyrs for their faith and large numbers of English Catholics gave their lives for their country.



William Allen (1532 – 1594)
(Created a Cardinal by Pope Sixtus V on 7 August 1587.)

USHAW COLLEGE AT WAR 1914-18

Revd D. Milburn

[All references to the *Ushaw Magazine* are shown as *UM*]

'The even tenor of our ways'

All seemed peaceful enough at Ushaw College in the late summer and early autumn of 1914. The President, Mgr William Brown had just returned from a month's holiday in the Eternal City as the guest of Cardinal Merry del Val (Ushaw 1883-85), Secretary of State to Pope Pius X. Its first (and for long enough) only telephone line had been installed, new lecture rooms had been completed, a novelty introduced in the way of a Marconiphone (a wireless station). The first subscriptions had come in to mark the memory of Bishop Thomas Wilkinson who as President had used his business acumen to save the college from bankruptcy. Some of the subscribers would soon go off to war, only for their names to resurface on a memorial of their own. On the debit side, there had been the untimely death of Tom Seed, the Clerk of Works, son of Peter Seed, the first of a family that still serves the college with distinction.

It would seem that English people on the whole hoped for a war to teach the German upstarts the lesson that there was room in Europe for one empire only, the British Empire. This was the war to end wars. The British looked on it as a skirmish which would be over by Christmas. Fr Edwin Bonney, editor, in his first comments about the hostilities in *UM* expected it would make 'no difference to the even tenor of our ways' though he did call it 'the great war'.[1] Maybe he had been listening to Lord Kitchener's private opinions on the Marconiphone, but more likely he picked it up from one of the few newspapers prepared to tell the truth – a long, costly brutal war, the first industrialised war. The horrors already perpetrated in Belgium and Northern France would be repeated in many other parts of the world.

Britain escaped most of the horrors inflicted on Belgium and Northern France in the early months, thank God. Ushaw enjoyed the relative peace, too. Of course there were minor upsets. Within days of war being declared the military raided the farm for horses and carts and saddlery, leaving the college farmer, already hampered by the prevailing severe drought, to get the harvest in as best he could. The editor comments: 'had that been some days earlier it might have caused a very serious inconvenience'. He is referring to the celebration of the July Grand Week – the Old Boys Re-union. Only after mentioning the death of Pope Pius X, Tom Bolam, an Ushaw workman, and the summer's cricket matches, he adds:

> It would, however, be strange if our great Ushaw family had no personal interest and anxieties in the vicissitudes of war. We cannot expect that a college like ours, which is so largely ecclesiastical,

> should be as strongly represented in the Army and in the Navy as purely secular schools; nevertheless a very considerable body of alumni are now under arms in defence of the national interests. Most of them have joined the flag in response to the call of Lord Kitchener, and there are some schools in the House the number of whose representatives in the Army run into double figures.

By the end of 1914 seventy-three alumni and students had enlisted. Just as some students were leaving for the war, others seeking higher education abroad were recalled or prevented from going. Two priests in particular should be noted here because they were marked out as staff replacements at the college. Charles Corbishley, nephew of Mgr Brown's predecessor, had been set to return to Bonn University for his sixth and final (degree) year, leaving there all his books and papers. Joseph McCormack likewise lost everything, having spent two years at Louvain University and intending to do a year's study at Bonn, having forwarded all his belongings there. Charles became the Ushaw president 1934-1958, and Joseph the bishop of Hexham and Newcastle 1937-1958. Louvain, it will be remembered, had been particularly savaged by the Germans during their initial attack on Belgium. Then there was the case of the student brothers, Bernard (theologian) and Edward (grammarian) who with their mother and two sisters had been on holiday right in the path of the German advance into Belgium. Edward was thought to be a prisoner of war, and of the others there was as yet no news. That is another story to be told.[2]

Another worry, not mentioned at the time by the editor, must have been the interruption to normal routine by the sudden and enthusiastic exit of so many of the college's younger employees to the recruiting offices long before conscription came into force: the acting butler and both bakers, then the painter, an assistant gardener, a farm-worker and one of the tailors – in fact, 'practically all the available single men'. Of all these interruptions to Ushaw life in the first six months of hostilities none came to be remembered better than the sound of the war itself. On 15-16 December German warships launched an attack on the north-east coast ports, especially Hartlepool when they discovered it to be defended by more than two cruisers, four destroyers and land batteries. The sound could be distinctly heard, disturbing the calm of 'first hour' (of study.) When later identified, it led to anxiety for the safety of a former professor and historian, the Revd George Phillips in care at Whitby, as well as the parents of some of the students. The bombardment caused considerable distress in Hartlepool itself: 86 killed, 424 wounded, seven churches, ten public buildings and three hundred homes and marine installations destroyed or damaged. Ushaw got off lightly: two of the nieces of former student William Kay (1860-65) died and the home of an existing student wrecked.[3] William himself died from shock before the end of the year.

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Joining the Armed Services

1. Government and Catholic policy regarding Church Students

'Holy Father, we do not want your peace'. Even nowadays such a disrespectful headline would raise eyebrows. Taken from a famous French Dominican's letter to Pope Benedict XV after the publication of the Pope's *Peace Note* to all the belligerents, this sharp rebuke could well sum up the attitude of English Catholic leaders, clergy and laity in 1915. 'Like the apparent rebel in the gospel, we are sons who say no, no.[4] The Pope wanted peace and reconciliation but the Allies meant to punish Germany for starting the war. Morality did not enter the heads of Catholics apart from some in London who founded an ill-fated Peace Society. The argument continues even today, with Benedict at last getting a fairer hearing. All this has to be said to understand how an ecclesiastical institution like Ushaw could even think of war, but it did, and it needed guidelines to ensure the flow of priests. These were thrashed out between Church and State before conscription became the norm. All students who were 'in immediate preparation for priesthood' (that is, starting philosophy and theology) would be exempt from call-up. That arrangement lasted for less than a year due to the need for many more chaplains to minister to the ever growing number of casualties on the Western Front. The new regulation limited exemption to those in major orders (diaconate and sub-diaconate) unless the students promised on ordination to become chaplains themselves or find priests to take their place.[5]

2. The Formation of the Tyneside Irish

On the day following Kitchener's *Call to Arms* a letter appeared in The *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* announcing a meeting at the Irish National Club in Clayton Street to discuss the feasibility of raising a Tyneside Irish Battalion along the lines of the 'Pal's' groups being formed elsewhere in the country. With initial difficulties overcome and the plans clarified, The Irish Battalion with the Scottish and a (second) Commercial Battalion (the three forming The Tyneside Brigade) began recruiting in the Corn Exchange. From the beginning, the Brigade benefitted from the presence of ex-soldiers who helped to establish it as an outstanding fighting force. In addition, the experience of ex-miners, local and Irish, in the art of digging deep and secure holes proved invaluable in a war which hinged on the effectiveness of trenches but one has to admit that first impressions were rather off-putting:

> When I joined the 24th Battalion, I found a motley throng very reminiscent of the types that used to file along the road to annual militia musters in Ireland. They had no uniforms, no collars, boots that had toes peeping through them, and trousers that were more patch and piece; there were old and young, some born in Ireland, some in England of Irish parentage, some having no connection with Ireland

> and Irish workmen (navvies) beyond the same church or the fact they worked in the same pit with an Irishman. An unusually large number were illiterate, the married ones hardly knew how many children they had, and single ones were not sure whether they were married or not and it was evident that they had one characteristic in common – many were no stranger to an empty belly.[6]

The Tyneside Irish Battalion played an essential part in the life of Ushaw during the war with eighty of its students joining it; a group of twenty-four were given permission to join in 1916 just before conscription became obligatory in the hope of staying together as 'pals'. At first the military honoured this arrangement, but the fast and growing loss of manpower at the Front soon led to their dispersal. From start to finish the Tyneside Irish had as its chaplain Fr George McBrearty who had volunteered to become a service chaplain just weeks into the war. During its course the Tyneside Irish lost so many men that the January 1918 reorganisation brought about the loss of most of its personnel. The letter Fr McBrearty wrote to his friend Captain George Swinburne on 11 February expresses his distress

> Now George, let me tell you the worst, if you haven't heard. The old Tyneside Irish is 'NAH POOH'. The 24/27+26th have been disbanded + the 25th has gone to 102 Brigade. At present I am unattached to any unit, but the 103 Inf Bde will find me. The old Bde now consists of NF, E. Lancs + Lincs Bns. Very sad isn't it? The lads are scattered to the four winds, POOR LADS. The 24th/27th went off IN TEARS. I hear that Col Richardson is getting command of the 25th. It is sad for me I am going among strangers now. I wish I were out of it all. If we ever get within reach of you, I shall do my utmost to give you a call. With every best wish. G. McBrearty, CF.[7]

3. RN and RAF Recruits

Though the vast majority of students and alumni joined the Army, a minority opted for other Services. According to my calculations, fourteen joined the Royal Navy, of whom six were chaplains working within very restrictive orders. Twenty-five were with the RFA and thirty-two with the RAF – this relatively high number probably explained by a heightened sense of adventure. Cuthbert Clifford and Austin Fee had crashes, the latter surviving no fewer than three. From these two Services died Charles Rogerson, a student, in the Navy on board a hospital ship in 1918, and from the Air Force, Charles Coffey, a student, Wilfred Ruxton and George Foggin, all in the course of 1918.[8]

If anyone from these Services deserves special mention, it is Newcastle-born Edward Francis Benedict Charlton, who spent a single year at Ushaw (1875-6) before moving to Naval College, but his lifelong interest in Ushaw and his copious fine letters sent there during the Great War earned him a reputation still

very much alive at Ushaw when I entered its portals in 1938. Every time we young students trekked through the museum to the refectory we encountered war time souvenirs from various benefactors, the largest by far being Admiral Charlton's gift of a German landmine! His distinguished career covered the war years – starting as Commander of the East Coast mine-sweeping fleet, then Commander in Chief of Naval Operations of the Cape (South Africa). After the war, he became President of the Inter-Allied Naval Commission of Control in Berlin. The only Ushaw man to serve on the admiral's flagship offers a tribute:

> The various appointments that he held before, during and after the war surely testify to the Admiralty's high regard for his capabilities. The men who served under him held him in very high esteem, and he was a most popular officer with wardroom and lower deck … On board, when we could not get to Mass, the Catholic men were taken to his own cabin, where he personally said prayers for us. When we arrived at our base and were able to go ashore he was a living example of faith and practical Catholicism both to his own men and civilians ashore, and many must have been edified by the sight of a distinguished officer accompanying or rather leading his wife and family of eight young children to Mass … At times of the year like Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide, I remember, he would issue orders to the effect that every facility had to be given to Catholics on board to hear Mass and go to their duties ashore, and that their breakfast had to be kept waiting for them on return. Looking back now after a lapse of 10 years, with perhaps a little more experience of the world than I had then, and through the eyes of a priest, I realise more than ever what a grand type we had in our midst, an ideal family man, a great public man, the perfect type of Catholic layman, and one who put into practice the best Ushaw traditions. R.I.P.[9]

Two sea-chaplains in particular are of interest, Preston-born and Ushaw-trained brothers, William and Thomas Meagher. The former served right through the war and, in *HMS Bellerophon,* he took part in the indecisive but important thirty-six-hour battle at Jutland between the British Grand Fleet and the German High Seas Fleet, 31 May – 1 June 1916. He became parish priest of

St Cuthbert's, Durham, after the war and as chaplain he witnessed the last hanging in the gaol opposite. As a student Thomas spent some time in Paris and after ordination he returned to Ushaw to teach French. In March 1918 he volunteered to serve as a naval chaplain. By 1923 and in poor health he was working at St Andrews, Newcastle and in a number of parishes in the diocese thereafter. He died in 1936.[10]

4. Student ('Pals') Groups

In the unusual situation of having their students for the priesthood heeding the call to war, the bishops and the college president, encouraged them to enlist in groups as so many others were doing from villages, towns, colleges, factories, and so on, to form 'Pals brigades'. Four philosophers left at the very beginning of the war, one of whom, Bernard Daly, would be Ushaw's first fatality of the war, killed 11 February 1915. Sixteen students joined up at the Royal Artillery Garrison and were billeted first at St Cuthbert's Grammar School, Newcastle, then in Darlington before being sent to train at Hartlepool. Later they moved to Trowbridge where D. Cunningham and T. Donovan joined them.[11]

The young students who joined the newly created Tyneside Irish Battalion early in 1916 in the hope of staying together went first to 'dreary' Catterick Moor then to Hornsea, where in their leisure time they could enjoy its holiday attractions. The lack of a church there was soon put right by Fr Flanaghan at Marton who at some inconvenience to himself came every Sunday to say Mass for them until they left for Hull. It was there that the group began to split up, some going to France and Egypt; others, like Charles Clifford whose family lived in Hull, applied for commissions – he himself got one with the RFC.[12]

The most fortunate of these groups was without doubt the five who joined the Garrison Artillery in 1918, trained together as cadets and, once commissioned, managed to go to France together when the demoralised and exhausted troops had begun the final battles of the war. Raymund Corboy (the group's natural leader) with a touch of Ushaw humour assessed the group's contribution to the war effort:

> The four of us – you will remember that Jos. Vokes came out a week before us – arrived in France on July 11th and the chief point to note is that from that date our armies have had continued success, and now that our presence is being more and more felt the war has reached its climax. On the 13th we all separated.

After outlining the adventures of his pals (E. McManus, J. Vokes, L. O'Meara, and J. Young), he gave an idea of his own life in the army:

> I have the honour to be working on one of our most monster weapons, and have led a chequered existence. After a month of fairly stiff experience, I was sent for a further gunnery course, from which I

> returned to a very exciting business till a fortnight ago, when the battery came en garage [out on rest]. And resting I now am, and quite content to rest for some time yet … 'through everything we have all been perfectly happy, and personally, I wouldn't have missed being out here these last three months for anything – perhaps it is easy to say [that] now that I am out on rest, and miles from the war. My brother John arrived in France last week, and I have applied, with the strong support of my Major, to have him posted to this battery, and I believe he will land along this way any day now.[13]

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5. The Ushaw Cadet Corps [UCC]

Organised by the autumn of 1918 the UCC held its first full dress parade in honour of the northern bishops who had come to the college for their annual governors' meeting. The weather let it down somewhat, the day rather cold and the high wind in addition to blowing off caps prevented Orders being heard. The corps' first route march through East Cornsay and Esh Winning proved more successful only to be followed at the weekend by the corps failure to attend a general inspection in Durham because of torrential rain. Another, conducted by Colonel C. Liddell from Ravensworth Castle, praised the smartness displayed after so short a time in training, but added diplomatically 'I am quite sure that you would not like me to say that everything was perfect when I did not honestly think so', pointing out that its marching could have been brisker with arms swinging body motion. He also criticised the dull buttons of the uniforms of three cadets.

By this time membership of the UCC numbered 153, including twenty-three who joined in the autumn term. Its officers were: Major, the Rt Revd President of the College; Captain and CO, Revd W. Hodson; Lieutenant and Adjutant Revd J. Morrissey; Company Sergeant-Major J.A. Mulvany; Sergeants B. Whiteside, E Lawler, L. McReavy; Corporals J Birchall, J. Hickey, H. Thompson, M. McNarney; Lance-Corporals P. Coughlan, W. Curry, E. Ward, J. Roskell. With a drum and pipe band being trained by Mr. J. Cross, the college music master. Equipment for camping had to be bought and because the general expenses of the UCC were not being met from members' subscriptions, a successful appeal for help from the alumni was launched by the editors of *UM*. One other outing is recorded:

> Wednesday, May 21st [Peace Day] was a particularly delightful day. At 8.30 the President sang a solemn requiem for the Ushawmen who had fallen in the war. At 8.15 the cadets paraded on the Front and marched into the church through the West door. Special places were reserved for them near the sanctuary, and a guard of honour stood by the catafalque. This was the first time we had witnessed such a

> ceremony at Ushaw, and we have it on the authority of an Army man who was then staying with us that it was carried out most excellently. After Mass the cadets marched down the West drive along the Durham Road and up the Avenue to the Front where they halted in columns of platoons. The National Anthem was then sung … Perfect weather favoured an exceedingly popular playday.

And that is it. Nothing more is recorded. Presumably the college, if faithful to its purpose would be thinking of peace rather than war. Had this not been the war to end all wars?[14]

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Priests and Ecclesiastical Students killed during the war

Revd Thomas Bains 31 May 1918
Revd Matthew Burdess 19 April 1917

(Both were members of staff who volunteered as chaplains. The latter received a tribute in *Northern Cross* on the occasion of the centenary of his death.)

William Aspinall 1 August 1916 (at Ushaw 1915)
Michael Boland 24 February 1918 (1915-16)
Robert Bradley, MD, 25 January 1917 (1909-14)
Wilfrid Bradley 1 August 1918 (1914-17)
Matthew Clancy 9 April 1917 (1915-16)
Charles Coffey 27 May 1918 (1912-14)
Thomas Etches 10 June 1917 (1914-16)
William Hubberstey September 1918 (1912-17)
William Jinks 19 October 1917 (1912-16)
John Kelly, 19 October 1917 (1910-15)
William Marra 2 September 1916 (1914-15)
Bernard McCormick September 1918 (1910-17)
Francis McNiff 13 March 1918 (1914-16)
Horace O'Sullivan 24 April 1917 (1910-15)
Cuthbert Peckston 22 March 1918 (1909-)
Austin Tumilty 10 November 1917 (1912-16)

None of the students who enlisted by December 1914 feature in this sad list.

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Revd Fr William Joseph Finn CF

A full length military-uniformed oil painting of Fr Finn (see front cover) formed the centrepiece of the exhibition *The Shield of Faith: Ushaw College at War* mounted in 2016 and hopefully soon to be a feature of the new Heritage Museum at the college. He was born in Hull in 1875 to Irish parents and trained for the priesthood at Ushaw from 1889. He was ordained in 1900 for the diocese

of Middlesbrough at its cathedral, ministering there before moving to Houghton Hall as chaplain. At the beginning of the war he joined the 1st Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers as chaplain when they returned from Madras for training in England. They sailed on St. Patrick's Day 1915 to join the rest of the 29th Division as part of the heavily equipped allied army headed for the Dardanelles to create a diversion from the allied western front where the troops were struggling to hold the line. The Gallipoli campaign failed ignominiously: the narrow straits were heavily guarded by an enemy already apprised of allied plans, and one of the worst massacres of the war followed.

Against advice, William, probably believing as did the whole army that it would snatch an easy victory, persuaded the authorities to let him travel as an observer in the first boat, the collier *SS Clyde* (in use incidentally until 1966), heading for V beach at one of the narrowest parts of the straits, a custom-made death trap. Seeing hundreds of the men drowned, killed or dying within minutes of attempting to scramble ashore, he knew it was his duty to help them. An eye-witness who survived the carnage recalls:

> Dear Joe, the worst of all was we had a priest who came along with us. He insisted on coming with us, as he said he would be wanted for the poor boys. They were calling for him, but the poor priest could do nothing for them. He got out of the boat afterwards and made a great run for the beach, but the Turks got him as soon as he landed, for he was hit four times. He died that evening, but he was still asking for us to the time he died.[15]

Fr Thomas Harker, another Ushawman and later a Senior Chaplain, watched with absolute horror from another boat:

> It was difficult to reach land … the little bay was alive with troops, snipers, and machine guns, while on both sides they had magnificent forts … for three hours we had immediate sights of deeds of heroism and of such a shambles as I hope never to see again. Men drowned, men dying without any hope of being assisted, and the only passage to the shore was over the bodies of the living and the dead. The enemy's machine guns had naturally the easiest job in the world to range themselves upon the landing spots. Meanwhile the little boats were trying to land but just as they reached the shore they were met with a fusillade of rifles and machine guns, and the slaughter was appalling. Father Finn was in one of these first boats, and out of 45 in the boat 40 never reached the shore. He was hit in the boat and the four times more as he reached the shore and tried to crawl to shelter. He died after two hours' agony (RiP). I buried him myself ... It is unfortunately true that many of our wounded have been bayonetted and outrageously treated.[16]

A third account comes from a well-known Anglican chaplain who gave public lectures after the war on his experiences at Gallipoli and Egypt. He witnessed the scene from one of the larger ships carrying nearly eight thousand troops of the Norfolk and Suffolk regiments:

> Before the V Beach landing [Father Finn] had asked to be allowed to accompany the Dublins into what became an infamous massacre. He is reputed to have said that 'the priest's place is beside dying soldiers; I must go'. He certainly spent a considerable part of the day beside dying soldiers as there was an abundance of them at V Beach. He attempted to save a number of drowning and wounded men before being hit himself, in the right arm. He managed to get ashore and crawl around the beach, offering help or consolation to the wounded and dying Dublins and Munsters. In order to give absolution he had to hold up his injured right arm with his left. While he was blessing one of the men in this fashion, there was a shrapnel burst above him which blew part of his skull away. He was buried on the beach and his grave marked with a cross made out of an ammunition box 'To the memory of the Revd Captain Finn'. There were many brave men at V Beach (and all over Gallipoli) but you can't help but be struck by the bravery of a man that didn't have to be there.[17]

The cross has been replaced with a simple gravestone. A terrible death indeed, yet it was one which hundreds of thousands of others met during the four years' of fighting. Apparently Fr Finn refused a VC for his bravery on the grounds that he had disobeyed regulations, but he was awarded a posthumous MC (too late to be listed in the *UM*'s list of honours). The Sacred Heart church in Hull was funded in his memory by his brother Frank.

It was not his death that brought him into prominence, however, but the widespread understanding that he had been the first chaplain of any faith in the British services to die in the war. That assertion needs to be qualified, if not corrected because Dom Basil Gwydir, a Benedictine priest of Douai Abbey, died before the end of 1914. He had been parish priest of St David's Priory in Swansea and became one of the few Catholic chaplains to attend the spiritual

needs of the Royal Navy at the beginning of the conflict, none of whom at first was allowed by the Admiralty to serve on warships – in stark contrast to the 233 Anglicans attached to the Fleet at sea:

> Following his appointment as full-time officiating chaplain, Canon Gwydir worked at Rosyth and Queensferry and at the end of October 1914 departed for Portsmouth in the Home Fleet hospital ship *Rohilla*, carrying sick and wounded seamen and marines. During a storm on October 30 the ship was wrecked off Whitby. Fr Gwydir remained onboard with the wounded and was drowned with them.[18]

From a practical point of view Fr Finn certainly merits his special place in the college's exhibition as the first diocesan priest or the first English chaplain to die on the battlefield, albeit with a mention of the Welshman Dom Basil.

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The Bombing of Alma Mater Duacensis

In *NCH* 56 (2015) Fr Dominique Minskip of the Middlesbrough diocese published an article 'The Man who Bombed the English College, Douai', not so much to draw attention to the bombing as to identify the bomber as [Thomas] Cuthbert Clifford, one of four brothers from Hull whose studies for the priesthood at Ushaw were interrupted by the call-up. They were Charles (born 1893), William (1895), Thomas Cuthbert (1897) and Gerald (1899). Dominic faced two problems, the possibility of a fifth brother Henry, and the apparent bilocation of William. He solved them with the evidence available to him, but the Student List at Ushaw provides more a conclusive solution. There was a Henry Clifford, but he came from Hamburg, not Hull, and belonged to an older generation: born 1861, at Ushaw 1874-8). His younger brother, born 1862, at Ushaw 1874-83 was called William. These were doubtless the two Ushawmen that Bernard Ellison met in the German prisoner of war camp, not the two from the Hull family.

Here is Bernard's story. A student in theology, he and his younger brother Edward (a grammarian) had gone with their mother and two sisters for a holiday in neutral Belgium just days before its unexpected and brutally devastating invasion by the German army. Avoiding attention, the family managed to survive, but in November the authorities arrested Bernard, later sending him to the notorious prisoner of war camp at Wittenberg, where, with the help of British medics, he and others, though considerably weakened, survived the cholera and typhus epidemics which raged during the first six months of 1915. He was transferred to Rubleben with its much improved arrangements, not the least of them being a chapel where a volunteer English-speaking German priest, looked after by the former Ushaw students, said Mass regularly. After two years, released by the intervention of the Holy See, Bernard ventured out to Italy to help the Red Cross, and later to Bombay, ultimately becoming Director of its

Natural History Museum. Edward, too young to be deported, found his way back to England with the help of the newly arrived Americans and signed up with the Indian army. The rest of the family remained undisturbed until they were repatriated some time before the end of hostilities. The brothers paid a courtesy visit to Ushaw in October 1920.[19]

The story of the bombing of Douai College was told by Fr Minskip and the minor damage it caused was described by Fr John Thompson during his visit to Douai shortly after the Armistice of November 1918. It is sufficient to note here in the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the college's foundation at Douai the irony that the bomber happened to be the Ushaw student 2nd Lieut. [Thomas] Cuthbert Clifford, RFC. The whole episode rightly brings into focus the morality of modern warfare, and Fr Minskip duly provides his own reflections, unearthing sombre details about Cuthbert's later health.[20]

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War Honours[21]

K.C.M.G. and Commander Legion of Honour: Vice-Admiral Sir E. Charlton, C.B.
C.B.; Crown of Belgium, Commander; K.B.E.: Surg.-Capt. D. McNabb
OBE: Edward Jefferys
DSO: Col. J. Reynolds; Lt.-Col. B. D. Gibson (R.I.P.); Revd T.H. Evans, SJ; Capt. Cecil McFeely, MC
M.C. & Bar: Rev. J. Browne, Capt. C. Marshall, Capt. C. McFeely, D.S.O.
MC: Capt. R. Bickerdike (R.I.P.), 2nd Lt. F. Brittorous, Revd J Browne, 2nd Lt. J.P. Carroll, Capt. W. Clapperton, Capt. W. Hickey, Rev. W. Leighton, Capt C Marshall, 2nd Lt. J.W. Marshall (R.I.P.), Revd R. McGuinness, Revd Jas. McShane, Capt. F. Mulgrew, Lieut. Desmond O'Kelly, Revd R.V. O'Shaughnessy, 2nd Lt. J.F. Thelwall, Capt. T. Thornton, Capt. A. Wilkinson, Capt. B. Wilkinson.
DFC: Lieut. Geo. Welsh.
Croix de Guerre: Lt. Col. B.D. Gibson, (with palms) DSO, Lieut. C. Coffey (R.I.P.), Lieut. J.F. Thelwall, M.C.
MM: John Conway, Herbert Power, Ludovic Gordon, Bernard McDermott
Many men were Mentioned in Dispatches.

Citations in the *London Gazette*[22]

> Captain W. Hickey: for two days and two nights, practically without sleep [he] attended to the wounded in the field and organised stretcher parties to evacuate casualties. His work was carried out under the most difficult conditions and he was under heavy fire the whole time. He set a fine example of courage and endurance
>
> Captain C. Marshall: [He] led his company with great gallantry in an attack without artillery support over a thousand yards of ground in face of heavy fire from artillery and machine guns and thoroughly routed the enemy with

severe casualties, capturing many prisoners, machine guns and two field guns. He held on to the position he had gained with much determination, though exposed to the fire of machine guns and field guns firing over open sights. He set a splendid example of courage and tenacity to his men.

Colonel B.D. Gibson (of the Hexham family closely linked with the history of Ushaw): Commanding a battalion of the line at the beginning of the attack, he kept on sending all the information about the enemy's advance to the moment when his P.C. was completely surrounded. He rallied all available men and opened an attack on three sides. Owing to his example, and his absolute scorn of danger, the enemy's advance was stopped for a long time. He was killed by a bullet in the head while standing on the parapet observing the enemy, who was advancing by a trench of communication.

Sapper Ludovic Gordon (a student): For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during operations against Mont St Quentin, near Peronne. On the 31st August, 1918, after most of his section had been casualties, Sapper Gordon continued his work on the bridge across the Somme River to Clery under heavy shell fire, showing utter disregard of danger, and very materially assisting in the construction of the footbridge, which enabled the 14th Brigade to cross to Clery.

*

Ecclesiastical Students who Returned to the College Wounded or Gassed[23]

Charles Flynn Tyneside Irish Jan 1916. Severe head wound at Arras. Easter 1917. Hospitalised until his discharge Nov. 1918

Richard Crawford Tyneside Irish Jan 1916. Several wounds at Passchendale Oct. 1917. Discharged March 1918.

Francis Burney Tyneside Irish Jan 1916. Contracted dysentery in France summer 1917 and sent back to England Sept. Back at the Front Feb. 1918 attached to 25th battalion of Northumberland Fusiliers. Gassed at Armentieres 6th April sent back to England. Discharged 20th Dec.

Arthur McCormack Tyneside Irish Jan 1916. Musketry instructor in England until Easter 1918. Jaw broken by advancing Germans ten days after his arrival in France. Hospitalised in England until the autumn then discharged.

Austin Wood KOYLI early 1917. In France July, flesh wound at Cambrai, and leg wound some time later. Instructor at Clipstone, demobilised Dec 1918.

Leonard Cornwall Motor Transport end of 1916, later Royal Fusiliers then Machine Gun Corps. Drafted to France June 1917. Gassed at Bourlon Wood and hospitalized after which he returned to the Front. Applied for a commission in the RAF, but was demobilised before it came through.

Austin Baron Public Schools Battalion Nov 1915. Sent to France Sept 1916, but was soon posted to Salonika where he contracted malaria. Granted sick leave

July 1918.
Austin Fee Tyneside Irish Jan 1916. Sergeant-instructor in musketry. Obtained a commission in the RAF. Survived three air crashes, (absent from the group photograph taken in Spring 1919).
Cyril Fitzsimmons RFA 1917. Wounded and gassed in France Oct 1918.
Hugh Welch Welsh Regiment. Nov 1917 wounded in Bourlon Wood and rescued after three days only to be taken prisoner some months later.[24]

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Ecclesiastical Students who Returned to the College 1918-19[25]

The names are arranged according to the dioceses to which they belonged, and an asterisk denotes those who were wounded or gassed.

Archdiocese of Liverpool: E Gray, E McManus, T Gore, F Holland, E Murphy, J Nixon, R Gore.
Hexham and Newcastle: *C Marshall, A Fee, *C Fitzsimmons, *A McCormack, *Ric Crawford, F McGuinness, 0 Moody, G Clifford, Jos. Coutts, J Corboy, A McShane, *D O'Connor, W Bennison, T Cunningham, L Landreth, *J Magin, *M Gallagher. Two other Hexham students, J Crawford and M Henry, returned from the O.T.C.
Leeds: MrW Moverley, *G Grogan, B Scannell, LO'Meara, *T Donovan.
Middlesbrough: *A Wood, L Jopling, *L Cornwall.
Salford: A Baron, *F Burney, J Masterson.
Shrewsbury: *H Welch, D Cunningham, A Roberts.
Students at St Joseph's, Upholland, who came to Ushaw on demobilization: J Taylor, Jos. Turner, J Bennett., J Parkinson, N Coughlan, J Gore and F Johnson.
Students at St Bede's, Manchester, before joining the forces: H O'Neill, W Boddy, W McGah, Thos. Elliott and Jas. Wilson.

*

The Last Post

The writer of 'Last Notes from the Front' in *UM* 1919, reflected that

> When the war broke out the number of Ushaw men who were known to be in the Navy or Army (including the Territorials) was not more than about 20. In the first list published in December 1914 it had grown to 73; in December 1918 it was 537, including chaplains [of whom there were nearly eighty]. Of these 537 we now know that 72 had been killed, whilst six, including a cadet in the American Army, died of disease. … Out of the 72 who were killed, no fewer than 16 were ecclesiastical students who entered the Army directly from Ushaw. Amongst the dead are four priests, three being killed and one dying of disease in Mesopotamia.

In addition, after the war ended a chaplain, Thomas Whittaker, whose lungs had

been severely damaged by gas, died of influenza, and an alumnus, Captain C.A. Brown, who had seen a good deal of service at the front and suffered a wound to his right thigh, was killed in January 1919 testing a new machine for the RAF.[26]

Another assessment limits itself to the 93 alumni who were regarded as being

> still ecclesiastical students after they had entered the Army. Out of this total 16 lost their lives in action – an average of almost one in six of those who joined up. Fifty-two resumed their studies on demobilisation, two of them going to societies for the Foreign Missions, but three of the 52 were found to be physically unfit and one of the three has since died. Three others have also left the College. Of the remainder, two are still in the Army, one is convalescent after a great deal of illness, and 22 did not return after being demobilized. On the other hand, one who had left before joining the Army is once more pursuing his studies for the priesthood.[27]

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The Ushaw War Memorial

I end with a word about the chapel which was built by subscription as a thanksgiving offering for the return of the living and a testimony of admiration for the dead. By the time I went to Ushaw and for long afterwards students identified the Memorial with the exquisitely crafted plaque attached to the open side of the English Martyrs Chapel, still fresh in its newness. Understandably so, as its list of the 99 war dead was a poignant but hidden reminder of the war's brutal human cost to the college. The fact is that the whole chapel – the size of a medieval chantry – was conceived as the memorial, where Mass would be offered for those who had died in such an inhumane manner. An appeal to fund this chapel was launched at a meeting of the St. Cuthbert's Society early in January 1919. It included the provision of a monthly Mass for the fallen as well as the building of a new chemical laboratory. To save expense, the chapel would be linked to the already mooted memorial for Bishop Thomas Wilkinson of Hexham and Newcastle whose acumen as President (1890-1909) had put the College on a firm financial footing. The committee aimed to raise £5,000. By the end of December 1919 it lacked only another £1,000 but as so often the case, other factors, including the collapse of the building firm commissioned to do the work, led to a delay of nearly ten years; the two altars were not consecrated until 8 June 1928.[28]

The editor of *UM* explained the memorial's dedication:

In honorem Beati Cuthberti Mayne et omnium Sanctorum Martyrum Angliae

> It was felt to be a most desirable thing that the martyrs of our own Alma Mater, Douai, should be associated in an especial way with this

chapel erected by Ushawmen to the honour of our English Martyrs in memory of our college brethren who lost their lives in the war. [29]

Such a tortuous dedication inevitably led to the chapel being known as English Martyrs and its association with World War I gradually overlooked. During my time at the College (over thirty years) we never had a Service of Remembrance, not even on Armistice Day. Thankfully, a revival of interest in the war has helped to right that wrong.

I first thought of writing this article under the title 'Ushaw: At Home and Away 1914-18', intending to include the impact of the war on the running of the college itself. It has not worked out that way. I do not apologise for the omission. I feel privileged to have spent my time bringing back the respectful memory of those who offered their finest years fighting for our well-being.

Notes & References

[1] *UM,* 1914, p. 307
[2] *UM* 1915, p. 74
[3] *UM* 1916, p. 83
[4] *The Tablet,* 27 July 1918
[5] *UM* 1916, pp.73/4
[6] J. Sheen, *Tyneside Irish,* 2010, p. 89
[7] Sheen, p. 163/4
[8] *UM* 1915, pp. 298
[9] *UM* 1937, p. 295
[10] *Northern Catholic Calendar* 1937, pp. 112/3
[11] *UM 1917,* pp. 67-9 gives a student's account of life in the army.
[12] *UM 1917*, pp. 66/7; *Northern Catholic History* 56, 2015, p. 42 ff.
[13] *UM* 1918, pp. 315-7
[14] *UM* 1918, pp. 156, 234-7; 1919, p. 146
[15] 'Remembering Father Finn', Middlesbrough diocese, April 2015
[16] *UM* 1915, pp. 183
[17] www: *Great War Forum*
[18] www: J. Hagerty, *Benedictine Military Chaplains in the First World War*, 1998, p. 12.
[19] *UM 1915, p. 74; 1917, p. 189; 1920, p. 189*
[20] *NCH* 58, 2017, pp. 43-47; *UM* 1919, p. 148
[21] *UM* 1919, p .127
[22] *UM* 1919, pp. 32/33, 148
[23] *UM* 1919, pp. 56-8
[24] The account of his experience as a POW is at *UM* 1919, pp. 42-6
[25] *UM* 1919, pp. 128-9
[26] *UM* 1919, pp. 31-3; J. Hagerty, *Priests in Uniform: Military Chaplains in the First World War, 2017*
[27] UM 1920, pp. 43/4
[28] *UM* 1919 32/3; 1932, p. 120f
[29] *UM* 1928, pp. 120-6

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DOUAI STUDENTS FROM THE DIOCESE OF DURHAM

W.V. Smith

This article first appeared in the *Ushaw Magazine* vol 78, 1968 and is reproduced with permission. The subject is of continuing interest and is therefore worth re-editing with up-dated biographical material.[1]

While a considerable amount of material has been published about the seminaries abroad, including the extant College Diaries, little has been written to show how the students were selected and how they were maintained and even less regarding the funds given to the college for their maintenance. Several manuscripts throw light on these financial arrangements and show how the various funds were used to comply with the wishes of the donors.

The first is the *Account Book of the Yorkshire Agents for Douai College,* 1722-1793 which includes also various sums sent to the college from Catholics residing in the diocese of Durham. There would probably be payments made through other channels as well for students from these parts, so that this source of information does not cover all cases. The Yorkshire Agent had two groups of students in his accounts. First, there were those whose *maintenance* at the college was paid by some fund, but whose *extras,* such as pocket-money, medical attention etc. was contributed by parents or friends. Examples are John Hankin, the Newcastle lawyer, paying for his son John, George Potts of Throckley for his son, also named John, and Thomas Maire of Hartbushes for his brothers William and Henry. The second group consisted of those whose total maintenance was found by their families. This was the larger number of students and they came from different classes of people. There were land-owners, as the two families of Jenison of Walworth and Jenison of Hurworth, Richard Hodgson of Lintz paying for his son Ralph, George Trotter of Byers Green for his son George and Ferdinando Johnson of Middleton-in-Teesdale for his son Robert. Thomas Radcliffe of Low Hamsterley was most probably a tenant farmer, and Albert Silvertop was in the coal trade at Blaydon (his son and grandson were to buy and build up the Minsteracres estate). Other students, like John Dunn and George White, though paid for by their parents or others, were from the poorer sort of people so that they and their families are completely untraced. Edward Debord, an innkeeper of Durham City, found the pension for two sons at the college. John was ordained a priest, James did not finish the course; when the two boys were at the college together he not surprisingly fell heavily in arrears with his payments.

Priests in England were frequently responsible to the college for the maintenance of students. Thomas Gibson of Newcastle paid for his nephew George Gibson and later for another nephew, probably William Gibson, later college President and Vicar Apostolic. All these entries occur between 1722 and 1750. After that year the seventh *Douai Diary* is bare of details of the students

and consequently it becomes very difficult to trace where they came from and who their parents were. Thus, the *Prefect of Studies Register of Seniors and Students,* 1750-1794, is essential in tracing the dates of arrival and leaving the College, but is lacking in all other detail.

Funds given for the education of boys at Douai appear to have been treated in two ways. Sometimes the capital remained in the hands of trustees in England and they transmitted the income to the college; in other cases the capital was handed over to the college, which invested the money and used the rents or dividends to pay the pensions of students chosen by those responsible either in England or at the college. There are three manuscripts at St Edmund's College, Ware, which contain between them a complete account of the funds of which Douai had the administration. The first is the *Liber Memorialis Praesidii Collegii Anglorum Duacensis.* This book contains a statement of all the benefactions known to have been received by the college, of money and goods. The second is: *Book of Pensioners showing what persons are upon our Funds. From the year 1758*, and it continues until the closure of the college. The third: *Synopsis Pensionum, or a short view of the present Rents, Articles of Agreement, and obligations annexed to such of our Funds, as are designed for the maintenance of Scholars,* seems to be a precis of the other two.

The manuscripts show that there were seven funds for students coming from the diocese of Durham. The donors of four of these, which were given during the last years of the college, were: Mrs Mary Maire of Lartington, who latterly lived and died at Headlam; Bishop Matthew Gibson; and the two brothers John and Albert Silvertop. The fifth was bequeathed by Dr William Howard of Durham, who died in 1751, but it only became effective after the death of his sister Dorothy who died ten years later. The other two funds were given very much earlier by Roger Midford and Nicholas Salvin, who both died in 1697.

The Midford Fund

Roger Midford was the son of Luke and Elizabeth (née Robson) of Thropton Spital, Rothbury.[2] He is said to have been educated at Douai but there is no mention of him there unless he is the *Robert Midford,* aged twenty-one in Philosophy in 1663. The date of his ordination is unknown but by 1672 he was chaplain to Sir Francis Radcliffe (later first Earl of Derwentwater) at Dilston Castle, near Corbridge, and tutor to his sons. He accompanied his patron to Rome in 1675 and while there he instituted this fund and another to support a priest at Thropton. In 1687-8 he was made V.G. and in 1694 Archdeacon of Northumberland and Durham. He served at Dilston until his death; he was buried in Corbridge church on 27 May, 1697.

There are two contemporary accounts of his donation to Douai. The first is by Dr. Edward Paston, then President of the college. He stated that £400 had been

paid to the college in 1700. He then went on to quote a letter from the Revd Francis Hodgson,[3] [one of the trustees, dated 2 June, 1702:

> What Mr Midford requires is that some indigent, yet hopeful youth born in Northumberland be maintained at your house in order to your calling for the space of seven years, at the expiration of which another is to be sent by his Trustees. Mr Midford's Relations are always to have preference, when any is found fit amongst them at the time preferred, which is all that is required about that affair.

The other account is by the Revd John Cotes[4], one of the superiors of the Clergy Common Fund (Northern Brethren's Fund) from 1739 to his death in 1794. He left a manuscript which reads:

> An account of what I have heard relating to the Funds left by Mr Roger Midford. He left a Fund to Doway College for the education of a youth. The preference was to be given to the nearest of kin, and in case no relation was fit to go, to a Northumberland boy: "Whoever is sent upon the Fund may, if he chooses, continue ten years without taking any engagement upon him. He left another Fund for one to assist the People near Rothbury which is to be supplied by one educated on that left to Doway."
>
> N.B. Mr Midford had two sisters, the offspring of the elder are the Potts of Throckley, of the younger was Mrs Crawford who had three husbands viz. Mr Storey Mr Tyndall and Mr Crawford, and had issue by every one of them. The above account I had from Mr Midford and Mr Carnaby alias Gardiner as witness my hand, J. Cotes.
>
> N.B. In a letter from Mr Green of Doway dated 26 August 1752. it is said the conditions of Mr Midford's Fund that a new incumbent be named from 7 years to 7 years; that the present incumbent remain upon his 7 years, without regard of taking or not taking the oath.

The only difference between the two accounts is the length of time the student was allowed to stay on the fund, that is, seven or ten years; with the exception of the second incumbent, it was always seven years. The two priests James and Luke Gardiner, were brothers, and nephews of Roger though neither of them seems to have been a trustee. John Cotes, who knew them and their families well, lived on until the closure of Douai, so there was an unusual continuity in the administration of the Fund. The students on the Midford Fund were:

> **Luke Gardiner** (alias Robert Carnaby) was born on 10 June 1683 to John and Catherine (née Midford) of Edlingham, Northumberland. He was placed on the fund 1 July 1698; he took the oath at Douai on 25 September 1703 and left for St Gregory's, Paris, in 1704. After ordination in 1713 and taking his Doctor's cap, he returned to England in 1716. He was chaplain to Lady Mary Radcliffe in Old Elvet, Durham, till her death in 1724; he

was then with Mrs Mary Maire at Gilesgate, Durham until 1732. In 1736 he went to Newhouse, Co. Durham, where he died in October, 1740.

John Dunn was born in 1692 to John and Mary (née Stoker or Carr) of Edlingham, and was admitted to the fund on 10 October 1705. After his ordination at Cambrai on 27 March 1717 he returned to England and was at Nidd in 1728 and Ravenstoft in 1735. He died on 29 January, 1741.

John Cotes was born on 4 April 1700 to John and Winifred (née Strother, daughter of a Catholic doctor) in a house next to the Plough Inn, Bondgate Without, Alnwick, which would become the first Catholic chapel in the town. He was admitted to Douai on 24 August 1715. (The manuscript notes that owing to the wars there was no income for two years, so that he should not have been admitted till 1717, but the trustees agreed to a two-year interval after his seven years were completed.) He was ordained at Ypres in September 1725 and went to England five years later. He served at Hardwick 1730-37 (with the Maire family) and Nether Witton from 1737; after the Thorntons closed the chapel in 1773 he removed to Witton Shields. He was the first superior of the Northern Brethren's Fund from 1739. He retired in 1793 to Thropton where he died on 8 July 1794 and was buried at Rothbury.

John Potts. Roger Midford in his will mentioned his niece Mary Cooper who married George Potts (later of Throckley) at Hexham in 1704 and their eldest son John was born the following year. John was admitted to Douai on 24 June 1724, aged twenty, and so had to sit with much younger boys. He left in Philosophy on 27 October 1731. In 1745 he was granted a dispensation to marry Helen Crawford of Thropton, related in the third degree of consanguinity.

Luke Potts was born on 21 February 1716/17, younger brother of John (above). He entered Douai on 15 November 1732 and was there till 1739. He was ordained at Arras in 1744 and left for the mission in 1745. In November he was appointed to Egton Bridge in North Yorkshire. Thomas Liddell, his predecessor, had been indiscreet about his Jacobite sympathies and it was thought prudent for him to lie low and he left the area. When it became known that arrests of Jacobite suspects were about to be made, Potts and Monox Harvey, missioner in nearby Ugthorpe, sought refuge in Egton but no-one would take them in and they were forced to wander the moors. Exhausted, they returned to Ugthorpe where they were arrested and incarcerated in York Castle. Harvey spent eighteen months in prison and when released he went to his native Wales. Potts was released in December 1746 and retired to Thropton where died on 16 August 1787.

James Potts was admitted 4 September 1761 and left 7 August 1764; he was probably the son of James Potts, mustard-maker of Newcastle and nephew of John and Luke.

William Storey was admitted 4 November 1739 and went away 28 July 1744.

There was a vacancy for two years during which time the income was used for the pension of

James Dixon born on 8 August 1720 son of Arthur and Eleanor (née Keen) of Lancashire or Westmorland, and sent to Douai by the Revd Thomas Royden, V.G. of Dodding Green, in 1737. He was ordained in 1745 and spent his missionary life as chaplain to Marmaduke Tunstall (1672-1760) of Wycliffe in the North Riding where he died in 1759. He had been first superior of the Yorkshire Brethren's Fund.[5]

Matthew Gibson, son of Jasper and Margaret (née Leadbitter), born in Warden, Northumberland on 23 March 1734. He entered Douai on 29 September 1747, was ordained c.1758 and after some years teaching Philosophy and Theology, he went to Lartington in July 1768 and in 1773 he went to Headlam near Gainford with Mrs Mary Maire. He was made Vicar General in 1776 and in September 1780 was consecrated bishop of Comana *in partibus infidelium* in London as Vicar Apostolic, Northern District, in succession to William Walton. He continued to live at Headlam until 1784, when he moved to Stella Hall where he died on 17 May, 1790.

Thomas Storey was born in Northumberland c. 1738, son of Thomas and Frances (née Selby). He was admitted to Douai on 30 June 1753. He was ill for some time and the date of his ordination is not known. He was sent to the English mission in September 1776 and served at Callaly Castle to 1786, Swinburne Castle 1786-87, briefly 'on supply' at Thropton, Hexham 1788-94 and then at Newcastle. After supping with Sir John Lawson and having been frightened or accosted by some women on his way, he dropped dead on reaching his house in The Nuns on 2 February, 1795.

William Witham was admitted on 21 August 1766 and went away on 9 August 1771.

John Crawford was admitted on 13 June 1772 and left owing to ill-health on 8 August 1775.

Thomas Sanderson was born in 1761, son of William (a Lancastrian) and Clementina (née Entick, of County Durham).He was admitted on 11 November 1776 and left for the mission on 6 September 1790. He was chaplain to the Warwick family in Wetheral, Cumberland till at least 1808. He was then at Wycliffe and he travelled weekly to hear the confessions of the nuns at Scorton. He died at Wycliffe and his will (made in June and

proved in December 1826) included a number of bequests to individuals with the residue going to Ushaw College for the education of students.

Owing to the amount of accumulated income, on 2 August 1783 two students were placed on the fund. These were

John and Matthew Gibson. John left on 4 December 1787 and Matthew was transferred to other college funds. He left Douai in May 1792.

Matthew Forster was sent by the Revd John Cotes on 3 July 1788. He was among the *Trent-deux* imprisoned at Doulens and returned to England with them. He was at Crook Hall for a short period but was not ordained.

The first sixty-five years were most successful in supplying priests for the English Mission. Luke Gardiner, John Cotes, John Dunn, Luke Potts and Thomas Storey were ordained, and Matthew Gibson became a bishop. For the remainder of the years of the college, only one student, Thomas Sanderson, was probably the priest of that name. Remembering that the names of Midford's relatives as being Potts, Storey and Crawford, it is evident how his wishes were respected that his family were to be preferred. The remainder of the students were all Northumbrians with the exception of James Dixon in the inter-regnum and William Witham.

With regard to Roger Midford's second fund, intended to meet the needs of the people near Rothbury, who were to be served by one of the priests educated on his Douai Fund, the first incumbent was

William Edisford, was born in 1673 in Yorkshire to William and Anne. He entered the Venerable English College, Rome, on 18 October 1691 and was ordained on 2 March 1697. He went to Thropton and died soon after 1700. He was followed by

James Gardiner (alias Midford) Roger Midford's elder nephew, was born on 4 April 1669 to John and Catharine (née Midford) of Edlingham. He took the mission oath at Douai on 4 December 1692 and was ordained at some point later. In his *Horae Diurnae* he wrote

'Aprill the 30th 99 being Thursday about 4 aclock I took Shipping at Callis for Dover but was miserably putt ashore about Hyde, which according to the English account is the 20th of April, 1699'.

He was imprisoned in Preston during the Jacobite Rising of 1715. He was in York by 1725 but he went to Thropton shortly afterwards and remained there until his death on 12 March 1750. His *Horae* and other books are initialled J W M C; the W.C. being probably where he was first stationed.

He was succeeded by **Luke Potts** who stayed until his death, in 1787. Then **Thomas Storey** went to Thropton for some twelve months; he was said to be 'on supply' there. He was perhaps sent to see if he liked the place and would

settle there. However, he returned to Hexham, and after that time there was no connection between the two Midford Funds.

The Salvin Fund

Compared with the fund of Roger Midford, the Salvin Fund is much more difficult to disentangle. Among his various generous bequests to the Church, Nicholas Salvin (died 1697) left a fund for the education of a boy in a seminary abroad. The wording was:

> For the maintenance of a youth at Lisbon or some other seminary of the clergy as my nephews Gerard Salvin and Thomas Maire shall think fit. This youth if a Salvin or of nearest kindred to the Salvins is to be chosen if thought hopeful to be a good man; if there be none such to be done upon a vacancy, then where Gerard Salvin and Thomas Maire aforesaid shall think fit. This trust to vest in them immediately after my death; this money arises out of tythes of East Renton, what can be made of them more or less must go to that use.

As the date of these secret instructions was 9 November 1696, it seems that Nicholas Salvin was already paying for a boy at Lisbon. This presumption rests upon the fact that among the students of that College was **Robert Bolney** 'upon the Salvin Fund which was afterwards given up'. Robert, born in 1679, of the recusant family of Bolney of Chester-le-Street, was said to be at Lisbon from 1687, and ordained by 1705. He died in Lisbon in 1716.

The fund at Lisbon being vacant before or in 1705, the Trustees transferred it to Douai that same year, paying £400 to the Revd Francis Hodgson, the College Agent in the North of England, and he handed it over to the college. An agreement was drawn up between Dr Edward Paston, the President of Douai and the Trustees, but this was soon cancelled, and a new one was written by Dr Robert Witham, before he succeeded Dr Paston as President. The trustees agreed to the terms, but refused to sign them owing to the difficulties of the times. The terms briefly were**:** the boy to be sent on the fund was to be at least fourteen years old and hopeful of being a priest. His maintenance was to continue till the end of his divinity course, unless it happened that he began to teach as a Minor Professor. On his return to England either after his ordination or when he gave up his studies, he was to be given £10 for his clothes and as a viaticum. A Salvin or near relation of that family was to have the preference. The nomination of the student was to be in the hands of the trustees and their heirs. From the names of the earlier students on the Fund it is clear that Gerard Salvin and Thomas Maire agreed to appoint a student alternately, Salvin nominating first. This first student was a relation of his named

> **Nicholas Skelton.** He is not mentioned in the Skelton pedigree, but he was the grandson of John Skelton and Elizabeth Salvin (aunt of Gerard Salvin the trustee) of Armathwaite Castle, Cumberland. Their son Richard married

Mary Meynell of Kirkby Ravensworth and their two sons became priests. James was born in 1690 and went to the English College, Lisbon, where he was ordained on 23 December 1714. He served on the mission around Ripon from 1727 from Ravenstoft Hall with his assistant Henry Maire. In 1745, both were imprisoned 'some time in Ripon Gaol upon suspicion of corresponding with' Prince Charles but they returned to their posts on being released. Nicholas was born on 17 December 1691. He entered Douai on the Salvin Fund on 10 October 1705 but he was not ordained until 1718 because of ill-health. He left for the mission in 1720 and became the first resident priest in Lancaster. He was imprisoned in Lancaster Castle during the Jacobite Rising of 1745 on the evidence of one, Henry Bracken:

> Here is a romish priest who stands committed amongst their prisoners of the D. of Newcastle, who gives 5 or 7 pounds a week in clothes money etc among the rebels … His name is Nicholas Skelton, he has lived in Lancaster long … Has known him 12 or 14 years and a large assembly of hearers he had, for this is a vile neighbourhood for papists and jacobites.

The following note was written by Thomas Maire, but is undated and the recipient is not named but was almost certainly Christopher Maire of Hartbushes:

> Dear Cousin.
> It is so long since I had hinted to you that I had a prospect of doing a service to my godson that you may wonder you heard nothing from me since. The difficulty of corresponding at so great a distance was the occasion of it which with some other occasions has induced us to change it to the house where you and I had our education. If your son's capacity and inclination fit him for the intention, you will only have the charge of getting him thither, which the sooner you do the better, for there will be a letter before him to gain him admittance.

This referred to

> **William Maire.** He was born on 3 January 1703/4, fifth son of Thomas and Mary (née Fermor) of Lartington. He was admitted to the Salvin Fund in July, 1714. He was ordained on 23 December 1730 and completed his education in Paris. He went to England in July 1735 and lived with his relatives at Lartington until he succeeded his great-uncle and namesake at Gilesgate in 1740, a mission founded by his uncle Nicholas Salvin. He transferred to the other Durham mission in Old Elvet a year later and in 1759 he was appointed V.G. Bishop Richard Challoner consecrated him Bishop of Cinna, *in partibus infidelium,* on 29 May 1768 as coadjutor to Bishop Francis Petre. He was in poor health by then and he died at Lartington on 26 July 1769 (before Petre) and was buried in the church at Romaldkirk.[6]

The Maire family memorial tablets in Romaldkirk church.
Catholic landowners were frequently buried in their local parish churches and given prominent memorials.
[Photo: J.S. Wheeler]

Dr Robert Witham, now President of the College, added a note to his account of the fund:

> Gerard Salvin Esq. desired me to take notice that he having the nomination for the next time, designed and desired that it may be one of his nephews son to Mr Vavasour of Willoughtoft.

Troth Salvin, sister of Gerard, the trustee, married Philip Saltmarsh of Yorkshire. Their daughter Elizabeth married Peter Vavasour of Willitoft and they were the parents of Peter and John. In October 1718 William Maire was transferred to the Pope's Fund and **Peter Vavasour** was placed on the Salvin Fund. He died in March 1719, and was succeeded by his brother **John Vavasour**, who left the college ten years later. The next beneficiaries were the sons of Christopher and Frances (née Ingleby) Maire.

William Maire, was born on 26 February and took the oath at Douai on 28 December 1717. After his ordination at Cambrai on 22 May 1723, he taught at Douai before leaving for the mission on 27 April 1728. He served firstly in the Durham area and then in York where he was drowned on 30 June 1733. He was buried in St Michael le Belfry.

Henry Maire, born on 19 May 1714, entered Douai on 5 June 1726. He was ordained at Cambrai on 31 May 1738 and returned to England in August. He was first at Leyburn, then Raventofts and then Nidd. He was imprisoned in Ripon gaol in 1745/6. His final posting was to Cliffe in 1767 and he died there on 5 November, 1775.[7]

George Anderson was placed on the fund in August, 1733, and left the college in 1740.

With two students on the fund for some years, it became heavily in debt to the college, and to have the accounts balanced, the fund remained vacant from 1740 to 1748. This interregnum left some money in hand, and, as with the Midford Fund, **James Dixon** had two years maintenance out of it. Charles **Ashmal** entered on the fund in July 1748 and went away in August 1751. The next recipient was

John Smith, born in 1735 to Richard and Mary (née Smelt) of the diocese of York. He entered Douai in 1749 and left for Esquerchin on 19 April 1759; his ordination date is not known; he died at St Omer on 11 February 1764.

The manuscripts state that in spite of letters to William Maire, V.G. of Durham and a son of the original trustee, there was a vacancy of three years.

William Dunn (alias Earpe). His origins are not known except that he was a Yorkshireman. He entered Douai in August, 1762, and ten years later he went to St Gregory's in Paris to complete his studies. He was ordained in 1780 and took his doctorate in 1782. He returned to England and founded the Blackburn Mission where he died in 1805.

In 1773 the Salvin Fund was divided into two. Half of the income was used for **Ralph Rainfor**d, who died at the College in May 1779, and his place was filled by **Thomas Gibso**n, who left owing to ill-health in 1787. The other half was given to the maintenance of

Ralph Platt. He was born in 1758, son of John and Elizabeth (née Watt) of Warrington. He entered Douai on 11 July 1772 and remained on the Fund until 1779 upon his ordination then or later. By 1786 he was teaching in St Omer. He was on the Lancashire mission by 1791 and was at Puddington Hall, Burton, Cheshire, for forty-five years where he ran a school. He died on 23 February 1837.

The Procurator noted that nothing had been received for Platt from Lancashire, whence he came, as had been looked for, and the whole of his pension had to be taken from the Salvin Fund. Hence once more the Fund was heavily overdrawn, and it took until July 1790, to clear the account. There were therefore no more students on this Fund at Douai.

The donation of Nicholas Salvin helped to educate several priests for work in England. As well as Robert Bolney at Lisbon, there were ordained at Douai Nicholas Skelton, the two Maires, William and Henry, John Smith, William Dunn and Ralph Platt. The two Trustees, Gerard Salvin and Thomas Maire, did not use the Fund for their close relatives. Thomas Maire had four sons at Douai (one of whom became a bishop), and Gerard Salvin had at least three grand-children educated there; but none of them was placed on the Fund.

These two Funds, together with others, had been invested in the purchase of farms, from the rents of which the students had their pensions paid. It is well known that Bishop William Gibson while President of Douai had transferred to England much of the college monies invested abroad. It is at least probable that these lands had been sold by President Gibson and the proceeds were amongst the monies sent back to this country. The Midford Fund certainly, and therefore the Salvin Fund probably, were transferred to Ushaw. During the nineteenth century the nomination of a student to the Midford Fund (then known as the Northumberland Fund) was in the hands of the Northern Brethren. Periodically at their meetings they chose a boy from Northumberland to be the beneficiary of the fund. This continued to 1925.

While the funds were at Douai the value of money remained fairly static, and throughout the eighteenth century the interest of each was sufficient to support a student at £20 a year. But it was very different in England. Immediately after its foundation, the pension at Ushaw rose to £40, and since then there has been a continuous decrease in the value of the pound. Nowadays the main source for the education of priests is the Ecclesiastical Education Collection; but even so, the old donations to Douai are still in use according to the intentions of the donors.

Notes and References

[1] The additional biographical information is taken from the last two of the four volumes of G. Anstruther, OP, *The Seminary Priests:* vol.3, *1660-1715,* 1976, vol. 4, *1716-1800*, 1977.

[2] Midford appears as Mitford in Anstruther 3 p. 150.

[3] A Yorkshireman born in 1650. He spent his missionary life in the north-east and became Treasurer of the Northern Brethren's Fund. He died in 1725 leaving money to support a missioner at Chester le Street, South Shields and Sunderland and one in the Darlington area. Anstruther 3 pp. 103/4.

[4]He is listed in Anstruther 4 as Coates, a Northumbrian and probably the student educated at Douai on the Midford Fund.

[5] Anstruther 4 p. 89. See also, L. Gooch, 'Paid at Sundry Times: Yorkshire Clergy Finances in the Eighteenth Century', *Saint Laurence Papers X*, 1997, p. 28

[6] Anstruther 4 p 184; Gooch, p.50

[7] Anstruther 4 pp. 183/4; Gooch, p. 57.

ESTELLE WHITE (1925-2011), HYMN WRITER

Veronica Whitty

Hymn-writing has a long and distinguished history in North-East England. The Venerable Bede of Jarrow (673-735AD) composed a *Liber Hymnorum*: 'a book of hymns in various metres and rhythms' which includes 'Sing we triumphant hymns of praise' for Ascension Day. The Revd John Lingard (1771-1851) translated the medieval hymn 'Ave Maris Stella' as 'Hail, Queen of Heaven', which is still popular and is sung to the tune of an old Durham folksong. James Chadwick (1813-1882), second Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, gave us 'Angels we have heard on high' from a traditional French carol. The Hemy family was also important in northern Catholic musical life: Henry Hemy (d.1850) composed tunes for hymns and other religious texts; his son Henri Frederick, who was organist at St Cuthbert's in North Shields and St Bede's in South Shields, wrote settings for a large number of hymns, including 'Hail, Glorious St Patrick'. He is perhaps best known for his compilation *Crown of Jesus Music* (1864).[1]

In the twentieth century two local hymn-writers came to prominence: Estelle White and Mgr Kevin Nichols who found themselves responding to the changes in the church brought in by the Second Vatican Council by writing new hymns. Kevin Nichols was born in Wallsend in 1929 and was educated at St Cuthbert's grammar school, Newcastle, and Mount St Mary's College in Derbyshire. He was awarded a double first in English at Cambridge University, where his tutor was C S Lewis. He trained for the priesthood at Ushaw College, Durham, and was ordained in 1954. He taught in schools and colleges of education in England and at the Catholic University of America, and he was National Adviser for Religious Education in England and Wales. He published widely on religious education but is best known for his verse[2] and several hymns, among which are 'Lord our God, O Lord our Father', 'Our Father, we have wandered', and 'In bread we bring you, Lord', regarded by many as one of the finest of modern hymns, for which he also wrote the melody. He was particularly interested in the rebirth of public poetry and produced a great deal for St Mary's cathedral: the annual Christmas verse, his beloved northern saints, heritage, 9/11, and on the death of Cardinal Hume. At the inauguration of the statue of the cardinal outside the cathedral by the Queen in May 2002, it was Kevin's carefully crafted words that imbued the ceremony with gravitas and humanity. He spent his last seven years as an assistant priest at the cathedral where he was referred to as the poet-priest in residence. He died in 2006 and was buried at Minsteracres.

While acknowledging those contributions, this article charts the life and work of Estelle White who wrote and composed the music for over one hundred and sixty hymns for adults and children; masses; and a setting of the Our Father.

Some of her compositions are included in current Catholic hymn books including Kevin Mayhew's *Hymns Old and New* and the McCrimmon *Celebration Hymnal* as well as the Methodist hymn book. She collaborated in the *Come and Praise* hymn book for the BBC which sold three million copies. Among the more popular and well-known of her compositions are:

O, the love of my Lord is the essence
I saw the grass. I saw the trees
Moses I know you're the man
Walk with me, O my Lord
I give my hands to do your work
(based on the Grail prayer)

Churchgoers, however, do not invariably accept new compositions uncritically as she herself found in 1996. Choristers at St Mary's Anglican church in Wroxham, Norfolk, declined to sing her hymn 'Autumn Days'. It begins:

Autumn days when the grass is jewelled,
And the silk inside a chestnut shell,
Jet planes meeting in the air to be refuelled,
All these things I love so well.

They felt that singing in praise of jet planes was inappropriate for the annual harvest festival. She thought the objections 'ridiculous' and considered 'Autumn Days' a hymn for children and, though not necessarily her favourite, 'rather jolly'. But the incident gave her an excellent opportunity to explain her approach to hymn–writing:

> All my hymns are very clear, very concrete. I don't believe God is vaguely out there sitting up on a cloud with a beard. I think you find the transcendental in everything, so I tend to write hymns that bring in concrete things.

She agreed with the St Mary's dissenters that not all modern music was acceptable. 'Some is quite ghastly', she said. 'You have to have a tune that people can sing.' 'A hymn well sung … is a prayer'. She would add in a later interview, 'I like to use very down-to-earth language. No difficult abstractions, no obscure theology.' The editor of *Come and Praise*, which includes 'Autumn Days', says the growth of evangelism had fuelled a repertoire of new work with such compositions as Graham Kendrick's 'Shine, Jesus, Shine' which beat old favourites like 'Jerusalem' and 'The Lord's My Shepherd' in opinion polls.

Estelle White was born in South Shields and her love of her roots remained with her all her life. Hers was a self-taught musical family and they all played instruments. She could play the guitar by the time she was ten years old and she went on to play the tenor saxophone, clarinet, piano and organ. Her brothers loved jazz: 'I was brought up on jazz', she said. During the Second World War

she joined the band of the local Auxiliary Territorial Service (the women's branch of the British Army) in Fenham Barracks. She was recruited into the Headquarters ATS band and toured with them. She was in Paris in August 1944 when the Allies drove in. She was sitting on, rather than in, one of the army vehicles which paraded through the city. She played tenor sax and clarinet with the HQ band on many ceremonial occasions, including football internationals and the 1946 Victory Parade. She was also a member of the ATS strict tempo dance band and entertained the troops in the Central Mediterranean Force in Palestine and Egypt. Echoes of her affection for Duke Ellington and Count Basie can be heard in her music. Clearly, she had a lively and engaging personality; as a young woman she loved perfume, drove a Nash Metropolitan sports car and smoked, using a long cigarette holder. She appears to have been an unlikely hymn-writer.

On leaving the Army at the end of the war she returned to Tyneside and became an exceptional physiotherapist, working in hospitals in the North East for sixteen years. She also joined the People's Theatre in Newcastle where she acted, directed, painted scenery and composed music. Estelle then went to Canada, setting up a department in Cornwall Hospital, Ontario, for children with cerebral palsy.

This period was crucial in her spiritual life because it was while reading St Mark's Gospel on board ship to Canada that she decided to become a Catholic. During her school-days she had become friends with a Catholic schoolgirl, Patricia Smith, who travelled on the same bus, though to a different secondary school, at Seaham. She also had a Catholic boyfriend at that time. In an interview published in March 1969 she recalled how the Carmelite Saint Teresa of Avila came into their conversation one day: 'Who the heck is she?' asked Estelle. After her boyfriend explained, she asked to borrow his book. While she was in Canada, she was received into the Catholic Church. On her return in 1965 she worked in Worcester where she was baptised in St. George's, the church where Sir Edward Elgar's father was organist. She was confirmed at St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle on 20 May 1956, somewhat unusually taking the name of a male saint, Aidan, but one of illustrious northern heritage – she later wrote a Mass of St Aidan.

Estelle left physiotherapy, which she found physically taxing, and became a copy-writer for an advertising firm and a free lance writer for the women's page

of *The Guardian* newspaper and women's magazines. Despite earning large sums she found the work unfulfilling and took a complete change of direction when, at the age of forty, she took temporary vows in the religious order of Corpus Christi Carmelite Sisters (founded in the West Indies in 1908), based at Shorne, near Gravesend since 1954. (Coincidentally, their pre-Reformation chapel was connected with the local Corpus Christi Guild and the Sisters wear the old Guild badge of Chalice and Host.) Here her life led her back to music. She began teacher-training as well as taking a further course in music and religious education. Her talent had been spotted by several nuns including Sr Madeleine. Sr Ann Parker, who was a novice with Estelle at the time recalls:

> Our congregation is not enclosed and that is why Estelle was sent to Digby Stuart [College, founded at Roehampton in 1874 by the Society of the Sacred Heart, a congregation of nuns] to train as a teacher. This was the period of the Second Vatican Council. The first document to be published was on the sacred liturgy. One major change was from Latin to the vernacular. I remember going to Digby Stuart for an Open Day shortly before Estelle left and having a conversation with Sr Madeleine, who taught music. She recognised Estelle's gifts and said: 'What we need is new music and new hymns.'
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> Many people were not thinking in that direction. They were trying to fit an English translation into plain chant. Sr Madeleine gave Estelle the impetus that she needed and encouraged the gift she was discovering in herself. Up to the time she went to Digby Estelle had not composed anything.

Sr Ann described Estelle as 'an enjoyable companion, witty, entertaining, unpretentious, a good conversationalist, well-informed', highly intelligent and a good teacher.

Estelle wrote a short poem on entering the Order on 18 November 1965. The lines would appear later in 'Autumn Days, I mustn't forget':

November mists and jewelled grass,
Hedgerows a red-berried mass.
The silk inside a chestnut shell.

Her first collection of songs and hymns *Harvey and Co'* (1969), dedicated to her brothers, recalls the mines and miners scattered around the area where she grew up. An Anglican friend of Estelle's for many years, Canon Barbara Doubtfire, Christ Church, Oxford uses it in her retreats; she said in November, 2014:

> My own experience and spirituality is shaped by the desert/monastic tradition, but I often reflect on Harvey when leading retreats and prayer workshops. Harvey comes over as the archetypal contemplative ... the song so effectively links the experience of wordless prayer with life's ordinary experiences ... I have just returned from working with the Church in New Zealand and there was the usual clambering for the words of Harvey as the people who were on the retreat dispersed.

During Estelle's five years in the Order she wrote the lyrics and music for several hymns. Her life as a nun was cut short by a severe bout of depression. She had suffered intermittently over the years. Even after leaving the religious life depression hit her again and again, curtailing her teaching career. After leaving the convent she taught in various Roman Catholic secondary schools in the North of England (Harrogate, Richmond, Alnwick). When she took early retirement she went to live in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, with her companion Barbara Illingworth. She was Director of the church choir at St Josephs, from Christmas 1984 until 1991. She studied at Leeds University where she took an M.A. with distinction in Hebrew and Greek in 1989. (She taught Greek to first year students.) Academically gifted, she would have gone on to complete a doctorate but physical ill health forced her to stop.

In an interview she gave to Janet Wootton published in *Feminist Theology* in January 2000, she explained that the roots of her feminism lay in her mother's admiration for the suffragettes and her mother's responsibility for the household because her husband was at sea (he was a marine engineer and away at sea for much of Estelle's youth.) In the interview she is clearly frustrated with the course of the Catholic Church with regard to women. Canon Barbara commented on the interview:

> It clearly shows Estelle's enquiring approach to faith questions and has flashes of her humour as well as clearly showing just how creatively gifted she was. I feel that in common with many folk who express creative gifts externally she had the equivalent in her inner life which when frustrated would predispose her to nervous breakdowns/collapses which have already been noted by others.
>
> Undoubtedly her kidney surgery and monitoring over the years took its physical toll. Her words 'when I was a practising Catholic …' could equally have meant 'In my early days as a Catholic …' and she

might have gone on to say I didn't take the Church's teaching always literally – for example, the doctrine of hell.

She then speaks of being an agnostic … a good example of what I have said earlier. She had a strong sense of faith development from reflection on her experience of scripture and church tradition. She may well have attended Mass less frequently and involved herself in fewer 'practising Catholic' activities (I don't know her view of sacramental Confession) as she became more physically under the weather … but I can't believe that Estelle ceased to be a tenacious seeker of God.

She died in a residential care home in 2011 aged eighty-five and was cremated in Dewsbury. She chose 'Walk with me, O my Lord' as the recessional hymn at her requiem mass, the words of which indicate her awareness of the darkness and isolation of those who suffer from mental breakdown.[3]

Another northerner now carries on the tradition: Bernadette Farrell, born in West Yorkshire in 1957. She said in 'Songs of Praise' in January 2012: 'To me music is a language of faith ... We've all got the reign of God inside us.' Her music has enjoyed widespread success throughout the English-speaking world. Among her best-known compositions are

Christ Be our Light
God, Beyond All Names
O God you search me and you know me
Unless a grain of wheat shall fall

She recently collaborated with other composers on 'Our Common Home', inspired by Pope Francis' second encyclical *Laudato Si* (2015) on themes of care for creation, poverty and solidarity.

Notes & References

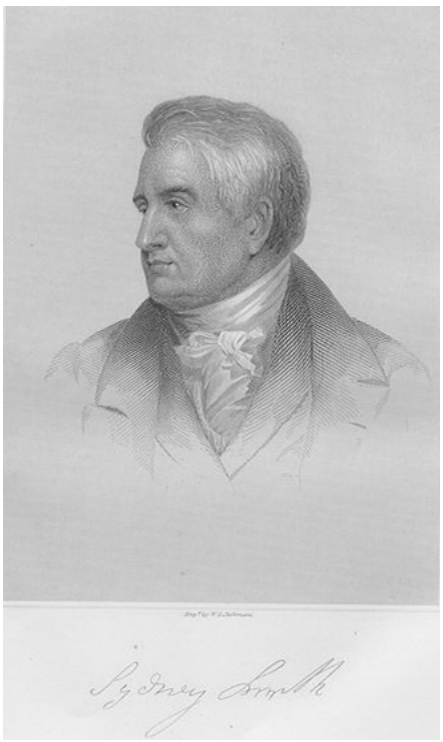
[1] M. Lapidge, 'Bede the Poet', *Jarrow Lecture* 1993; Lingard also translated 'Alma Redemptoris', 'Ave Regina' and 'Salve', cf. P. Phillips (ed.), *Lingard Remembered,* CRS Monograph No 6, 2004, pp. 189/190; D. Oates et al, 'Henri Frederick Hemy (1818-1888) and his Descendants', *NCH* 36, 1995, pp. 31ff.

[2] *Stations of Affliction* (1987), *Sequences* (2000), *Decryptions* (2006).

[3] V. Whitty, *Estelle White, 1925-2011* (2016), a short biography, is available in both book and kindle form. A cd recording of an interview she gave around 1981 to Revd Fr John Skivington (parish priest of St Gregory's, 1978-91, when on a visit to her home town is also available for £5.00. Seven of her hymns are sung on the cd.

'*AN OPEN ROAD TO HEAVEN*', JOHN LINGARD & SYDNEY SMITH ON CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

Dr Leo Gooch



The campaign leading to Catholic Emancipation in 1829 was both protracted and hard fought. The two principal clerical protagonists in the cause were John Lingard, its main Catholic proponent, and Sydney Smith its chief Anglican supporter.[1] Their biographies have several similarities. They were born within a few months of each other: Lingard in February and Smith in June 1771. Both spent most of their lives in northern England and both became prominent and admired members of their respective Communions. They intervened in the debate independently of each other in 1807-8 when the Catholic Question became a major political issue and it is of some interest to explore their writings on the matter, particularly those of Smith since his contribution has not been given its due in Catholic historical studies.[2]

It might have been expected that as clergymen Lingard and Smith would have both addressed the theological and ecclesiastical arguments about emancipation but, whereas for the most part Lingard did confine himself to those matters because he wrote primarily for a clerical audience, Smith courted an educated secular readership and focussed on the political question of religious liberty and justice. Both, however, deliberately adopted a bantering and ironic style, intended, at first, to be gently persuasive. A clerical reader of one of Lingard's

pamphlets feared 'from its lively and entertaining stile, [it was] likely to become popular'.[3] Although their approach could be seen as complementary, Smith as an Anglican was bound to have a wider readership than the Catholic Lingard and therefore a greater influence nationally; his opinions are, in any case, well worth quoting extensively for their literary merit and humour let alone their polemics. (By the way, although they were certainly aware of each other, it seems that they never met or corresponded.[4])

John Lingard's parents came from Lincolnshire. They moved to Winchester, presumably where there were better employment prospects. John entered the English College, Douai, at the age of eleven and was said to have passed through the schools with distinction. Following the outbreak of the French Revolution the students returned home and a large number of French priests became émigrés in England. Lingard became tutor to a young Catholic gentleman. In October 1794 a new seminary was opened in Crook Hall in County Durham and Lingard was ordained priest at the Bar Convent in York in 1795 aged twenty-four. He remained at the college as a professor and he became Vice President. His interventions in the debate over the Catholic Question came in 1807, firstly with a short correspondence in the *Newcastle Courant* and then in a longer pamphlet exchange with Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham, and various Anglican clergymen.

Sydney Smith's father, Robert, was a fast-talking businessman who spent much of his life in unsuccessful financial speculations. Sydney described him as 'a good kind of man, who disappeared about the time of the assizes & we asked no questions'.[5] In 1768 Robert married Maria Olier, an émigré French Huguenot. Sydney was born in Woodford, Essex; he went to a grammar school in Southampton and, aged eleven, he won a scholarship to Winchester College. After leaving school, his father sent him for six months to Normandy to improve his French. Revolution was in the air and it was thought a salutary precaution that he should join a local Jacobin club and he was duly entered as 'Le Citoyen Smit, Membre Affilié au Club des Jacobins de Mont Villiers.' In 1789 he went up to New College, Winchester's sister foundation at Oxford but he gained little from his time there.[6] In 1794 he took up a curacy at Netheravon as a deacon and two years later, aged twenty-five, he was ordained. He moved to Edinburgh and took on the tutorship of a young gentleman. In 1800 he married Catherine Pybus of a well-to-do Tory family.

It is generally held that in the eighteenth-century an Anglican clergyman could not be said to be exclusively devoted to his calling – he was a country gentleman, a naturalist, a magistrate, a sportsman and occasionally, as in Smith's case, an essayist and polemicist.[7] Smith became an enthusiastic member of various liberal social circles in Edinburgh and in 1802, with a group of Whig friends, he launched the *Edinburgh Review* to challenge the prevailing Tory orthodoxy which ran through public affairs. The journal was an instant

success and Smith was propelled into a twenty-five-year long career in journalism, contributing to 'the *Edinburgh*' on a wide range of subjects. He moved to London in 1803[8]; three years later he was appointed to the living of Foston in Yorkshire, worth £500 a year. He soon became popular as a caring pastor (and unconventional JP), though he was not best pleased with his rural situation: he considered the countryside 'a healthy grave', he feared that 'creation would expire before tea-time', and he complained that Foston was twelve miles from a lemon.[9] He would, however, serve there for twenty years (obliged by the Clergy Residence Act of 1808) and it was at Foston that he wrote, anonymously, *Letters on the Subject of the Catholics to my Brother Abraham, who lives in the country. By Peter Plymley.*

*

Anti-Catholicism in Britain comprised two main elements. Firstly, to a greater or lesser extent, Protestants held that Catholics were insincere and that their beliefs and practices were blasphemous, idolatrous, impious and sacrilegious. Secondly, religious conformity was required by law and since the crown claimed spiritual as well as temporal authority, it was treasonable to adhere to a religion which owed obedience to another jurisdiction. Hence, the Pope, as a religious leader and temporal ruler, was held to represent an alternative focus of Catholic civil allegiance and it would be a constitutional outrage to admit Catholics to places of trust and authority under the crown. John Wesley held that 'No government not Roman Catholic ought to tolerate men of the Roman Catholic persuasion'. The topic became something of a fixed idea with Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham. He spoke in the House of Lords on only ten occasions in an episcopate of fifty-seven years but all those utterances were in fervent support of the Tory doctrine of the indivisibility of Church and State. He also advanced the policy in *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Durham* at each of his diocesan visitations in 1797, 1801 and 1806.[10]

The international and national political background to the controversy can be briefly summarised. The Napoleonic Wars, 1803-1815, (a continuation of the French Revolutionary Wars) were fought to contest Bonaparte's domination of Europe and to curb his strategic ambitions in the eastern Mediterranean which threatened India. Moreover, he entertained hopes of fomenting rebellion in Ireland and of invading England. A successful invasion depended on a defeat of the Royal Navy, of course, but Nelson's victory at Trafalgar in 1805 put paid to Bonaparte's maritime strategy and he would never regain effective sea-power although he continued to have continental Europe at his feet until his defeat by Wellington at Waterloo in 1815. William Pitt the Younger, the Prime Minister, who had resigned in February 1801 when George III refused to let him to bring in a measure of Catholic Relief, returned to office in 1804 but he died in January 1806 and, in the absence of a coherent single political grouping, a 'Ministry of the All the Talents' (or the 'Broad-bottomed Ministry') was formed

under Lord Grenville. But a little over a year later this government too was dismissed by the king because of its desire to respond to pressure by extending the provisions of the Irish Catholic Relief Act of 1793 to England as well as its refusal to pledge never again to propose further concessions. A general election ensued. The Whigs put Catholic Emancipation at the top of their agenda and the Tories went to the country on the single issue, 'Support the King and the British Constitution.' The Tories were returned in May 1807.

*

Catholic political loyalty was a subject of fierce controversy before and during the election campaign of 1807. The Revd Thomas Gillow at Callaly Castle wrote a substantial pamphlet of one hundred and four pages entitled *Catholic Principles of Allegiance Asserted* (Keating 1807, 2/6d). Although sympathetic to his purpose, the *Edinburgh Review* thought Gillow had falsified some of his historical claims and that he was 'too zealous a Romanist' to be persuasive. At the time of the election, however, Gillow had one hundred and seventy copies reprinted in Newcastle for sale at the reduced price of one shilling each so as to reach the widest audience. At the same time, Henry Cotes, Vicar of Bedlington, published a 'Letter to the Electors' in the *Newcastle Courant* using the pseudonym of 'A Liege Subject'. He rejected Catholic claims to emancipation on the grounds that they owed ultimate fidelity not to the king and British constitution but to the pope who, he reminded everyone, was then under the sway of Bonaparte, Britain's mortal enemy. But Edward Walker, the editor (and Lingard's publisher as it happened), even-handedly reprinted the Irish *Declaration of Loyalty* of March 1792 refuting Cotes's position. The discomfitted Cotes wrote again, but Walker now reprinted the recent *Address* of Bishop Douglass and over fifty leading lay Catholics, including the Northumbrians George Silvertop, John Charlton and Ralph Riddell, clearly stating that the Church had no authority whatever over the civil affairs of any country and further that the pope could not dispense Catholics from their secular oaths of allegiance or sanction them to deal insincerely with heretics. George Gibson of Stonecroft (as 'A Friend to Peace and Union') and Thomas Selby of Biddlestone ('A Loyal Freeholder') wrote in deploring Cotes's intolerance and falsehoods. Lingard ('J.L.') also wrote pointing out that papal authority was confined to spiritual matters. Cotes now cited a catechism of 1685 to prove his point; fatally, however, he did not know that Lingard knew it was spurious and had been written to misrepresent Catholic beliefs by John Williams, a Protestant clergyman and controversialist. Lingard delightedly exposed the fraud in the *Courant*. After a blustering response nothing else was heard from 'A Liege Subject' until he appeared as 'Elijah Index' in the more extensive debate which followed. (Lingard spotted the new guise immediately.)[11]

During the parliamentary election campaign following the fall of the 'Talents', Barrington published his *Charge* of 1806 for a general readership.

Lingard was annoyed not only by the offensive tone and inaccuracy of the *Charge,* but also because the bishop had intervened during 'the ferment of a general election' with a pamphlet which 'seemed designed to prepare the way for the warwhoop of no popery'. He therefore responded, anonymously, with *Remarks on A Charge…*[12] Predictably, Barrington had rehearsed all the traditional anti-Catholic bugbears, which would be rebutted effortlessly (and need not detain us), but Lingard specifically emphasised their irrelevance to the political question and objected to the conclusions the bishop drew from them to deny Catholics their civil rights. It was sufficient, Barrington had written, to show charity and kindness to people holding a different faith, but that did not mean they should be given political power. He would treat the Irish with kindness, and improve their social and economic condition, but without granting them political power: 'Let us keep inviolate the barriers of our religious and political constitution'. Lingard demurred:

> what can religious doctrines have to do with petitions for political privileges, or, what is there in my belief that should incapacitate me, or in yours that should qualify you for civil employment?

Smith entirely agreed:

> It is ridiculous to tell men who use a different hassock from me, that till they change their hassock they shall never be Colonels, Aldermen or Parliament-men.

At the same time, however, Smith was an uncompromising upholder of the established church ('The purest religion in the world, in my humble opinion, is the religion of the Church of England') and was 'disgusted with the nonsense of the Roman Catholic religion'. Catholics were, of course, dismayed by his antipathy to their beliefs and practices (which he scorned as intellectually in error and superstitious) and accepted his support warily and only for its political utility. Smith was not devout, and he played down doctrine in favour of simple Christian ethics; he hated Evangelicals and Methodists and he would later ridicule the Oxford Movement. W.H. Auden described him as the perfect expression of the Whig mentality – a moderate royalist, liberal in politics, and enlightened in religious belief.[13] Just as he detested Methodism because it offended his liberal convictions, for him the Catholic Question was one of religious freedom. His 'passionate love for common justice and for common sense' explains why this Low Churchman adopted the Catholic cause in the first place and why he hardly touched on theological issues. He hated religious persecution and was impelled to confront it whenever he came across it. The state had nothing whatever to do with theological 'errors' which did 'not violate the common rules of morality and militate against the fair power of the ruler.' Catholics obey the Pope as the spiritual head of their Church just as Dissenters obey theirs. 'What have I to do with the speculative nonsense of his theology

when the object is to elect the mayor of a country town, or to appoint a colonel of a marching regiment?'

Lingard noted that Barrington had 'imputed the overthrow of the ancient government of France and all its tremendous consequences, ultimately, to the corruptions of the Church of Rome and its wide departure from the simplicity of the Gospel'. In fact, the revolutionaries treated all religion 'as their natural and most formidable enemy.' He later reflected that if the revolution had taken place in England and the Anglican clergy had displayed the same determined opposition as was shown by the French clergy, the established church would certainly have fallen. In any case, Lingard wondered, why did 'members of the government and the higher classes of people' of nations in communion with Rome, having discovered the errors of popery, not accept 'the pure, rational, unadulterated system of Protestantism' but chose 'the absurdities of infidelity' instead.

Barrington also observed that England had received and protected French exiled priests with all the warm charity of Christians and the liberality of Englishmen, undeterred by the lack of 'security against the introduction of spies and enemies'. But Lingard hoped that Barrington would applaud the return of the expatriate Catholic schools from France whence 'as aliens in our own country, we were compelled to seek an education':

> The country will not lose by it. A domestic education will strengthen our attachment to our native land, and will retain at home the sums which formerly were of necessity expended abroad.

No sooner had Lingard's response appeared than the bishop reissued his pamphlet but under a new title: *The Grounds on which the Church of England Separated from the Church of Rome*. Lingard immediately reissued his *Remarks* but with a new and provocative preface. He was incensed both at its anti-Catholic contents and its deliberately wide dissemination:

> From one extremity of his diocese to the other he preached a crusade against the opinions, I had almost said the persons, of Catholics … The limits of his diocese were too narrow to confine his benevolence: he resolved to extend the benefit of his *Charge* to the whole nation. He presented it to his majesty at a very critical period; published it and re-published it; he gave it first one title and then another; he printed it in quarto for the rich and in duodecimo for the poor; he made himself all to all that he might communicate to all his enmity to the opinions of Catholics. After so much provocation we certainly may be allowed to speak in our own defence.

Over and above that, however, Lingard was irritated that the beliefs ascribed to Catholics so as to justify their oppression were false: 'They take from us our

civil rights and in return give us erroneous articles of faith' so that we are excluded

> from the privileges of our birthright here, and the same will exclude us from the joys of heaven hereafter. All the good things both of this world and of the next appear to be reserved for the professors of the established creed.

Besides, the bishop's choice of a new title for his pamphlet led Lingard to warn that 'to discuss the reasons which induced the English Protestants to separate from the Catholic communion [was] a subject of dangerous investigation':

> [The] Protestant is the established church. This should satisfy her ambition. In the present temper of mankind, while she remains in possession of wealth and honour, she may deem herself secure. Let her be content with her present glories and cast a decent veil over the infirmity of her birth

which had only come about because of

> the impetuous passion of Henry the Eighth, who renounced the authority of the Pontiff, that he might give to his mistress a seat on his throne; the rapacity of the courtiers of Edward the Sixth, who to fill their own coffers, promoted with all their influence the godly work of the reformation; and the policy of Elizabeth, who rejected an authority which she could not acknowledge without confessing her mother's shame and her own illegitimacy.[14]

Smith thought historical arguments were pointless: 'There were as many persons put to death under the mild Elizabeth as under the bloody Mary'; it was better 'to forget times past and to judge and be judged by present opinions and present practice'.

Although the Tory election victory effectively consigned the Catholic Question to the political wasteland Smith maintained the offensive with a scathing sermon on religious intolerance, delivered in the Temple church (and published) in July 1807. But that was merely an overture to the *Peter Plymley Letters* which dealt at length with religious freedom for Catholics (but always subject to the preservation of the Anglican establishment) and the security of the country. The first letter became an immediate best seller; four more appeared before the end of 1807 and another five came out early the next year. They were gathered into a pamphlet which ran into sixteen editions by the end of 1808. It appears that the government tried without success to confirm the authorship and he always disclaimed it. With tongue in cheek, however, he wrote in the preface to his *Works* (1840) that

> finding that I deny it in vain, I have thought it might be as well to include the Letters in this Collection: they had an immense circulation at the time, and I think above 20,000 copies were sold.

The great danger to England was the threat of a French invasion assisted by the Irish. There was in any case a real possibility of an autonomous Irish insurrection if emancipation and the admission of Catholics to parliament were not granted. But the required legislation could not be enacted unless the king's scruples over his coronation oath were overcome. George III (and his successor George IV agreed) held that in principle he could not consent to any relaxation of the penal laws. Both Lingard and Smith pointed out the inconsistency of the king's position. In fact, he had done more for the Catholics of both kingdoms than had been done for them since the Reformation. Nothing was said about the royal conscience when the Catholic Relief Acts were enacted late in the previous century. Nor was any conscientious objection raised against the act of 1804 enabling the king to grant military commissions to foreign Catholics even if they did not disclaim the tenets of their faith deemed prejudicial to the safety of throne and established church. In 1807, however, a similar proposal in favour of English Catholics was refused. Smith scoffed: 'it is contended that this is now perjury which we had hitherto called policy and benevolence'. The king had repealed the Corporation and Test Act in Ireland and relaxed the laws against Protestant Dissenters so why not relax them for the Catholics. 'If one is contrary to his oath, the other must be so too'. Surely, Lingard said,

> as well as Jews, deists and atheists, we might aspire to places of trust, emolument and rank, and obtain the privileges for which our fathers fought, and which are the birth-right of every Englishman.'

Smith did not believe that the establishment of church and state was in any danger, but if it was it was from Dissenters not Catholics:

> We should as soon dream that the wars of York and Lancaster would break out afresh, as that the Protestant religion in England has any thing to apprehend from the machinations of Catholics.

The Dissenters were 'infinitely more distant from the Church of England than the Catholics' yet they had never been excluded from parliament (there were forty-five of them in one house and sixteen in the other).

> A Catholic Chancellor of the Exchequer would not do a ten thousandth part of the mischief to the English Church that might be done by a Methodistical Chancellor of the true Clapham breed.

For a century Britain had been exposed to the enmity of France, and the royal succession was disputed in the two Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745 but even the Pope was unable to induce the Irish to rise.

> Let me hear no more of the danger to be apprehended from the general diffusion of Popery. It is too absurd to be reasoned upon …

He had had enough of 'Arabian-night stories about the Catholics'.

Further, 'the Catholic asks you to abolish some oaths which oppress him; your answer is that he does not respect oaths. Then why subject him to the test of oaths?' In 1774 the oath of supremacy was dispensed with for the Catholics of Canada and they were then only required to take a simple oath of allegiance. In any event, 'Suppose Bonaparte were to threaten Ireland, do you think we should hear anything of the impediment of a coronation oath' to recruiting Catholics for the army and navy. It was ridiculous 'to tell Catholics that they cannot be honourable in war because they are conscientious in religion'. Even Louis XIV was perfectly willing to have Protestants in his army. Smith could not conceive of a greater disgust for an English monarch

> than to see such a question as that of Catholic Emancipation argued, not with a reference to its justice or importance, but universally considered to be of no further consequence than as it affects his own private feelings.

In fact,

> the king would comply more strictly with his oath if he is guided by the advice of his parliament, and parliament was unanimous about the necessity of Lord Howick's bill'

which he had refused to entertain.

As to the admission of Catholics to parliament, Smith noted that they were not excluded from the Irish House of Commons or military commands before the revolution of 1688. At present the Catholics could not bring in half the number of Scottish members:

> The most ample allowance does not calculate that there would be more than twenty members who were Roman Catholics in one house and ten in the other if Catholic emancipation were carried into effect … Nothing would give me such an idea of security as to see twenty or thirty Catholic gentlemen in Parliament looked upon by all the Catholics as the fair and proper organ of their party.

Even if every one of the hundred Irish constituencies returned a Catholic they would have to out-vote 588 Protestants in the House of Commons. 'You keep out twenty or thirty Catholics and you lose the affections of four millions.'

> In the name of Heaven, what are we to gain by suffering Ireland to be rode by that faction which now predominates over it? Ten or twelve great Orange families have been sucking the blood of that country for these hundred years past … To a short period of disaffection among

> the Orangemen I confess I should not much object … and the more violent the hatred of the Orangemen, the more certain the reconciliation of the Catholics.

'Abhorred by the English, who have witnessed their oppression, and by the Catholic Irish who have smarted under them', the Orangemen would be well-advised to keep quiet or leave for foreign parts.

The Relief Acts had allowed the Irish to prosper and since then the commerce of Ireland had doubled, but every law which irritated them remained:

> if you were determined to insult the Catholics, you should have kept them weak; if you resolved to give them strength, you should have ceased to insult them – at present your conduct is pure unadulterated folly … If you had intended to refuse the Catholics political power, you should have refused them civil rights.

It was absurd to trust the lowest Catholics with the offices corresponding to their situation in life and deny such privileges to the higher. 'Such an idea is nauseous, antiperistaltic and emetical'. If you wanted to engage the vigour of the common people you must not disgrace their nobility and insult their priesthood.

Smith was opposed to Catholics having to pay their tithes to the Church of Ireland:

> I admit that nothing can be more reasonable than to expect that a Catholic priest should starve to death genteelly and pleasantly for the good of the Protestant religion but not for the fabric of the Protestant churches of Ireland. Upon what principle of justice or common sense is he to pay every tenth potato in his little garden to a clergyman in whose religion nobody believes for twenty miles around him and who has nothing to preach to but bare walls while two hundred yards off, a thousand Catholics are huddled together in a miserable hovel and pelted by all the storms of heaven. Can anything be more distressing than to see a venerable man pouring forth sublime truths in tattered breeches and depending for his food upon the little offal he gets from his parishioners?

Smith held that all the trouble in Ireland would cease if the Catholic clergy were paid and the appointment of bishops by the pope could be facilitated with a modest expenditure. There were twenty-six Irish bishops who got at most £400, and more than a thousand priests who received from £30 to £90 a year. Smith would allocate £250,000 to the Irish Catholic Church to cover salaries, church upkeep and schools. The clergy would all receive their salaries at the Bank of Ireland. 'Even St Ignatius would not withstand the temptation.' Bishop James Doyle of Kildare scorned the idea that they would ever take money from

an English government. ‘Do you mean to say’, demanded Smith, ‘that if every priest in Ireland received tomorrow morning a government letter with one hundred pounds, first quarter of their year’s income, they would refuse it?’ ‘Ah! Mr Smith’, the bishop replied, ‘you’ve such a way of putting things.’

Smith was certain that

> All other dangers taken together are not equal to the danger of losing Ireland from disaffection and invasion’ but the ‘moment the very name of Ireland is mentioned, the English seem to bid adieu to common feeling, common prudence and common sense and to act with the barbarity of tyrants and the fatuity of idiots.
>
> What can you say to a Prime Minister who really believes it feasible to convert four million Catholic Irish and considers it the best remedy for the disturbed state of Ireland? It is really such trash that it is an abuse of the privilege of reasoning to reply to it.

Catholics were here to stay: they could not be ignored, converted or eliminated, they must be accepted. Smith took the example of Scotland which had been as much a part of the weakness of England in the past as Ireland was at present:

> For years it was attempted to compel the Scotch to change their religion but when the Book of Common Prayer could not be introduced they were suffered to worship God in their own way. No lightning descended from heaven; the country was not ruined; the world is not yet come to an end and Scotland has ever since been an increasing source of strength to Great Britain.
>
> Whatever your opinion may be of the follies of the Roman Catholic religion, remember they are the follies of four millions of [Irish] human beings, increasing rapidly in numbers, wealth and intelligence who, if firmly united with this country, would set at defiance the power of France.

Smith dismissed the idea of a papal invasion in the first letter: ‘the Pope is not yet landed’ although he ‘is probably hovering about our coast in a fishing smack’. The danger of a French invasion was an entirely different matter, of course, and so the defence of the realm, and indeed of Europe, was of the greatest and most immediate necessity.

> I want soldiers and sailors for the state; I want to make greater use than I now can do of a poor country full of men; I want to render the military service popular among the Irish; to check the power of France; to make every possible exertion for the safety of Europe which in twenty years time will be nothing but a mass of French slaves … yet people say ‘do not think of raising cavalry and infantry in Ireland! They interpret the Epistle to Timothy in a different manner

> from what we do!' … When Turk, Jew, Heretic, Infidel, Catholic, Protestant, are all combined against this country; when men of every religious persuasion and no religious persuasion, when the population of half the globe is up in arms against us; are we to stand examining our generals and armies as a bishop examines a candidate for holy orders and to suffer no one to bleed for England who does not agree with you about the second of Timothy…

Lingard too wanted to know why British Catholics were not permitted to gain preferment in the armed services of the country:

> At the present day, Englishmen are, I trust, too wise to fight with each other for modes of faith. They would rather unite men of every religious persuasion to oppose the designs of a bold, powerful and fortunate enemy who, with all Europe at his beck, threatens our very existence as an independent nation.

Smith pointed out that from Brest to Cape St Vincent there were a dozen harbours capable of containing a sufficiently large invasion force. The nearest was not two days sail and the furthest not ten from the southern coast of Ireland with a fair wind, and that coastline of more than five hundred miles abounded in deep bays, admirable harbours and disaffected inhabitants. There was at that moment 'a universal clamour throughout the whole of Ireland against the Union' and although two fifths of those serving in the army and navy were Irishmen, the priests were preventing further recruitment. If French troops landed, the whole population 'would rise against you and you could not possibly survive such an event three years.' To deny the Irish justice now,

> in the present state of Europe, and in the summer months, just as the season for destroying kingdoms is coming on, is whatever you may think if it, little short of positive insanity.
>
> You may ask if it is possible for this country to survive the recent misfortunes of Europe under Bonaparte. I answer without the slightest degree of hesitation that if Bonaparte lives and a great deal is not immediately done for the conciliation of the Catholics, it does seem to me absolutely impossible but that we must perish.
>
> If you do not relieve these people from the civil incapacities to which they are exposed, you will lose them or you must employ great strength and much treasure in watching over them.

If we conciliate Ireland, we can do nothing amiss; if we do not, we can do nothing well. In the sixth *Letter* Smith recalled that Lord Auckland, (a Durham peer) Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant (Duke of Northumberland) had declared to parliament that if he 'did not carry with him a compliance with all their demands, Ireland was for ever lost to this country'.

Smith noted that an unfortunate consequence of the penal laws was that the persons of Catholics were routinely insulted:

> The Irish country gentleman would bear his legal disabilities with greater temper if these were all he had to bear, if they did not enable every Protestant cheesemonger and tidewaiter to treat him with contempt.[15]

He was astonished that so many clergymen painted Catholics in detestable colours: 'I solemnly believe blue and red baboons to be more popular here than Catholics', echoing Lingard's remark that he had 'known many an orthodox churchman stare at a Catholic clergyman as if he were an ourang outang or an infernal being in a human shape'. Actually, Smith suggested,

> after a Catholic justice had once been seen on the bench, and it had been clearly ascertained that he spoke English, had no tail, only a single row of teeth and that he loved port wine … he would be reckoned a jolly fellow and very superior in flavour to a sly Presbyterian. After dissection Catholics will be found to be really human creatures.

Smith would have agreed with Earl Grey, with whom he struck up a friendship, who had told the House of Lords that he enjoyed the acquaintance of many Northumbrian Catholics and in the

> discharge of the duties of life they could not be excelled and if religion was to be appreciated by the conduct of those who professed it, he must at least say that the religion which produced such fruits could not be a bad one.[16]

Smith reasoned that since at least two thirds of Europeans belonged to the oldest and most numerous sect of Christians (though 'mistaken') one could hardly suggest that they were incapable of fulfilling the offices of common and civil life:

> It is supposed that Huskisson and Sir Harry Englefield would squabble behind the Speaker's chair about the Council of Lateran and many a turnpike bill miscarry by the sarcastical controversies of Mr Hawkins Brown and Sir John Throckmorton upon the Real Presence.

Smith enjoyed cordial relationships with the local Yorkshire Catholic gentry. He was delighted to find that Henry Howard of Corby Castle, 'an excellent man', was to be his neighbour; the Fairfaxes of Gilling stayed at Foston; and the Cholmeleys became particular friends. Francis Cholmeley was a liberal Catholic squire who lived at Brandsby some eight miles from Smith at Foston and the two families regularly exchanged letters on recipes and agricultural matters as well as making visits bearing fruit, seeds, cake and other presents. Smith respected Cholmeley's moderate religious opinions: 'I wish you would inspire

those Irish Catholic Bishops with a little of your understanding – they have marred their own cause most miserably.' Cholmeley's help was solicited to place Signor Denarchi, an Italian refugee, in a teaching post at the Bar Convent or Ampleforth College.[17]

For all that Smith was strongly in favour of emancipation, however, he teased its champions about its likely consequences:

> If you free the Catholics to gain high positions, they would come over to the established Church; there are very few old and rich families among Dissenters. A rich young Catholic in parliament would belong to White's and to Brookes's, would keep race-horses would walk up and down Pall Mall, be exonerated of his ready money and constitution, become as devoid of morality, honesty, knowledge and civility as Protestant loungers in Pall Mall and return home with a supreme contempt for Father O'Leary and Father O'Callaghan. I am astonished at the madness of the Catholic clergy in not perceiving that Catholic emancipation is Catholic infidelity … and will ensure the loss of every man of fashion and consequence.

Partly because he knew that the obstinacy of the king was not likely to be overcome, and that his likely successor the Prince Regent had said he would not accept emancipation either, Smith realized that the Catholic claims would not be achieved for some time to come. Reluctantly, but pragmatically, then, he moderated his demands: If Bonaparte were to 'put off his intrigues and his invasion of Ireland' he would 'overlook the question of justice and, finding the danger suspended, agree to the delay' of legislation. Therefore, he suggested, the best solution might be

> to keep the penal law in effect but to suspend it every year as had been done for fifty years … This effectually removes persecution but lets Protestants have the exquisite satisfaction of enjoying some advantage over the Catholics.

And that is what happened.

In any case, Smith, ever the realist, predicted in the last *Letter* that if the safety of Europe was restored 'Catholics may for ever bid adieu to the slightest probability of effecting their object.' He was certainly right that when the threat of invasion receded and with the peace following Wellington's victory at Waterloo in 1815, Catholic emancipation was no longer seen in London as an immediate political necessity. Nonetheless, Smith continued to argue the case, saying that 'the Protestants must not have it all their own way'. In March 1823 he spoke to a meeting of the Anglican clergy of the North Riding at the Three Tuns in Thirsk, called to petition parliament against making any concessions to the Catholics; his counter-petition gained only two supporters. At a similar meeting in April 1825 he addressed the East Riding clergy at the Tiger Inn,

Beverley, and found himself in a minority of one (even his own curate Mr Milestones opposed him). Further articles appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* and in February 1826 he published *A Letter to the Electors on the Catholic Question* (which sold two thousand copies within a month) containing some memorable images of religious liberty: 'No chains, no prisons, no bonfires for a man's faith … *an open road to heaven* …' His last intervention on the subject came in 1828 when, as a prebendary of Bristol, he gave the Gunpowder Plot Anniversary Sermon before the Mayor and Corporation, allegedly the most anti-Catholic civic body in England; He gleefully reported that he had 'let off in the Minster no ordinary collection of Squibs, Crackers and *Roman* Candles' giving them 'such a dose of toleration as will last them for many a year'.[18]

Lingard dealt with several Anglican opponents during the debate but after he left Ushaw College in 1811 to become missioner at Hornby in Lancashire he concentrated on the historical work which he preferred but which had been interrupted by the controversy. Smith had devoted more time and energy to the Catholic Question than any other cause but he wearied of it saying it had become 'stale, threadbare and exhausted' and that men were 'tired to death of it'. That was certainly not the case in Ireland where the matter was far from played out; discontent had never wholly subsided and agitation, both religious and nationalist, rose to alarming levels in the mid-1820s. Though at heart deeply anti Catholic, Wellington, now Tory Prime Minister, and Robert ('Orange') Peel, Home Secretary, conceded that emancipation was essential if Ireland was to be kept at peace and, to the despair of the king, decided to legislate for it. (Peel's nickname was amended to 'Turncoat' Peel.) In April 1829 following the bill's successful passage through parliament, George IV was obliged to give his assent though he only did so with pain and regret.[19] Smith wrote: 'Thank God there is an end to it'.[20]

In his *Charge* of 1831, Bishop van Mildert, Barrington's successor as Bishop of Durham, lamented the passage of Catholic Emancipation and encouraged his clergy to put it out of their minds:

> Far better is it, for the peace of the community, and for its future welfare, that such things should be left to the historian hereafter to dilate upon, with a cooler judgement and a more impartial spirit than can be expected from contemporary observers.

Peter Plymley had concluded long before that

> the anti-Catholic people little foresee that they will hereafter be the sport of the antiquary; that their prophecies of ruin and destruction from Catholic Emancipation will be clapped into the notes of some quaint history and be matter of pleasantry even to the sedulous housewife and the rural dean.

NOTES & REFERENCES

[1] When writing this article, I was unaware of T.A. Birrell's 'Non-Catholic Writers and Catholic Emancipation: An Aspect of Sidney Smith, Shelley, Coleridge and Cobbett', his inaugural lecture on his appointment in May 1953 as Professor of English Literature in the Catholic University of Nijmegen. It has now been published in a posthumous collection of his articles: T.A. Birrell, *Aspects of Recusant History,* edited by F & J Blom & F Korsten, 2020.

[2] Their most recent biographies are Peter Phillips, *John Lingard, Priest and Historian,* 2008; Peter Virgin, *Sydney Smith,* 1994.

[3] *Reply to the Revd Mesurier.*

[4] I have not found a personal reference of Lingard to Smith. On two occasions in his pamphlets, without naming anyone, Lingard refers to 'Edinburgh and Monthly reviewers' in general and said of them that he did not 'know much more than that they have often taught him to laugh at the Rector of Newnton Longville', see *Reply to the Revd Mesurier.* Smith's only reference to Lingard was in a letter to John Allen, a friend and contributor to the *Edinburgh Review,* who had severely criticized Lingard's account of the Anglo-Saxon period and the Massacre of St Bartholomew in his *History of England:* 'Have you finished your squabbles with Lingard? The Catholics are outrageous with you, and I have heard some of the most violent express a doubt whether you are quite an orthodox member of the Church of England'. N.C. Smith, *The Letters of Sydney Smith,* 1953, No. 487, 9 Nov 1826; Allen in *Edinburgh Review* 83, art. I, Apr 1825; art. IV, Jun 1826; see also Phillips, 70 ff.

[5] H. Pearson, *The Smith of Smiths,* 1934, 43, but see Virgin, 7.

[6] His experience of the teaching profession made him a zealous supporter of educational reform. Lingard would remind his readers of Gibbon's remark that a single Benedictine monastery had produced more valuable works than both English universities, citing Aikin's *Annual Review* 1802, vol. 1, p. 579.

[7] J. Althoz, *The Mind and Art of Victorian England*, 1976, p. 60.

[8] Thomas Creevey thought Smith 'too much of a buffoon …' H. Maxwell (ed.) *The Creevey Papers* II 1903, p. 79. Charles Greville would later hear Smith preach in St Paul's saying he was 'very good; manner impressive, voice sonorous and agreeable, rather familiar but not offensively so, language simple and unadorned, sermon clever and illustrative'. The cathedral service was 'simple, intelligible and grand, appealing at the same time to reason and the imagination. I prefer it infinitely to the Catholic service, for though I am fond of the bursts of music and clouds of incense, I can't endure the undistinguishable sounds with which the priest mumbles over the prayers'. C. Greville & P. Wilson, (eds), *The Greville Diary,* 1927, I, p.151, 1 Dec 1834.

[9] There was no rectory at Foston so he spent the first two years living at Heslington in a house that would become the Catholic chaplaincy of York University, renamed More House. His bedroom was turned into a confessional.

[10] Barrington became Chaplain in Ordinary to kings George II and III. He was firstly Bishop of Llandaff (1769), then of Salisbury (1782) and was translated to Durham in 1791.

[11] Walker would publish the whole correspondence in a pamphlet later in the year. For this and the following episode see Phillips, 75 ff and L. Gooch, 'Lingard v. Barrington, et al: Ecclesiastical Politics in Durham 1805-29' in P. Phillips (ed.) *Lingard Remembered* (CRS 2004). Walker also published *A Review of the Question of Catholic Emancipation* (1808) by Charles Stanley Constable, (nee Haggerston) which went into two editions and was sold in

Newcastle, Durham, London, and York. J. Gillow, *Bibliographical Dictionary of the English Catholics* (5 vols. 1885-1902) I, p. 548.

[12] I have used: J. Lingard, *Tracts occasioned by the publication of a Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Durham by Shute, Bishop of Durham, 1806* (Classic Reprint, 2015) which unfortunately prints the tracts with a continuous pagination. A general discussion is at Gooch, *Lingard Remembered, art. cit.* See Phillips pp. 77 ff. for a treatment of the theological issues. In the rest of this paper I freely quote the *Plymley Letters* without references.

[13] W.H. Auden, *Selected Writings of Sydney Smith,* 1957, vii.

[14] Preface to *Remarks,* 3rd ed. He would reiterate these observations in later pamphlets.

[15] William Cobbett's pro-Catholic *History of the Protestant 'Reformation' in England and Ireland,* 1824-5, sold 60,000 copies in its first year. Cobbett always put reformation in quotation marks. He drew attention to the abusive language often applied to Catholics (letter I, para 10), and he saluted Lingard's 'usual fairness' (letter X, para 293).

[16] *Parliamentary Debates* (1) 17, 430. Smith made annual visits to Grey's home, Howick Hall in Northumberland, and he dined at Lambton Castle with Lord Lambton ('Radical Jack'), Grey's son in law.

[17] *Letters* No. 452 to Lady Grey, 14 Oct 1825. A collection of eighteen letters dating 1808-22 between the Cholmeleys and Smiths is in the NYRO. Smith also took satisfaction that Philip Howard of Corby Castle was elected as MP for Carlisle after emancipation. Smith was particularly taken with the best-selling book *Wanderings in South America,* 1825, by the eccentric Yorkshire Catholic Charles Waterton which he reviewed for the *Edinburgh Review* in 1826 in one of the funniest pieces Smith ever wrote.

[18] Virgin, 231. See also *Letters* No. 521, Smith to Lady Holland 5 Nov 1828 and No. 522 to E. Littleton 7 Nov. Smith's connection with the west country was cemented with his appointment as Rector of Combe Florey in Somerset in 1829.

[19] In December 1785, when he was Prince Regent, George married (validly but illegally) the twice-widowed Catholic Maria Fitzherbert; her brother John Smythe and uncle Henry Errington signed the marriage certificate. As a result George became acquainted with many of her Catholic relations and connections: the Smythes, Welds, Fitzherberts, Haggerstons and others, perhaps giving rise to his observation that Roman Catholicism was the only religion fit for a gentleman (not that he would grant religious freedom or extend the franchise to one). J. Munson, *Maria Fitzherbert,* 2001, pp. 147, 238.

[20] *Letters*, No. 455 to Lady Grey 29 Jan 1826; A. Bell, Sydney Smith, 1980, 154.

THE CATHOLIC BOOK TRADE IN NORTH-EAST ENGLAND Part 1: JOHN BELL (II)

Nelson Hogan

The English Catholics never lost the habit of private devotion nurtured by spiritual reading in the post-Reformation period although the public practice of their religion was not formally allowed until the passage of the Catholic Relief Act in 1791. At that point public and private worship could unite. The spiritual and devotional life of the north eastern Catholics in the early years of the new dispensation can be glimpsed in a collection of around one hundred and fifty business letters dating between July 1803 and July 1815 from the clergy in the region to the Newcastle bookseller John Bell (II). Though short, even terse, the letters, held in the archives of St Joseph's, Gateshead, add to Bell's biography which has paid little attention to this aspect of his career hitherto.[1]

John Bell (I) was born in Alston in 1755 and was apprenticed as a land surveyor in Newcastle; he was later appointed Parliamentary Commissioner for many of the Enclosure Acts relating to northern parishes. He also entered the service of a Newcastle bookseller and, at about the age of forty, he opened his own bookshop in Union Street. The career of his eldest son John (II) followed much the same pattern; he became a land surveyor and bookseller with his father and in February 1803, aged twenty, he too took the opportunity to strike out on his own when Francis Coates, bookseller, bookbinder, druggist, grocer, publisher, nautical instrument seller and stationer died. (For Coates, Bell *et al* the book trade was essentially a side line since it was insufficiently profitable as a primary occupation and they depended for a livelihood on general retailing – tea, patent medicines, insurance, musical instruments and much else besides.)[2]

The younger Bell bought Coates's shop on the Quayside together with the stock but, while carrying on his surveying practice, perhaps rashly he dropped the household business and discontinued publishing to concentrate on stationery and book-selling, specialising in navigation and Catholic books.[3] Since he lived in a town with major seafaring interests, the trade in maritime material was an obvious line to maintain; his decision to keep the ecclesiastical business arose from the fact that Coates had been in Catholic book-dealing locally for some twenty or more years and had an established clientele. There is no evidence that Bell himself was a Catholic although Coates may well have been if he was the seven-year-old 'Francis Coats', son of a publican in St John's Chapelry, Newcastle, listed in the *Papist Returns* of 1767 which would make him twenty-one years old when he is first known to be self-employed. At any rate, local Catholics accepted the transition from Coates to Bell seamlessly and continued to send their book-buying, book-binding and stationery requirements to the shop on the Quayside.[4] Bell fulfilled their orders by mail or passenger coach, and books were often left at inns or shops to be collected. Ushaw was thought too

remote for small packages. Nicholas Gilbert in Whitby chose to use coastal shipping for his deliveries.

It might be expected that there would have been a demand for bibles, missals, breviaries and the old devotional classics, but other than one or two requests for the *New Testament, Confessions of St Augustine, Imitation of Christ* and *Introduction to a Devout Life,* the overwhelming majority of orders were for a single copy of a contemporary theological work for a priest himself. In fact, priests and students were just as likely to buy secular historical works by Cobbett, Cowper, Hume and others. Basil Barrett took Enfield's *Help to Elocution* which was no doubt intended to be passed around his fellow students at Crook Hall. John Lingard and then Thomas Stonor co-ordinated business for the boys of the college, and Thomas Pennington took over that rôle after the move to Ushaw. (The libraries both at Crook Hall and Ushaw were created and built up mostly from benefactions rather than purchases.[5])

As well as buying for themselves, priests out on the mission acted for their congregations although they did not always come out of it well financially: Thomas Stout told Bell: 'If I were to pay you as badly as people pay me for the books, you would never make your fortune in the trade. I lose half of what I sell…' By far the greatest demand over the period was for catechisms of one sort or another. Altogether, Bell sold some three hundred and fifty of *The Douay Catechism, The Little Catechism, The Poor Man's Catechism* or *Short Historical Catechism.*[6] The sale of two hundred copies of Richard Challoner's devotional manual *The Garden of the Soul* (1740 and innumerable editions since) shows that the soubriquet '*Garden of the Soul* Catholics' to describe the English Catholics of the day was perfectly true. Seventy-five copies were sold of the manual *Bona Mors; or the Art of Dying Happily* (1703 up to 1776) and seventy of *The Poor Man's Daily Companion* (1792). Those were all well established works but Matthew Sharp at Hexham bought thirty copies of the newly issued *An Exercise for Sanctifying Sundays and Holydays &c* (1804) by Bishop John Milner as well as a dozen of *The One Thing Necessary* (1806) by Henry Rutter, his neighbour at Minsteracres. In 1811 Peter Wilcock at Bishop-wearmouth ordered fifty copies each of three 'little books about the size of Catechisms' published by Edward Walker of Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, entitled *The Method of Conversing with God; Pious Resolutions of a Christian; The Portrait of a True and Perfect Christian.* With such works, the clergy revived the communal devotional practices long absent from English Catholic life.

Other than books, Bell was asked for periodicals: a few of the annual *Laity's Directory* in English were regularly ordered by priests for their people.[7] He usually got around twenty copies of the annual Latin *Ordo,* paid for by John Yates (as Treasurer of the Northern Brethren's Fund) which he was required to distribute among the local secular clergy. Most of the French exiled priests who came to the north east lived in closed communities (at Berwick, Brooms,

Heddon, Stella, Sunderland and elsewhere) for economical reasons but some of them served the mission in the region and became Bell's customers, usually for the Latin *Ordo* which they had to buy for themselves, unlike the English priests.

The *Catholic Magazine* and *Orthodox Journal and Catholic Monthly Intelligencer* were asked for, but secular magazines were also taken: the *Court Calendar*, *Edinburgh Review*, *The Athenaeum, Panorama.* Thomas Stout cancelled his order for the *Monthly Magazine* which he said he now 'hated'. It was very common at this time for controversialists to put out cheaply priced pamphlets – more durable than newspapers but more immediate than books – and Bell was usually asked for each *Charge, Letter, Answer, Defence, Remarks, Reply, Review, Vindication* and so on, as they issued from each side in the long-running public debate over Catholic Emancipation. Thomas Gillow at Callaly Castle wrote a pamphlet entitled *Catholic Principles of Allegiance Asserted* and he had an extra one hundred and seventy copies at a shilling each printed for circulation during the general election campaign of 1807.

If they specified the bindings and qualities of their purchases, customers generally wanted them 'plain and neat', 'plain binding but a good print', or bound 'in the cheapest manner'. Some asked for 'sheep' or 'calf' with ribands; Rutter was unusually precise in requiring Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints* (probably the new edition of 1812-13 in twelve volumes) to be bound 'neatly in sheep, lettered and with a small ribbon' to each volume with the index bound in at the front of the first volume. Yates wanted 'a *Garden of the Soul* of the largest type – it is for an old man – that published by Keating is not fit for anyone.' Abbé Fidèlle, chaplain to Miss Constable at Pocklington, wanted his copies of *The Daily Companion* in a 'plain binding and not fine paper … print clear and very good', which made him 'give Newcastle the preference to other places as he finds Mr Bell's print better than he has got in some other Towns nearer at hand'. (The abbé did not speak English and his patroness wrote to Bell on his behalf.)[8]

Occasionally Bell would be asked for catalogues issued by other booksellers (Binns, Duleau, Lackington) and he would be invited to advertise forthcoming works by his own customers. He was sometimes asked to sell unwanted volumes as secondhand, to exchange items, or to take books back. Richard Albot, a student at Crook Hall, sent Bell a large parcel of books for sale, carefully stipulating the price he wanted for each one, but then had second thoughts and wanted some of them back because other students had belatedly shown an interest in them.

Bell was asked for a large miscellany of items, some of which were the kind of thing one would expect of a Catholic Repository: rosaries, cruets, and altar breads (but not wine) for several chapels; Mrs Silvertop ordered prints of the Crucifixion. But he was, of course, mainly a stationer and he supplied quires of

letter paper, variously inferior, white, unwoven, fine or thin; Japan ink, red ink, a bottle of India rubber, quills, pencils, sealing-wax, and 'a glass sand-box without inkstand'. Thomas Gillow needed replacement pages for his *Little Atlas;* and Mrs Silvertop wanted a *Royal Pocket Atlas & Almanack*. Thomas Stonor, a student at Ushaw, asked for 'a map of Europe to play upon (I suppose you know what they are)'.

One or two of his customers were unaware that Bell had dropped Coates's extraneous lines and he may have been surprised or even put out to be asked to supply a snuff-box or a watch seal (for not more than £3), to settle John Bradley's shoemaker's bill, to have a silver cup re-engraved for Henry Rutter (with '*Dono dedit Joannes Lawson Esq.: Baronet*'), to receive a copper plate for engraving from the Carmelite sisters at Cocken Hall, Houghton le Spring, or to get the same sisters a 'bottle of Spain's Restorative Oils for the Rheumatism'. Clearly, the sisters needed to earn a little money (they took female boarders) to eke out their income for in 1810 M. Louise Housman, the superior, sent Bell some little boxes and pin-cushions for sale; the 'Ladies also made registers' and she would send them and anything else he thought would sell, 'as some of our Ladies have a pleasure in employing some of their leisure hours in these things but hitherto we have had very poor encouragement'. Bell returned the pin-cushions but took the boxes and later asked for some registers.

Bell was asked to obtain foodstuffs. Dom John Forshaw seems to have developed a taste for good living while serving as chaplain to the Haggerstons at Ellingham Hall, on the Northumbrian coast near Seahouses, and shortly after having been moved to Birtley in 1810 he sent Bell

> a small empty hamper hoping if you possibly can get two hundred good Oysters you will have the goodness to forward them by some safe opportunity tomorrow to be left at Josh. Emmerson's, White Cake Row, Birtley …

Forshaw also wanted Bell to 'procure me a couple of lobsters' and 'for myself and friends … hen meat or pig meat' at a modest price, and he became impatient when Bell did not comply quickly enough. He asked William Birdsall, his successor at Ellingham, to send, through Bell, 'Eggs from the Islands' but that was impractical, 'the season being so far gone'. Birdsall would take care to get some the next season.[9]

The Bell family's principal profession of surveying makes an appearance in these letters. Thomas Stout, missioner at Callaly Castle moved to Thropton in 1797 and very soon became a leading citizen of Coquetdale. Significantly, one of the books he bought from Bell was H. Clavering's *The Compleat Parish Officer*. He was one of Bell's friendlier and most frequent correspondents. Bell was ill in June 1809 and Stout advised him: 'don't fix yourself to your counter; indulge yourself daily round the fields of Newcastle …' In August 1809, he told

Bell that he and the other freeholders of Thropton wanted his father to survey their Common. Bell should also know that Sir Carnaby Haggerston, Mr Selby, Forster and Farquar had thoughts of dividing Hallystone Common and that Mr Snowdon of Farnham wished to consult him about it. In 1810 Stout spoke for the freeholders when he sought to persuade Bell Senior of the need for new roads in the locality and the breaking of a quarry 'to win stones for our new houses'; he also planned to rebuild the mission property. In February 1811 he told Bell that he was well pleased with the 'division of our Common. The Commissioners have done us ample justice. I believe our neighbours are all content'.

Newcastle from the Tyne, after a drawing by G. Balmer c.1842

If the increasing indications of poor service are anything to go by, however, it was not long before Bell lost enthusiasm for the business. At any rate, from the winter of 1808-9 priests began to complain about his tardy fulfillment of their orders. Matthew Sharp in Hexham could make light of the late delivery of books, asking if 'the severe weather has frozen your memory or are you so amused with the skating parties' that Bell had forgotten his order, but priests became frustrated at not receiving essential items promptly. In July1812 John Robinson complained that the last batch of altar breads sent to Felton was spoiled because of bad packing; in January 1814 Louis Deshogues at Cowpen was 'in great want' of altar breads ordered long since. In February 1814 John Beaumont, a recently ordained Jesuit at Alnwick, wrote a long and tart letter of complaint about the non-receipt of the annual *Directory* which was most inconvenient and it was not the first time that Bell had been remiss; if Bell wanted to retain his custom he had better pay more attention. In March 1814

William Birdsall ordered cruets for the chapel at Ellingham to be delivered before Easter and gave precise details of the design and the supplier in Sheffield. They did not arrive and Bell was given till Whitsun but they were not delivered until the end of May and even then they were not as specified. Several customers threatened to take their business elsewhere.

Bell's slackness arose from a loss of interest in both the ancillary and the main Catholic business (maybe the maritime trade as well). Obtaining altar breads and cruets was troublesome enough but some of the books he was asked for were unlikely to have been on his shelves or be readily available, especially such multi-volume works as A. Dulan's *Le Gloire du Christianisme par Chateaubriand* in nine volumes or N. Bergier's *Dictionary* in eight, and had to be sent for from London (or Paris perhaps) incurring extra effort, cost, and time. Moreover, some priests were difficult customers. John Yates at Esh Laude was peremptory in his demands and even doubted Bell's competence: when ordering the *Ordo* for 1809, he told Bell 'be sure not to make any mistake, as otherwise it would be attended with a good deal of confusion'. Dom James Higginson at Swinburne (known to be ill-disciplined and 'of a testy, sarcastic turn of mind'[10]) sent in two long lists of books, to be sent 'carefully packed up', the majority of which were probably difficult to obtain, although *Blaine on the Diseases of Horses and Dogs* (4th ed., 6/-), was doubtless well-thumbed around the county. Further, with many items priced at ninepence or a shilling, his profit margin was negligible. Not only that, but customers were often late payers: in January 1813 William Birdsall bought two dozen books but he took it that Bell would 'not find it inconvenient to permit [the bill] to run on till next Christmas'; Pennington asked for six months grace for the whole of Ushaw's stationery bill.

His authors quibbled about Bell's terms; Henry Rutter was unhappy about the commission on his *Meditations* (1807): whereas Keating would take 20%, Bell wanted 30%, though admittedly he paid the carriage to subscribers. John Marshall at Carlisle complained about Bell increasing the price of catechisms yet they were not so neatly bound as previous editions. In 1799 a three-volume abridgement of Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints* was published in Newcastle by the Revd John Bell, teaching at Crook Hall, for the benefit of those unable to afford the twelve-volume edition. Rutter said that Bell was 'very sanguine in his expectations of success and means to apply the profits towards a new college', but in 1814 he told Mr Bell to pass the unsold copies to Mr Heaton, presumably a secondhand dealer, as 'mere lumber'.[11] At the same time he wanted Bell to distribute a prospectus for his new work *The Wanderings of the Human Intellect; or, A New Dictionary of the Various Sects, &c.* among the booksellers of Newcastle. He intended to do the same in Manchester, Lancaster and Preston, and, again, had 'no doubt of considerable if not complete success.' A notice had appeared in the *Newcastle Courant* and one was to be placed in the *Tyne Mercury.* He hoped they would have a 'better effect than the former

advertisements at Newcastle and through the District.' The book came out in 1814 and was recommended in the *Edinburgh Review.* The author was pleased that his book 'was generally thought well of both by Catholics and Protestants' though not by all: 'are Protestants still so dreadfully afraid of being undeceived?' But he was more concerned about financial matters and he questioned Bell's profit which he had expected to be less than 2/6d a copy on a sale price of 10/6d. Moreover, local sales were poor: 'What can be the reason there is such small demand for it with your Newcastle booksellers? Certainly it is far below what you originally gave me reason to expect'. He wanted to know

> precisely from the private directions which you last received from Keating what is the allowance for circulating my *Dictionary* as I wish to negotiate with certain booksellers in Lancashire and whether they are to be charged with the expense of carriage &c.'.

At the end of March 1808 John Lingard withdrew the remaining copies of his *The Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church* (Edward Walker, Newcastle, 1806) which were to be sent to Keating in London for sale. He said he had proposed that Keating produce a second edition 'to be printed on inferior paper to be sold at 10/6d.' Nothing came of this, however, and it was reissued by Walker in Newcastle in 1810. In 1811 Nicholas Gilbert at Whitby sent Bell a dozen copies of 'a little work' he had just published on the errors of John Wesley.[12] It was priced at 1/6d but Gilbert let Catholics have it for 1s. He asked for eight bound copies of *The Garden of Soul* in exchange. If Bell agreed, Gilbert would send more on the same basis. John Jones, chaplain at Cliffe Hall, wrote *The Orphan's Guide* in 1814, priced at 4s., and sent fifty to Bell for sale, with the plug that: 'I find that all who have taken the book like it'.[13] Bell may have found the practicalities of running a bookshop tiresome, let alone having to deal with over-optimistic authors, and he was not making a good living at it anyway; the result was a decline in application and reliability, and that led to his bankruptcy in December 1817.[14]

But then, Bell's heart lay elsewhere. He had always held a deep interest in northern history and over the years he amassed a substantial collection of coins, antiquities and printed ephemera. He founded a (short-lived) numismatic society and hoped to create a subscription society for the publication of old English tracts. In 1812 he published *Rhymes of the Northern Bards,* a collection of songs and poems from the north east, and over the next five years he produced eleven pamphlets on subjects of local interest.[15] He was also highly conscious of the importance of the Roman and other antiquities to be found in the region and in November 1812 he circulated a proposal for the formation of a society for their study and preservation. The leading gentry of the region concurred and on 6 February 1813 the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne was formally established and it flourishes still as the leading historical society in the north eastern counties.[16] Bell was elected Treasurer (an office he held only until

his bankruptcy, of course) and he was Librarian until 1849. He had found his métier, surveying excepted. He moved to live in Gateshead and he died there in 1864 aged eighty-one. Since he played a worthwhile part, if only briefly, in the life of the Church at the turn of the nineteenth century, John Bell (II) is surely worth remembering in northern Catholic history.

NOTES & REFERENCES

[1] I am most grateful to the parish priest, Revd Dr Michael Brown, for allowing me to examine the letters. The letters are uncalendared but are easily searched.

[2] Coates was not a printer; he published and sold, or sold books for other publishers. A Fotheringham, 'Catholic printing, publishing and bookselling in the north-east before 1800', *NCH* 39, 1998, p. 24 ff. Bell's dates are too late for his inclusion in that article.

[3] *ODNB;* C.J. Hunt, *The Book Trade in Northumberland and Durham to 1860,* 1975 pp. 9/11.

[4] Hunt, pp. 9-11, 25; E. Worrall, *Returns of Papists 1767* vol. 2, CRS Occ. Pub. 2, 1989, p. 11. The Baptismal Register for St Andrew's begins in 1765 too late to record any of the Bell births; R. Welford, 'Early Newcastle Typography, 1639-1800', *AA*(3) III, 1913, p. 130ff.

[5] M. Sharratt, 'The Origin and Growth of the Ushaw Library', *NCH* 24, pp. 22ff.

[6] The latter, by Claude Fleury, was translated by Charles Cordell, priest in Newcastle, 1786, and printed in Newcastle. At his death, Cordell's library was sold by John Bell (I). J. Gillow, *Bibliographical Dictionary of the English Catholics,* (5 vols. 1885-1902) I, pp. 566-8.

[7] When J. P. Coglan died on 20 Feb 1800, the *Laity's Directory* was carried on by Richard Smith and the Keatings.

[8] Fidèlle was 'long remembered for his piety, simplicity and charity'; and N. Gilbert (a prolific pamphleteer) at Whitby was 'a man of great dignity of bearing'. W.B. Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop* (1943) p. 4.

[9] Forshaw was at Ellingham 1805-1810 and then at Birtley. Henry Lawson told Dom Richard Marsh that Forshaw was unhappy but he died there in 1815 aged 47. A. Allanson, *Biography of the English Benedictines* (Ampleforth Abbey 1999) No. 800.

[10] Allanson No. 846

[11] L. Gooch, *The Revival of English Catholicism* (1995), p. 281.

[12] Gillow, II, p.466, No. 4.

[13] The book is attributed wrongly to a priest of the same name in Gillow, III, p. 668.

[14] His shop and stock was sold to Robert Gisburne, but Edward Walker became the main retailer of Catholic material in the town. Hunt, pp. 41, 92.

[15] Hunt, p. xii; only one had any Catholic interest: *The Escape of Lord Nithsdale* (1816).

[16] Antecedent to the Antiquaries was The Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne, founded in 1793 as a 'conversation club' by the Revd William Turner and others.