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North East Catholic History Society

NORTH EAST CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY

The Society was founded in July 1974 to foster interest and promote research into the history of the Catholic Church in North East England.

A yearly programme of talks and visits to places of Catholic interest is arranged and *NORTHERN CATHOLIC HISTORY*, the Society's periodical, is published twice yearly.

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NORTH EAST CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY

The twelfth A.G.M. held in the parish hall of St Mary's Cathedral on 7 October, was well attended and conducted by Fr Nicholson with his customary informality and expedition. He reviewed the activities of the past year, thanked the officers for their devoted work and, in accordance with the members' wishes, renewed their mandates for yet another year. Anticipating the thirteenth centenary of the death of St Cuthbert which falls this year, Fr Nicholson gave his Chairman's talk on the significance of the patron of the Diocese in the past and present. The autumn half-day excursion, on 11 October, was blessed with sunshine, and a full coachload of members enjoyed visits to Belsay and Cheeseburn Grange.

Both the autumn talks were well supported, the Hon. Editor making his debut on Armistice Day on the subject of Catholic lay societies in the nineteenth century, and on 9 December John White gave an absorbing lecture on Newman for our time. The two talks in February and March will take place while this booklet is in the press. The February meeting will be our first Members' Night when several short papers will be given, while the March talk by Fr Luke Magee, rector of Minsteracres, on the Passionists in England is eagerly awaited.

For the first time the autumn issue could not be wholly distributed before Christmas and the Hon. Editor apologises for the delay. Two events in 1987 dominate this spring issue. The first is the thirteenth centenary of St Cuthbert, whose two feasts are on 20 March and 4 September. The Society will mark this occasion with a pilgrimage in May to the Inner Farne, while in the booklet there is an article by Fr Geoffrey Scott OSB on the Benedictine secret as to the burial place of St Cuthbert's remains and a reprint of a brief biography by Provost Consitt which was read in all churches in the Diocese on 20 March 1887.

The second event is the beatification of eighty-five martyrs of England, Wales and Scotland towards the end of the year. There is a short article and list of the twelve martyrs who were born, lived and worked in the North East and who were martyred at York, Durham, or Newcastle, and this is followed by a biography by the late Ann Forster, who did so much to advance the cause of the English martyrs, on the Ven. George Errington, who helped to organise an underground movement to assist priests in the sixteenth century. The edition is completed by an article by June Crosby on Joseph Bonomi, the architect, whose son was a well known architect in the North East in the mid-nineteenth century.

Thanks are expressed to all contributors and also to the Carmelite nuns at Darlington for their expert printing. The Hon. Editor solicits articles on topics of Catholic interest for the autumn and subsequent editions.

THE TWELFTH CENTENARY OF ST CUTHBERT, 1887

As we commemorate the thirteenth centenary of the death of St Cuthbert, on both his feast day on 20 March and that of his translation on 4 September, it will perhaps be of interest to recall how the twelfth centenary was celebrated in 1887.

Bishop Bewick, who died on 29 October 1886, was a keen historian and he had looked forward to the centenary, referring to it in his last letter to the clergy. Edward Provost Consitt, the Vicar Capitular during the episcopal vacancy, was likewise a scholarly historian and, having consulted the Chapter, he wrote to the clergy on 10 February announcing the ways in which it was proposed to keep the commemoration in these terms:

> 1. On the day of the Festival, Sunday, March the 20th, in St. Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle, there will be Solemn High Mass with a Sermon on St. Cuthbert, followed by a Procession and Exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament.
>
> 2. In the other Churches and Chapels of the Diocese the Festival is to be kept with all the solemnity possible. Permission is granted for Exposition and Procession of the Blessed Sacrament on the Feast day, and for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament daily throughout the Octave. It would be very desirable that the Clergy should mutually assist each other to have High Mass in the principal Churches with Sermons appropriate to the occasion.
>
> 3. Due notice of the Services on the Festival should be given at latest on the previous Sunday, and the Faithful exhorted to approach the Sacraments, and in every way to assist in keeping the Feast.
>
> 4. It is proposed that there should be a general pilgrimage, weather permitting, to Holy Island and the Farne on the Feast of St Aidan, August 31st, during the week preceding Sunday, September 4th, the Feast of the Translation of St. Cuthbert. All particulars concerning the pilgrimage will be furnished in due course.
>
> 5. Though it might be difficult or impossible to make a public pilgrimage to the Cathedral at Durham, an appropriate way of honouring the Saint would be to organize private visits from different parts of the Diocese to the Feretory in which His Body was enshrined for more than 500 years, and where, probably, it still remains.

6. The Chapel attached to Lindisfarne Cottage in Holy Island will be opened during the course of the year, and Holy Mass will be celebrated there during the Summer Months.

On 14 March Provost Consitt again addressed the clergy as follows:

Thinking it may be of use, I venture to send you a short sketch of the life of St. Cuthbert, which you may read to your people at the principal Mass on his festival day, Sunday, the 20th instant.

It may help to increase devotion to our great Patron Saint, if you will place within reach of your flock, the popular life of him which will be published before the end of the month. I have also ordered a supply of small pictures of the Saint, which I shall be glad to see in the hands of all. They can be obtained at a very low price on application to the Rev. J. Rooney, Darlington.

I would further suggest to you to try and promote, if you can, during the course of the centenary year, pilgrimages of devotion to those places which have been intimately connected with St. Cuthbert, viz:— Old Melrose, Coldingham, Carlisle, Derwentwater, Tynemouth, Chester-le-Street and Durham.

I have already drawn your attention to the great general pilgrimage, which I hope will be numerously attended, to Holy Island where St. Cuthbert spent much of his monastic life, and to Farne, where he died. In both these spots there still remain venerable buildings of surpassing interest and beauty.

I offer another suggestion. Might we not by means of lectures and readings from the lives of St. Cuthbert by Ven. Bede and other writers, render our people gradually well acquainted and familiar with the story of his life and the wonderful history of his sacred incorrupt body? The present seems to be a most fitting time for implanting in the hearts of the faithful a deeper devotion to our old English saints.

(The text of Consitt's brief biography to be read from the pulpit on 20 March 1887 is printed elsewhere in this booklet.)

Provost Consitt was, however, not destined to take part in the summer pilgrimage. He died in July having been taken ill while staying at Lindisfarne to arrange the chapel and make other preparations for the pilgrimage there on 11 August. It was left to Canon Thomas Wilkinson, as the new Vicar Capitular (Bishop, 1888—1909), to complete the arrangements, about which he wrote to the clergy on 5 August, encouraging all to take part in a true religious spirit and prayerful frame of mind.

Pilgrimage to Holy Island, 11 August 1887

The events of the pilgrimage to Holy Island on 11 August were described fully in *The Northern Catholic Calendar* for 1888 thus:

> Far away in the Northern Sea lies the island of Lindisfarne, or Holy Island. A few fishermen dwell there, and an occasional visitor in the summer visits the island. There are few beside to break the loneliness of the spot, which has been truly called the birthplace of Christianity in ancient Northumbria.
>
> The ruins of the Abbey Church and Monastery are the only points of attraction. Here reposed the remains of many saints, numbering St. Aidan, St. Oswald, St. Cuthbert, etc., till the incursions of the Danes forced the monks to fly, carrying with them the relics of their saints.
>
> And so, on August 11th, 1887, the year of the 12th centenary of St. Cuthbert, the dream of bishop and prelate was realised, and more than realised. They had looked forward to a procession of some hundreds of pilgrims; but here were thousands. They came from all parts; some by road, some by boat, and the greater part by rail. It was a sight never to be forgotten. From the island could be described a dark stream coming from the mainland across the three miles of sands, as though to empty itself into the sea; but onwards it came, and banners began to appear streaming in the breeze, and the sight of white surplices, and a procession numbering thousands, began to unfold itself before the astonished gaze of the inhabitants. Barefoot, with rosary in hands, and responding audibly to the prayers of the clergy, each band, headed by cross-bearer, approached and halted under the shadow of the sand hills, then, chanting the Litany of the Saints, and the hymn, 'Faith of our Fathers', the mass of people moved forwards, the clergy leading the way.
>
> The old pile re-echoed back the voice of priest, and monk, and nun, and the sunshine danced upon the waters, which had now cut Lindisfarne off from the mainland, and the tears streamed down the faces of the pilgrims as the High Mass proceeded. The Gloria, and Credo, and Te Deum had not been heard within these walls since the Reformation, and now the past had returned, and, as if the tombs of the Abbey had given up their dead, priest and monk and nun appeared on the scene. But two were absent — who were present in spirit — whose names were on every lip, and whose presence alone was wanting to complete the scene. Many a 'Requiem aeternam' was breathed for Bishop Bewick and Provost Consitt; they had sown what we had reaped on that glorious autumnal day.
>
> On the very spot whence Cuthbert had often spoken to his brethren, Bishop Patterson addressed the densely packed congregation before him — strangers mostly to each other, but one in faith. 'Put off the shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground', was the text of a very impressive sermon; but sight of sights and sound of sounds when the

bell rung and the host and chalice were elevated, and the Lamb without stain was once more, after so long a blank, offered up within these ruins! The multitude were so tightly packed together that kneeling was impossible, but wet was the eye and moved the heart of the believer. Not a few on that day, who came to scoff, remained to pray. The Vicar Capitular, at the end of the Mass, intoned the Te Deum, and the Ambrosian hymn was taken up by the clergy and people with heart and soul, and resounded back from wall to wall, from crag and peak. While the Holy Sacrifice was being offered up within, the vast crowds encircled the outside walls, and many prayers were said out of sight and sound of the altar. Under the north wall a Benedictine Monk stood up and addressed the surging masses. He told them of the old days when monks peopled the cloisters, and taught the young, and tended the sick, and ministered to the dying, while the sound of the praises of God was kept up night and day, in the Abbey Church, in the good old days of old.

And back the multitude moved, after all was over; and the three miles of sand and water was again crossed by pilgrim feet. As pilgrims they came, and as pilgrims the thousands went back — their conduct above all praise — bearing on their breasts the badge of St. Cuthbert's cross; and each one who bore a share in that day's pilgrimage will remember to his dying day how gloriously and how piously we kept the 12th centenary of our great patron, St. Cuthbert.

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the self-same prayers as of old, and hundreds have partaken of that divine food which nourished the soul of Cuthbert in life, and which gave strength to him in his last struggle with the enemy of our salvation. May his anointed hands be lifted up to bless us, and his intercession ascend to God this day and always, for his children everywhere in all the land.

NOTE

This is the text of the brief biography sent to clergy throughout the Diocese on 14 March 1887 to be read to parishioners on St Cuthbert's Day, 20 March 1887.

ST CUTHBERT [1]

Edward Provost Consitt

About two miles distant from the princely Castle of Bamborough, and six from Holy Island, 'like the broken and defenceless hull of a ship-wrecked vessel', exposed to the wild storms of the rugged East Coast, lies the Island of Farne. There on the morning of the 20th of March, A.D. 687, just twelve hundred years ago this very day, our Glorious Father and Patron, St Cuthbert, gave up his soul to God. His was not a very eventful career, but it may be grateful to you to have recalled today, the few principal facts of the story of his life, to remind you of the claims he has upon our veneration and devotion.

We first meet him, in the enchanting pages of Venerable Bede, his Biographer, as the young boy watching the flocks of his master on the mountains, probably the slopes of the Eildon, or Lammermoor hills in the Lowlands of Scotland. Several localities in the rich pastoral vale where the Leader and Tweed mingle their waters, claim the honour of his birthplace. 'The story of St Cuthbert's youth reads,' says Montalembert, 'like that of an Anglo-Saxon boy of our own day.' He was a ringleader in boyish games, and excelled his playmates in running, wrestling, jumping, and all bodily exercises. One night lying awake on the mountain side, he saw, in a dazzling vision of bright light, the soul of St Aidan, the Apostle of Northumbria, being carried by Angels to Heaven, and the sight so moved his young heart with heavenly desires that he at once renounced his secular life, and sought admission into the monastery of Mailros, where he had the special fortune of being received by Boisil, its saintly Prior.

After spending some years at Mailros, he removed for a brief period to the new monastery at Ripon, in Yorkshire, and on his return, after the death of St Boisil, St Cuthbert became Prior of Mailros. From Mailros he migrated with Abbot Eala, the future Bishop of Hexham, to St Aidan's monastery at Lindisfarne, the most venerable spot in all Bernicia.

In his office of Prior he was not content with guiding in the paths

of monastic perfection the monks over whom he was placed, but, after the example of his holy predecessor St Boisil, he devoted himself to the work of evangelizing the scattered population of the surrounding country.

The vale of Tweed and Ettrick has long been celebrated for its rich pastoral beauty. Describing the district a modern writer remarks, 'agriculture has chosen its valleys for her favourite seat, and drainage and steam power have turned sedgy marshes into farms and meadows. But to see the Lowlands as they were in St Cuthbert's day, we must sweep away meadow and farm again, and replace them by vast solitudes dotted here and there with clusters of wooden hovels, and covered by boggy tracts, over which travellers rode spear in hand, and eye kept cautiously about them.' Such were the features of the region in which St Cuthbert pursued his labours when Prior of Mailros. He became the apostle of the whole country between the Solway and the Firth. He spent whole days together without returning to his monastery, in instructing the poor half barbarous inhabitants, often detained in the almost inaccessible and impenetrable swamps, by dreadful storms of frost and snow, and exposed with no other shelter than the boughs of trees, to the inclemency of the long dark nights.

At Lindisfarne he devoted himself to the same kind of work. Like St Aidan before him he wandered over the moorlands and mountainous ridges of Northumbria, teaching the people from hamlet to hamlet, as he had done in Scotland, and winning all hearts. Venerable Bede gives us a beautiful picture of the docility of those amongst whom he laboured, and their eagerness to hear the word of God. 'It was the custom,' he says, 'in those days with the English people, when a clerk or a priest came into a village, for all to flock together to hear the word of God, willingly hearkening to what was said, and still more willingly following up by works what they heard and understood.'

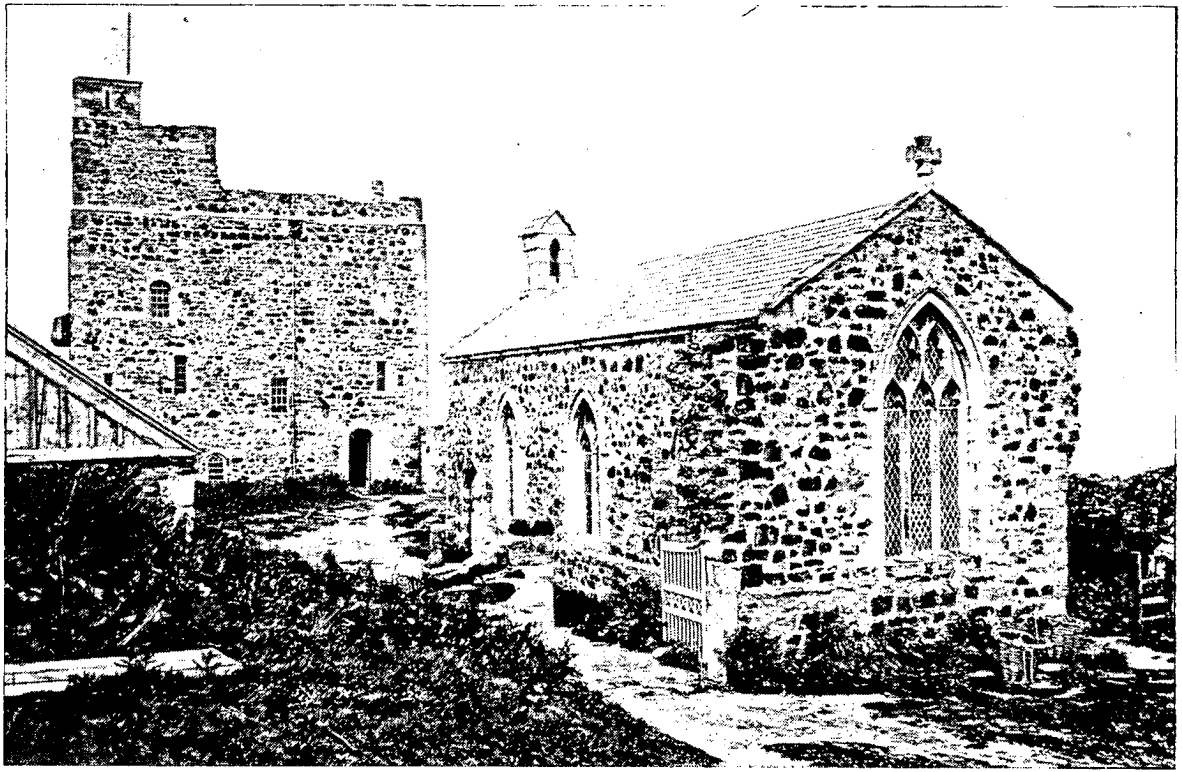
After some years spent in the monastic life, longing for a closer union with God, he resigned his office, and retired in 676 to the solitary rocky island which forms the largest of the Farne group. Ten years later the prediction, uttered by St Boisil 21 years before, was fulfilled, and St Cuthbert was consecrated Bishop of Hexham, (which he afterwards exchanged for Lindisfarne,) in the minster of St Peter at York, on Easter Sunday of the year 685, which fell on the 26th of March. The ceremony was performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury,

assisted by seven other prelates, and in the presence of King Egfrith. When Bishop his new dignity made no difference in his character, or even his mode of life. His whole Episcopacy seems to have partaken of the character of a modern mission indefinitely prolonged. He went over his vast diocese stretching from the mouth of the Tyne, to the Firth of Forth, to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to converts, lavishing all kinds of benefits on his people, alms, clothing, miraculous cures, penetrating, as of old, sometimes on foot, though mostly on horseback, into hamlets and distant corners, climbing the hills and downs, sleeping under a tent, and sometimes indeed finding no other shelter, as in the days of his life at Mailros, than in huts made of branches brought from the nearest wood to the desert in which, says Ven. Bede, he had made the torrents of his eloquence and charity to gush forth.

There was one most special and delightful characteristic of his holy soul, which mainly accounts for the wonderful love with which he was followed during life, and which won for him for centuries to come, that undying affection which made him the popular saint of the North — a great loving heart, overflowing with tenderness and compassion.

He was Bishop only two years. With the monks of Holy Island he celebrated the Christmas of 686, and immediately after withdrew once more to his beloved solitude at Farne, 'knowing', says St Bede, 'in spirit that his last day was at hand.' Fortunately we possess a most minute as well as touching record of his last illness and death, furnished to Venerable Bede, by Herefrid, Prior of Lindisfarne, who was an eye-witness of much that he described. 'Going to him about the ninth hour of the day I found him reclining in a corner of his oratory, opposite the altar; and I myself began to sit down, but he did not speak for the severity of his suffering prevented him from speaking much. But on my pressingly asking him to leave some words, which might be considered as a bequest and as a last farewell to the brethren, he began to speak a few words, but they were *powerful* concerning peace and humility. "Have peace," he said, "and divine charity ever amongst you." He spoke at intervals, for as we have said, the greatness of his infirmity deprived him of the power of much speaking. Thus he spent a quiet day till evening, in the expectation of future blessedness, yea, and tranquilly continued the wakeful night also in prayer. Now

St Cuthbert's chapel, Inner Farne, built in 1370 and restored in 1848, and in which services are occasionally held today. Beyond is Prior Castell's tower built for defence about 1500.



when the wonted time for Matins had come, after having received the salutory sacraments (of penance and extreme unction) at my hands, he fortified his departure which he knew had now come, by the Communion of the Body and Blood of Our Lord, and having lifted up his eyes to heaven, and extended his hands on high, his soul intent on heavenly praises departed to the joys of the kingdom of Heaven.' Thus about the age of 60 years, after having been a Monk 37 years, Prior 12 years, Anchorite 9 years, and a Bishop 2 years, passed from this life the blessed Cuthbert.

This most bare outline will serve to recall and fix upon your minds the story of that saintly career. It is the mere outward pencilling of the picture — to give it life and proportion and beauty and edification and perfection, you must supply from your memories the light and shade and colouring of his heroic virtues — the continued prayer, the perfect detachment from the world, the spirit of humility, mortification, obedience and self-denial, the burning love of God, the consuming zeal for souls, the unceasing and unresting round of missionary toil.

You are familiar with the eventful years which followed the saintly death, how his incorrupt body was placed on the right hand side of the High Altar of his Cathedral at Lindisfarne — how, when the Danes landed on the coast, the monks fled away carrying the treasure along with them — how, after seven long and weary years of wandering to and fro over the greater portion of the northern counties of England and the south of Scotland, they settled at Chester-le-Street, and finally at Durham, where for six centuries and more his sacred relics reposed upon a shrine of 'fine and costly marble, all limned and guilted with gold,' and encased in crystal and hung round with precious jewels and costly offerings, until evil days fell upon this dear old England, and impious and sacrilegious hands broke down the shrine and despoiled the feretory and profaned with insult and indignity the body of our venerable Father.

The majestic cathedral still is there — the glory and boast of the ancient city of Durham — and, though hidden and unknown, the relics of St. Cuthbert are doubtless there still, but oh, how changed the people! how altered the aspect of this great Festival! But 300 years ago, and on this 20th day of March, the whole of the northern counties would have been astir and alive with excitement. From earliest dawn the great bells of St. Cuthbert's cathedral would have poured out the

full strains of their melody over the waters of the Wear and the villages which studded its banks. At every altar, from sunrise to noon, a succession of priests would have offered the adorable sacrifice of the Mass. From far and near, thousands and tens of thousands of eager and devout pilgrims would be flocking in through the wide abbey gates, to venerate the incorrupt body of their great patron, and to pray before his uplifted shrine. At a fixed hour, previously announced in every parish throughout the diocese, Holy Mass would be said at the little altar at the west end of the shrine 'which was used only upon the great and holy feast of St. Cuthbert's day in Lent.' Then would follow the solemn High Mass sung by the mitred Prior, or perchance by the Prince Bishop himself, surrounded by a whole army of priests and religious, clad in the richly embroidered copes of which the monastery had such a goodly store; and, mindful of the apostolic precept of hospitality, 'the whole convent did keepe open house in the Frater-house and dine all together on that day and on no other day else in the yeare.'

All these things are passed away, and 'as a vesture they are changed.' Lindisfarne has gone, and Chester-le-Street has gone and Durham has gone. 'It was,' as Cardinal Newman has said, 'sore to part with them.' But one thing remains, of which no special pleading can rob us, our inheritance in St. Cuthbert and the Saxon saints and our unquestionable identity with the old Catholic Church of England, with which we are one in faith, one in worship, and one in government. It cannot be otherwise, for the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church ever remains the same, yesterday, today, and for all time. It is equally at home in our humble churches as in the stateliest temples which the marvellous wisdom and skill of man have ever raised to the honour of God.

Let us then on this great festival be thankful to God, and strive to honour our great Patron by the devotion and fervour of our prayers. Let us day by day invoke his powerful intercession, and by our loyalty and love to him, make reparation for the coldness, forgetfulness and unbelief of this people for whom he toiled and spent himself, and whom he still loves so dearly. But above all let us labour with untiring zeal and perseverance, to acquire a share in those virtues of which he was so striking a model, and which made him the saint he was.

On this day in every church and chapel of this vast diocese, the great sacrifice has been offered to God in honour of our Saint and with

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SOME NOTES ON THE BENEDICTINE SECRET REGARDING ST CUTHBERT'S BODY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Dom Geoffrey Scott OSB

The Benedictine tradition that the incorrupt body of St Cuthbert was transferred at the Reformation to another part of Durham Cathedral and that the place of its deposition is known to three monks who pass down the secret from one generation to another has become a popular story, although its origins are lost in antiquity.[1]

The first known Benedictine mention of the tradition is that of Fr Serenus Cressy in his *Church History of Brittany* (1668): 'The body of St Cuthbert remained incorrupt for many hundred years, till the unhappy days of King Henry VIII. And no doubt it continues to do so at this time in the hands of some devout Catholics, it is to be hoped secure from the outrages of calvinistical enemies'.[2] There is nothing here about the secret being held by monks, but it is true that the Benedictines had a continuing interest in those saints whose shrines had been venerated in the cathedrals and abbeys which the monks had possessed during the medieval period. Thus, the monk Hugh Frankland in 1710 described how he had questioned an aged Benedictine, William Hitchcock, born in 1617 in Buckinghamshire, about the shrine of St Edmund, King and martyr, at the abbey of Bury St Edmunds. Hitchcock insisted that the story regarding the translation of St Edmund's relics to Toulouse was false, for Hitchcock's grandfather or great-grandfather 'had seen his Body put into an Iron Chest at the fall of Religion in England, and knew where it was put'.[3]

The next evidence after Cressy regarding St Cuthbert comes from the monk Anselm Mannock who wrote his manuscript *Annus Sacer Brittanicus* in three volumes between 1747 and 1750 when he was a chaplain in Warwickshire.[4] This work is heavily reliant on Cressy and other English Benedictine authors of the previous century for its material. After the life of each saint, most them being Anglo-Saxon, Mannock offered a pious reflection and a scriptural text, whilst always citing his authority for historical details. The work appears to have been

written for monastic rather than lay readership; it dwells much on individual asceticism whilst noting English Benedictine liturgical usage. Written into the margin opposite the entry for St Cuthbert are the words:

> (The body) was translated to Durham when in Hen(ry) 8the time his shrine was defaced, ye monks removed it to a more secret place and there it still remains known only to three Monks who are all bound to perpetual secrecy. I had it from one of ye three [he adds 'in ye secret'] about ye year 1730, named Fr Casse Monach. Paris, who lived in ye Family of Sr. Edwd. Gascoine.

Mannock went on to give the history of the ring (now at Ushaw) taken from the finger of the saint at the Reformation, and through Bishop Richard Smith (1568—1655): 'tis now in ye Custody of ye Augustin Nuns at Paris as I was credibly informed by one who lived amongst them. An. 1741'. Mannock had a particular interest in relics, and there are a number of descriptions of saints whose bodies were reputedly incorrupt found in his *Annus Sacer Brittanicus.*

Lawrence Casse was chaplain to the Gascoigne family at Parlington, near Aberford, West Riding, from c.1701 until his death in 1732. He may have learned the secret from this family, but it is more likely it came to him from a Benedictine source. It seems probable that by the beginning of the eighteenth century the monk who assumed the office of Cathedral Prior of Durham was given the details of the secret, as well as the Benedictine Provincial of York. Casse was Provincial of York in 1710 to 1713 and 1721 to 1725. Another monk, John Bede Potts, chaplain to Sir Marmaduke Constable at Everingham in the East Riding became Cathedral Prior of Durham in 1733. Writing to the Provincial of York, Cuthbert Farnworth, at Capheaton, Northumberland, in May 1737, Potts, himself a Northumbrian, from Rothbury, had this to say: 'If you have not imparted or promised to impart the secret to any other, I shall give you a meeting at Durham before you take your journey'.[5] The journey mentioned here was that to the monks' General Chapter in the summer of 1737 at Douai and Potts's request suggests that Provincials customarily took recipients of the secret to Durham Cathedral itself in order to point out the exact spot where the apparently genuine body was laid. Potts gained possession of the secret at a time when the Benedictines were raising the status of the Cathedral Priors. Thus, the 1721 General Chapter had allowed them the right of wearing pectoral crosses, and rings, 'which are also part of their dignity', were granted to them by the next Chapter in 1725. Potts, drawing up his

Lent Poverty Bill in 1734 for Provincial Farnworth includes 'A little crucifix, a silver cross with (the) inscription Eccl(esia) Cath(edralis) Dun(elmensis)', i.e., the pectoral cross belonging to the Prior of Durham, which was returned to the Provincial on the Prior's death.[6]

In the 1720s also, each Prior was given a 'cathedral chapter' of three monks whom he could nominate from among the Benedictine missioners, and 'until the French Revolution, these Cathedral Chapters were filled up as any members died, or were otherwise disposed of by the Fathers at Chapter'. Although these 'chapters' seem to have had no power nor authority, it is possible that it was here that we have the origin, noted by Sir Walter Scott in his poem 'Marmion', of the secret being known only to three monks, who passed it on to their successors.

The last piece of evidence from the eighteenth century regarding the Benedictine secret comes in a letter of August 1891 from President Augustine Walker to Bishop Charles Walmesley.[7] Walker had heard that Walmesley's friend and patron, Thomas Weld of Lulworth, Dorset, wished to possess the body of St Cuthbert, and Walker could think of no better person to own it. But there were difficulties. God had preserved it, Walker suggested, for some greater end than private veneration. 'I have heard that it was once proposed to the Abbot of Lambspring to have it carried over thither, that it might be decently enshrined and exposed in his Church, but that he refused, thinking it would be counteracting God's intentions towards our country.'[8] Walker then retold the relic's history as he knew it. He had learned from a 'Protestant Prebend' how the Commissioners who opened the tomb in the late 1530s found a fresh leg wound bleeding, which wound had been made by a workman digging up the body on Lindisfarne. The body had been hidden at the Reformation by the monks 'in a place which God has never permitted the enemies of the Faith to find out.' Walker concluded:

> All this seems supernatural and therefore I think we should not easily be led to remove it from where God Almighty has been pleased to have it placed. The Catholics of that county have great respect for the saint, and any of ours that dared to remove it, would never dare show their face in that country, and if the Bishop of the North would consent to its removal, he would lose all the respect of his flock, and it would be cruel to deprive the faithful of that District of their protector.

The saint's body was, therefore, not removed south, and if there

is truth in the secret, remains to this day hidden in Durham Cathedral.

NOTES

1. E. Power, 'St Cuthbert: Part 2', *Northern Catholic History*, 12, Autumn 1980, pp.23–32, for the background to the Benedictine secret.
2. D. Lunn, *The English Benedictines*, London 1980, p.133 for Cressy and the secret.
3. Douai Abbey, Weldon, 'Memorials' VI, p.600.
4. Downside Abbey, MS 576, March 20 entry.
5. Hull University, Everingham Papers, III/156, 1737, 30 May, Potts to Farnworth.
6. Ampleforth Abbey, Allanson MS, 'History', II, pp.93, 146. R.C. Wilton, 'Some Annals of Everingham', *Dublin Review*, clxi, Oct. 1917, pp. 272–73.
7. Ushaw College, UCM IV/290, 1791, 30 Aug., Walker to Walmesley.
8. Lambspring was the English Benedictine monastery, near Hildesheim. The head of St Thomas of Hereford had been taken there about 1670 to be 'kept and exposed with dew publick veneration', see *Downside Review*, V, 1886, pp.39–40.

Death of St Cuthbert (from a medieval MS.)

NORTH EAST MARTYRS AMONG THE NEW BLESSED MARTYRS

Towards the end of 1986, sixteen years after the canonisation of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, the Holy Father signed the decree certifying the fact of martyrdom of a further eighty-four English and Welsh martyrs and one Scottish martyr who will be beatified later this year. Brief details of all eighty-five, comprising sixty-three priests and twenty-two laymen, are given in *The Ransomer*, Vol. XXIX, No.6, Christmas 1986. The list includes twelve who were born and bred in the North East and were martyred at York, Durham and Newcastle.

Much of the preparatory research into the lives of these 'Martyrs of the Diocese' was completed by Dr Annie Forster, who wrote several articles about them. A brief account of the twelve appears in *The Northern Catholic Calendar 1987* (pp. 136—138) and further details of most of those soon to be beatified were recorded by Fr William Fee in 'The Venerable Martyrs of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle' in *Northern Catholic History*, No.7, Spring 1978. An extended biography of the Ven. George Errington, martyred at York on 29 November 1596, appears elsewhere in this booklet and an account of the underground movement to assist priests which he helped to organise and run was written by Mrs M.J. Cashman in 'The Catholic Underground on Elizabethan Tyneside' in *Northern Catholic History*, No.13, Spring 1981 (pp.3—10). It is hoped to publish biographical notices of all the twelve in future issues. In the meanwhile, the following summarised notes record their names and other details, with the place and date of their martyrdom. Because of the local devotion to the Ven. Nicholas Postgate, the martyr of the North Yorkshire Moors, his details are also included. A short account of his life was given by J.L. O'Connor in *Northern Catholic History* No.10, Autumn 1979.

Hugh Taylor, seminary priest; born Durham; educated Rheims; ordained 1584; condemned for priesthood; hanged, drawn and quartered, York, 26 November 1585.

Edward Burden, seminary priest; born Durham; educated Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Rheims; ordained 1584; condemned for priesthood; h.d.q., York, 31 October or 29 November 1588.

Edmund Duke, seminary priest; born Kent, 1563; convert; educated Rheims, Rome; ordained 1589; condemned for priesthood; h.d.q., Durham, 27 May 1590.

Richard Hill, seminary priest; born Yorks; educated Rheims; ordained 1589; condemned for priesthood; h.d.q., Durham, 27 May 1590.

John Hogg, seminary priest; born Yorks; educated Rheims; ordained 1589; condemned for priesthood; h.d.q., Durham, 27 May 1590.

John Holiday, seminary priest; born Yorks; educated Rheims; ordained 1589; condemned for priesthood; h.d.q., Durham, 27 May 1590.

Joseph Lambton, seminary priest; born Walton-in-Rydale, 1568; educated Rheims, Rome; ordained 1592; condemned for priesthood; h.d.q., Newcastle, 24 July 1592.

George Errington, layman; born Hirst, Ashington, Northumberland; educated Oxford; condemned for 'persuading to Popery'; h.d.q., York, 29 November 1596.

Thomas Palaser, or *Palliser*, seminary priest; born Ellerton-upon-Swale, nr Richmond, North Yorks; educated Rheims, Valladolid; ordained 1596; condemned for priesthood; h.d.q., Durham, 9 August 1600.

John Norton, layman, of Ravensworth, Lamesley, Co. Durham; hanged for harbouring, Durham, 9 August 1600.

John Talbot, layman; of Thornton le Street, North Yorks; hanged for harbouring, Durham, 9 August 1600.

William Southerne, seminary priest; born Ketton, nr Darlington, 1579; educated Valladolid, Seville, Douay; ordained 1601; English mission, Staffs; condemned for priesthood; h.d.q., Newcastle upon Tyne, 30 April 1618.

Nicholas Postgate, seminary priest; born Egton, North Yorks, 1598; educated Douay; ordained 1628; English mission, North Yorks, 50 years; condemned for priesthood; h.d.q., York, 7 August 1679.

THE VENERABLE GEORGE ERRINGTON *

Ann M.C. Forster

The Ven. George Errington, whose Cause of Beatification is now being introduced, must have a very special appeal to all in the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. He was a native of this part, it was the scene of his activities, and also of his imprisonment; though not of his martyrdom, which took place at York in 1596.

He was born, probably about the year 1556, at Hirst,[1] a property acquired about that time by a branch of the Errington family. Today it forms part of the town of Ashington. The Jacobean mansion, attached to an older tower, both of which were demolished about fifty years ago, was built by Thomas Errington, who was, in all probability, George's brother. Thomas could trace his ancestry for several generations, back to another Thomas Errington who, at the beginning of the sixteenth century held land at Beukley in the parish of St John Lee near Hexham. The radio pylon towering above the Rochester-Corbridge road (the ancient Watling street) marks the spot.

In December 1574, a George Errington, *filius generosi*, whom we may with some confidence identify with the martyr, matriculated at Trinity College, Oxford. He was then aged eighteen. He graduated B.A. in 1576, and M.A. in 1579. The fact that he did so seems to indicate that he had conformed, at least to the extent of taking the Oath of Supremacy, without which he would not have been granted a university degree. Whilst at Oxford, however, he could not fail to have come across Catholic influences, particularly at Trinity, which produced no less than seven of the martyrs. One of these, William Spenser, was actually his contemporary, and so was William Warford, afterwards priest and Jesuit; neither of them as yet reconciled to the Church.

When and under what circumstances he himself was reconciled, we have no means of knowing. In 1580 he appears to have been living at Ellington, near Hirst, looking after an estate there. but it must have been during the years immediately following that he entered upon what was to be his life's work — the lay apostolate, so vital if the priests

coming from abroad were to be brought in contact with the people who needed them.

We first hear of him in this connection in 1585, when he was arrested, in the Tyne, on board or about to board a ship which was leaving for France. With him was a boy, name undisclosed, whom he was escorting abroad. He also had upon him letters, intended for persons overseas. He was taken to London, and committed prisoner, on 2 June, to the Tower.

We know that there was at this time an organised system of communication carried on secretly between the Tyne and the French ports. Young men were going overseas, priests were returning, Catholic literature was being smuggled into England. A spy reported, in 1585: [2] 'The said priests most commonly do come over in French boats, that come to Newcastle for coals, who do land the said priests either in Newcastle or in some creek near to the same.' During his questioning, which took place a few weeks later, George Errington admitted that he 'rode with the boy to the water's edge about one mile and a half from Newcastle, where the Frenchman lay and stayed' for them. Another account related the discovery of 'a number of popish and traitorous books, sent from Reames (Rheims) and other places beyond the seas in Barrels and Fardels, landed at Sheeles (Shields), and from thence conveyed by water to Newcastle in Baskets covered over with fresh fish.' [3]

South Shields played an important part in these activities, a house there, occupied by a family called Taylor, being the centre of operations. Here, priests coming from abroad were received and sheltered, supplied with funds and disguises, and escorted to their destinations. Miss Ursula Taylor kept the house, Laurence Kellam, an ex-student of Douay, managed the finances, and George Errington controlled the whole, himself acting as guide and conveying the priests 'to such gentlemen's houses as they were assigned unto.' Another member of the family was Valentine Taylor, [4] a Marian priest now living abroad, and possibly acting as the agent on the other side of the water. One of the letters taken on George Errington was intended for him. It is interesting to note that, in spite of all set-backs, Tyneside continued to be a centre for the smuggling in of priests and books for another generation at least, up to the time of Bl. Henry Morse, arrested off Tynemouth in 1626; and that his fellow-prisoner and novice master

also captured in the Tyne, was Fr John Robinson S.J., a nephew of the Rev. Valentine Taylor.

Another person who used this channel of communication was Bl. John Boste. In 1585 Thomas Rogers, a Government agent, writing from Paris, stated that the Scottish Jesuits who corresponded with France, had their letters conveyed to the North of England to John Boste, and that Boste sent them on 'by some that come from Newcastle to Dieppe.' [5]

To return to George Errington. On 30 August 1585, he and his companion, Robert Hethfield, were examined by Sir Owen Hopton, Lieutenant of the Tower, and Mr Edward Barker.[6] Attention seems to have been concentrated mainly on the letters. This is understandable. Without attempting to unravel the intrigues which went on around the person and cause of Mary, Queen of Scots, then a prisoner in England, intrigues in which politics and religion were closely intertwined, it is enough to say that they constituted a perpetual threat to the English Queen. The previous year (1584) had seen the execution of Francis Throckmorton for his part in a plot to liberate Mary. The year following (1586), Anthony Babington and others were to suffer death in the same cause. Anyone caught carrying letters abroad was bound to be suspect. George Errington's real mission, a spiritual one, does not seem to have been mentioned. It was not that he made any secret of his religion. When asked 'whether he can be contented to go to the church and to conform himself like a good subject in matters of religion, in case her Majesty would vouchsafe to pardon his former offences against the laws?' his answer was gloriously uncompromising: 'He would pray for and serve her Highness with his body and life, but as for going to the church, his conscience would not permit him.' Being further questioned whether he be reconciled to the Pope, 'He saith that he is a Catholic and so fully resolved, and farther answer he cannot make.'

Robert Hethfield was not so steadfast. He was a Newcastle merchant, and a relative of the Taylor family. He had been in trouble before, with regard to the 'conveyance over' of Bl. Thomas Alfield, who had just been executed (July 1585), his offence being that he had brought into England 'seditious books', which were, in fact, copies of Dr Allen's *A True Sincere and Modest Defence of the English Catholics.* Hethfield, now caught a second time and in terror for his life, made an abject surrender and promised to conform. When confronted with

Errington, he denied knowledge of the letters which had come from him, admitting only one to his uncle, Valentine Taylor, and another 'from one Garthe to Browne.'

Some little details of interest appear in these examinations. The two had met, according to George Errington, 'between Newcastle and Gosforde (Gosforth), about ten of the clock, at which time they stayed together in the highway on horseback and talked together, but he knoweth not . . . of anything that they talked about, saving that Hethfield told him that he rode suspiciously like a priest . . .'

Errington was detained in the Tower for over a year, until 27 August 1586. During that time his name appears regularly in the Lieutenant of the Tower's quarterly charges,[7] in which the prisoners were debited with the expenses of their keep. His reads as follows: (spelling modernised)

> For the diet and charge of George Errington
> beginning the second of June and ending the
> last of September then next following, being
> 17 weeks at 13s.4d. the week for himself . . . . . £11 6s. 8d.
> One keeper at 5s. the week . . . . . £4. 5s. 0d.
> Fuel and candle at 4s. the week . . . . . £3 8s. 0d.
> Amounting to the sum of . . . . . £18 19s. 8d.

Considering that the purchasing power of money at that time was something like twenty to thirty times what it is today, he was being charged about the equivalent of £30 a week in modern currency, for the privilege of being her Majesty's guest!

After August 1586, his name disappears from the Tower lists, but he was not released. At the Privy Council held 30 November 1586, his case was discussed, and it was resolved that he be 'conferred with in point of religion.' [8] The following February he was released on bail, described as of 'Ellington in Northumberland.'[9]

He must have returned to his mission; but it was only three years later that the secret of the house in South Shields came to light. The discovery was made, it was said, 'by two seminary priests taken about Dover.' These were undoubtedly BB. Francis Dickenson and Miles Gerard. They had left Rheims, with four companions, 31 August (N.S.), [10] and the following November, encountering a heavy storm, were driven onto the coast of Kent, and there captured.

They both made up stories[11] to account for their having been aboard. Miles Gerard had left England, he said, in search of a certain George Williams, who had gone overseas some time previously, leaving a wife at home. A friend of the lady had commissioned him to discover whether her husband was alive or dead, as she was wishful to contract another alliance.

It sounds like a most elaborate leg-pull; for George Williams was actually a fellow priest, not long ordained, and was one of the members of the party when they started out from Rheims. It is possible that he had escaped in the confusion, and that the story was intended to account for him in the event of his being picked up. It may even have originated as a nonsensical fiction invented to beguile the tedium of the journey! However that may be, it was not until April that George Williams was taken, in Newcastle upon Tyne. A Welshman, usually described as 'Sir George Williams', he is probably the person of that name caught four years previously, attempting to get a passage to France in the suite of the French Ambassador.[12] He seems to have been a lively lad, and we shall meet him again.

In spite of the statement that the house in South Shields was discovered 'by two seminary priests taken about Dover', we need not assume any conscious betrayal on the part of Francis Dickenson or Miles Gerard, who were martyred at Rochester, April 1590. Mr Dickenson, in his first examination, stated that he 'departed from his father about June last, and came to Newcastle and took shipping at a place there called the Sheeles in a small French boat laden with coals, which went to Callis (Calais).' The statement is untrue at least as regards the date, for in the previous June Mr Dickenson had been at Rheims, having been ordained in March, and not leaving for England till August. The knowledge, however, that he betrayed of the Shields traffic, possibly a chance remark on his part, may have been enough to start an investigation. Another possibility is suggested in the wording used by Dr Challoner in his account of these martyrs: 'they escaped to the shore . . . being immediately apprehended upon suspicion, or *the information of some of the ship's crew* . . .' (italics mine).

Prompt action was taken. Letters from Sir Francis Walsingham, Principal Secretary, and the Earl of Huntingdon, President of the Council of the North, came to Tobie Matthew, then Dean of Durham. He was instructed to engage the services of Henry Sanderson, to 'break

the nest of that popish and traitorous crew'. This, the Dean reported later, 'was by him so faithfully and diligently performed, as he forced the priests to seek elsewhere for landing places, so as some of them were taken, by two or three together, coming into Newcastle by an unaccustomed way . . .' [13]

The reference here must be to the four martyrs, Edmund Duke, Richard Hill, Richard Holliday and John Hogg. Leaving Rheims for England in March 1590,

> they landed in the North of England, [says Challoner] and travelling through the country, which they were not well acquainted with, they were, upon a slight suspicion, stopped in a village where they stayed to rest themselves, and were carried before a neighbouring justice of the peace, who committed them to Durham Jail.

All four of them, the oil of the anointing hardly dry upon their hands, suffered martyrdom at Durham, two months later (27 May).

It was a dreadful disaster; but Errington and his friends were still at liberty, and in spite of the increased danger, possibly with a change of headquarters, they carried on. Early the following year (February 1591), three young men, Roger Ashton, Oliver Cotton and Robert Musgrave

> attempted to take ship at Shields, were by a contrary wind after certain days sailing brought back again to Shields, and there apprehended on the 27th February, and brought back to Durham and there committed.
>
> About the 2nd March after, was Mrs Ursalie Taylor, a maid, taken for harbouring them, and committed to Newcastle Gaol close prisoner, as the rest were.
>
> About the 12th or 13th day of April following, they (Ashton, Cotton and Musgrave) were brought to York Castle from Durham, and Mrs Ursalie and Sir George Williams, a seminary priest, with them. They were committed . . . Mr Roger Ashton to the Kidcott, Mr Cotton to Alderman Jackson's, Mr Musgrave to the Palace, Mrs Ursula Taylor to Peter Prison, [14] and Sir George to the Castle, all closely to be kept. [15]

About the same time, Sanderson 'apprehended George Errington hand to hand, being their Chieftain and Guide', and sent him to York. On 22 May he was examined by the Council of the North, and committed to the Castle. Sir George Williams was similarly dealt with.

> The 4th of December, in the evening, [Fr Grene goes on] Sir George Williams,

> a seminary priest and a Welshman born, Mr George Errington, a northern gentleman, went both away from the Castle, to the great trouble, discredit and disquietness of the Catholic prisoners, who were locked up and abridged of their former liberty.

Much as we admire the gallantry of these two who put first things first, we cannot but sympathise with these unfortunate people in the loss of their hard won privileges. 'Sir George Williams', Fr Grene tells us further, 'was not well liked of.'

This is the last we hear of him. The following summer (1592), two priests, Joseph Lambton and Edward Waterson, were captured separately in Newcastle. George Errington had shifted his base and, from our next information, was carrying on his heroic work in the north-western corner of Durham county. The hunt for John Boste was growing furious, and the spy Anthony Atkinson was on his track. He reported: [16]

> Metcalfe a priest said Mass at the Waterhouse at one Claxton's house, a recusant who is in prison, and there were present at the Mass the 12th and 13th July, 1593, George Errington, Nicholas Bridges, Francis Eglisfield (who betrayed them) and many others.
>
> Boost (Boste) did say Mass at the Waterhouse the 5th day of August in that company.
>
> Upon Thursday, the 30th of August, Davy Englebye and George Errington did harbour all night at one Wilfrid Lee's house in the Bishoprick.
>
> The 5th September, Davy Englebye, Thomas York, William Norton and two others not known, rode by Pearsebridge, and had every man a case of pistols.

A gallant band of adventurers these, day after day going about their elected task: contacting the Catholics, escorting the priests, making what arrangements were possible for their comfort and security. George Errington, we are told, was 'a tall, lusty gentleman, well horsed and armed'; and of Davy Ingleby (brother of the martyr Francis Ingleby), it was said that he 'rides in Yorkshire and the north parts like Robin Hood.'

On 10 September 1593, Bl. John Boste was apprehended at the Waterhouse, and George Errington was taken soon afterwards, and brought before the President and Council of the North, 6 November. With him were two young men, his lieutenants. One of these, John Spence (or Spede) was martyred at Durham, 4 February 1594. The other, Nicholas Briggs, of Broom Hall, Durham, conformed under pressure and appears no more in recusant records, though his wife, a

Newgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, with its late medieval barbican.
Newgate served as the town gaol from 1400. It was taken down in 1823.

member of the Batmanson family long associated with Ushaw, remained very staunch.

George Errington was kept prisoner in York Castle until the following July (1594) when, in company with John Boste, he was sent, in irons, to Durham. While the latter lay in Durham awaiting his trial, Errington was sent on to Newcastle, and lodged in the Newgate prison, as also was John Ingram for the two nights preceding his trial, which began at Durham on 23 July. The expenses of their imprisonment are recorded in the Municipal Accounts of Newcastle upon Tyne. The charge for George Errington reads as follows:

Paid for George Errington, 10 days	10s.
his bedding	20d.

A further item may refer to his arrival, or his departure, or both:

Paid for taking irons off George Errington, prisoner, and laying on	12d.

He was then returned to York.

Why he was not brought to trial remains a mystery. Possibly he had influential friends; possibly the evidence against him was insufficient to secure a conviction, or the Authorities hoped to get information out of him. At all events, he was committed once more to York, and this time there was no escape.

The final episode, by which his death was engineered, was one of treachery. A certain minister, imprisoned for some misdemeanour, sought to win favour by trapping his fellow-prisoners. He posed as a would-be Catholic, and begged for the ministrations of a priest. George Errington, with his companions, William Knight, William Gibson, Anne Teshe (formerly the friend and fellow-prisoner of Bl. Margaret Clitheroe) and Bridget Maskew, directed him to a Catholic layman outside the prison, Henry Abbott, who attempted, unsuccessfully, to put him in touch with a priest. Then the man gave information, and the six were indicted for 'persuading' to Popery. All were condemned to death, the men to be hanged, drawn and quartered, the women to be burnt. The latter were reprieved; George Errington, William Knight and William Gibson suffered together at York, 29 November 1596. Henry Abbott followed them seven months later.

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* The Venerable George Errington is one of the eighty-five priests and laymen to

be beatified later this year. This biography was first published in the *Ushaw Magazine*, December 1961, No.213, and is reprinted by kind permission of the Editor.

NOTES

1. Chalcedon's Catalogue (1626–1628).
2. State Papers, Domestic Eliz. 12-177, 19.
3. Cecil Papers 180 129.
4. S.P. 12-150 95.
5. S.P. 15-29 62.
6. S.P. 12-18 78.
7. Exch. 407 56.
8. S.P. 12-195 30.
9. S.P. 12-205 13.
10. T.F. Knox, *Douai Diaries* p.226.
11. See *Catholic Record Society* V. pp. 169–173.
12. S.P. 12-182 17, 19.
13. Cecil Papers ibid.
14. After a severe imprisonment, heroically borne, she was eventually released.
15. Fr Frene's MSS 'F', printed in Foley, *Records S.J.* III, pp. 745 et seq.
16. S.P. 12-245 131.

The old manor house at Hirst, nr Ashington, home of the Errington family. The house was taken down c.1907.

JOSEPH BONOMI [1739–1808], ARCHITECT

June Crosby

The letter to Joseph Bonomi from Benedict Rayment transcribed below is from a collection of Bonomi family MSS privately owned. It does not appear to have been published and is presented here, together with some notes on its contents, in the hope that it may be of interest to readers of *Northern Catholic History*.

Lartington, near Barnard Castle,
Yorkshire

(1802) June 23

Dearest Sir/

Your obliging kindness in forwarding to me Marchetti's letter, with brief for leave to say the mass and office, on the 9th day of July singulis annis, with the indulgence annexed, and also your kind tender of services for the future, demand my most immediate and grateful thanks. I have very frequently heard of you Dear Sir from our common friend, my near neighbour Mr. Coghlan of Cliff, and am happy to cultivate so valuable an acquaintance. Mr. Maire my Patron wishes much to make an acquaintance with you, and should you ever be able in another excursion to take Lartington in your line, you would add a great favour to us both, and gratify your exquisite taste for architecture with a sight of the most beautiful correct and chaste Gothic Catholic Chapel in England not excepting my friend's at Winton.

The death of your wealthy and able Brother will be a general loss. I shall tomorrow offer up the august sacrifice of the mass for the repose of his soul. I borrowed from Mr. Coghlan his synopsis de locis theologicis, and I mentioned them with praise in a note to my version of the miracles. If you have a copy to spare I should be very thankful for it, or for anything your worthy and learned Brother and theological Professor published. He had true notions and just conceptions, his latinity indeed is rather difficult, but the only work I have seen, his synopsis, was printed in a great hurry, on the spur of the occasion, as himself mentions, when Professor, perhaps his other works,(for so learned a man must have written more) are easier in their style. I shall take the liberty of inclosing a letter to thank Marchetti for his good offices in procuring me the leave I mentioned above. He has rather missed in describing me as an emigrant french Priest residing in London. I suppose this

misprision was occasioned by my writing to him in french, which I did in preference to italian, for although I understand sufficient of that language to read it, I desired him to answer me in it, which he did about 3 weeks ago, still I thought I could not undertake to write an epistle in italian.

I must also thank you for the kindness and attention that you had for me in procuring a frank, as postage now becomes very heavy and a matter of consideration, where the purse, like mine, is lightly furnished. Allow me to add before I finish that it will afford me very great pleasure to make my acknowledgements in person, if opportunity shall offer, and in the meantime I can only say that I shall never forget your favour, and that I shall certainly be exceeding happy to hear at all times from, or about, you. I am going to morrow to preach at your acquaintances the good ladies of St. Helen's Auckland for the glorious feast of the sacred heart. I have heard them speak in raptures of you.

I remain Dear Sir

Your obliged friend

Benedict Rayment

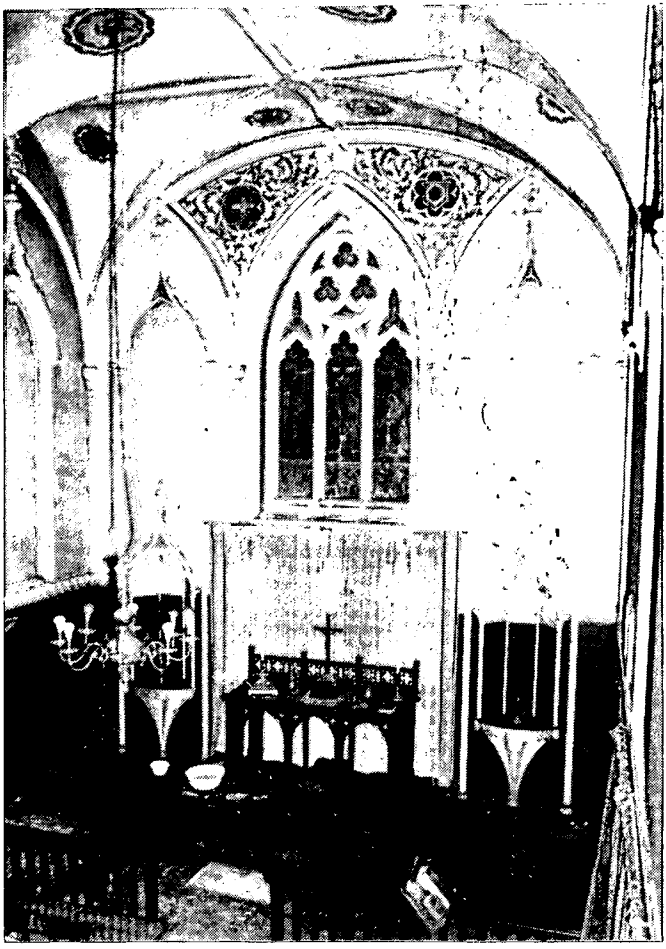
I am acquainted with Mr. Barrow of Lancashire, and when I see him next I will not fail to bring you to his memory. He is a marvellous man, has gone thro' various fortunes, and is now but so so in health.

The writer of the letter is Father Benedict Rayment (1764—1842). Born in Worcester, he trained for the priesthood at Douai. Ordained in 1788, he remained at the College as a teacher of philosophy until early 1793 when he came to England and ministered in the North East until his death nearly fifty years later. His first post was that of chaplain at Lartington Hall, North Yorkshire (NZ 022 177). He remained there until 1811 when he was appointed Vicar General at York in place of the Rev. Dr John Gillow who had been appointed President of Ushaw College.

Rayment's patron was Henry Maire (1751—c.1810). Born Henry Lawson, the second son of Sir Henry Lawson of Brough Hall, he assumed the name of Maire after inheriting, in 1771, the Maire estates from his mother's brother, John Maire of Gray's Inn and of Lartington and Hardwick.

Lartington Hall was long part of the Roman Catholic circuit in the days before Roman Catholic emancipation, and is associated with many

members of the recusant families of the area, the Applebys, Maires, Lawsons, Silvertops and Withams. The strong Roman Catholic connection was broken in 1910 when Francis Silvertop of Minsteracres sold the estate to a staunch Methodist, David Magnus Spence, who closed the house chapel and Roman Catholic cemetery along with the brewhouses and extensive wine cellar. The equally strong Roman Catholic connection at Hardwick, Lartington's sister estate, had ended earlier in 1823.



Eighteenth-century Gothic chapel at Lartington

Hardwick had been a haven for Roman Catholics since the conversion, in 1589, of Henry Maire and his wife Grace ('Graceless Grace' in her Protestant father's will, which disinherited her). The Hall's cunningly contrived priest hole and the artificial cave in the Dene with traces of a Crucifixion and stoup still survive to testify to the loyalty and hardship of earlier times. No wonder that Father Slater, the mission priest, felt betrayed when Hardwick was sold to a Protestant, Lord Darlington, without any provision for the long-established Catholic community.

Fortunately, Lord Darlington agreed to sell a suitable piece of land without profit, to the local Catholic Mission, which provoked Father Slater to write, 'Give me such as Lord Darlington before 10000 of your Withams and Silvertops although they professed themselves Catholics and Darlington was what we called a heretic.'

However, when Father Rayment was writing to Guiseppi Bonomi in 1802, the Lartington and Hardwick estates were still united and prosperous. He wrote to thank Bonomi for forwarding a letter from Abbot Marchetti and affording him the means of reply. Marchetti, who was then residing at Naples, was Apostolic Examiner to the Clergy, and as such had been involved in the examination of miraculous events said to have occurred in Rome during the years 1796 to 1797. Father Rayment had published an English translation of the investigation: 'Official Memoirs of the Judicial Examination into the Miraculous Events which happened in Rome in the years 1796—7. Translated from the French compared with the Italian of Sig. Gio Marchetti, Apostolic Examiner of the Clergy . . . London 1801.'

In the preface to his translation Rayment (p.ix) says: 'An annual mass with an office has been granted to all the Clergy of Rome on the 9th of July to perpetuate the memory of these unparalleled prodigies.' It was for this 'commemorative' Mass that Marchetti's letter (forwarded by Bonomi) gave Rayment 'the brief for leave to say . . . with . . . indulgence attached.'

Guiseppi Bonomi (1739—1808) was an Italian architect who came to England in 1767 to work under the Adam brothers. According to an unpublished letter written by his son Ignatius soon after his father's death, the elder Bonomi had met Robert Adam when Adam was

> resident in Rome for the purpose of perfecting himself by observation of the magnificent and splendid remains of Roman grandeur; a strict union

and friendship cemented their acquaintance and in 1776 my Father engaged to come to London to assist him in his vast professional concerns. My Father remained with Messrs Adams 17 years, so long as the extent of their business required his assistance, after which he began to exercise the profession on his own account . . .

The same letter mentions that although Bonomi's father, Giovanni, died comparatively young, and his widow's 'resources were materially circumscribed', Guiseppi and his brother Carlo were educated 'at a great expense . . . at the Roman College, under the tuition of very able and virtuous Professors (Jesuits).'

Guiseppi Bonomi was a superb draughtsman and artist; much of his work has vanished (e.g. Roseneath, Dunbartonshire, and the Spanish Chapel, Manchester Square, London), but with Great Packington Church and parts of Packington Hall (Warwickshire) and Longford Hall (Salop) still surviving, his austere and innovative skill is clearly demonstrated. Yet, according to his son (in the letter already referred to) 'the extent of his employ however by no means equalled his unbounded reputation which can be accounted for with several reasons.' The first of the three reasons Ignatius gives in his letter is 'being a Catholic and alien he could not be preferred to any appointment under Government or any Public Office Company etc all of which situations independent of their lucrum naturally produce many useful connexions.'

Nor was the lack of lucrative return the only way in which the elder Bonomi was affected by his religion and nationality. Sir Joshua Reynolds had to use his casting vote as President of the Royal Academy in order to make him A.R.A. in 1789. Reynold's effort to gain full R.A. status for his great friend was unsuccessful as were his attempts in 1790 to have him elected as Professor of Perspective. This latter disappointment caused Sir Joshua to resign (temporarily) as founding President of the Royal Academy and in a note written at the time Reynolds blamed Bonomi's defeat upon 'an infamous Cabal (Sir William Chambers said to have been at its head)'. While the outward basis of opposition was that Reynolds was using his position to foist his own nominee upon the Royal Academy (allegedly at the request of Lord Aylesford of Packington Hall), there was also apparently a concealed hostility because he was both Catholic and alien. No one attacked Bonomi on the grounds of any lack of ability.

Guiseppi Bonomi (or Joseph as he signed himself in England) did

not relinquish his faith or his contacts with Italy. In 1776 he designed a sacristy for St Peter's, Rome. In 1783 he went to Italy expecting to remain there, and became an associate of the Clementine Academy at Bologna and of the Academy of St Luke at Rome. The death of their infant son there so distressed his wife that she wished to return to England; and having become acquainted with Lord Aylesford in Italy, Bonomi obtained a patron to help him establish an independent practice in Britain. In 1803 Bonomi applied for the post of architect to the King of Naples, but was unsuccessful. He was made an honorary architect of St Peter's, Rome, in 1804.

Bonomi's sisters and his brother, Don Giovanni Carlo Bonomi (1743—1801) who is mentioned in Rayment's letter, did not emigrate to England. Carlo became a Professor and as well as the Synopsis which Rayment says he has 'mentioned with praise in a note in my version of the miracles', Carlo Bonomi wrote other works including articles on Diritto Pubblico and four MS volumes on Nature and Man.

'My near Neighbour Mr. Coghlan of Cliff', who lent Rayment a copy of Carlo Bonomi's synopsis was Fr William Augustine Coghlan (1768—1836), chaplain to the Witham family of Cliff Hall from 1792 until 1804. According to Mackenzie and Ross (1834), 'The chapel at Cliff was the only place of worship which, at the Reformation, did not pass from its Catholic possessors; and it remained in their hands, through all the storms of succeeding revolutions till untoward circumstances alienated it from its late owners, the Withams'. The sale of the Witham estates in 1823 included the chapel and, lacking the good fortune of Father Slater of Hardwick, the priest at Cliff, Father W. Hogarth, had to move to Darlington. As a result of Hogarth's fund-raising efforts, a new Roman Catholic chapel was built in Paradise Lane in 1827 with the arms of the Withams of Cliff over the door. The architect of this Darlington chapel was Joseph Bonomi's son Ignatius (1787—1870), who had an extensive practice in the North for over forty years.

The 'good ladies of St. Helen's Auckland' who are acquaintances of Joseph Bonomi are, of course, the Teresian nuns of St Helen's, Auckland Hall who moved to Cocken Hall in 1804 and thence to Carmel House, Darlington. Rayment has heard them speak of Bonomi 'in raptures' and one wonders how the community knew the elder Bonomi. The name of the architect engaged by Ralph Carr to build

St Helen's Hall is not known. Pavener suggests James Paine as a possible candidate. Perhaps Guiseppi (Joseph) Bonomi deserves to be considered.

Rayment's attempt to persuade Bonomi to visit Lartington by tempting him with an opportunity to 'gratify your exquisite taste for architecture with the sight of the most beautiful correct and chaste Gothic Catholic chapel in England' was doomed to failure. Bonomi had a marked aversion to the Gothic style; he regarded the growing fashion in Gothic as a 'contagion'. In a letter to the Earl of Buchan (1807) he writes of

> the progressive downfall of Architecture till it came to its total corruption which is called the Gothic style . . . in the XII century every Country was contaminated with it; except Rome, where there is not a Building of any magnitude properly gothic. It seems that Providence has protected it from that contagion, that it might be the means of restoring the perfection of that art, which thereabout the latter end of the XIV century was in the highest degree, when at that time, nay till a century after, Italy, Germany, France, Spain and Great Britain were immersed in the thickest gothic clouds. How true it is, that vices, and bad habits, spread their baneful influence more rapidly and more extensively than Virtue'.

The 'correct and chaste Gothic Chapel' is now a squash court; its charming plasterwork and glass are protectively screened.

Rayment's letter was addressed to Bonomi at 76 Great Titchfield Street, which was his office and family home in London.

Added below the address, in Bonomi's hand, is a note saying that Rayment's letter had been sent to Signora Angelica to forward to Signor Abbato Marchetti at Naples. Angelica was Angelica Kaufmann R.A. (1741—1807) probably the best known woman artist, who was then living at Rome. Like Bonomi, she was a devout Catholic and was related to him by marriage. Angelica and her cousin Rosa Florini had been brought up together as sisters. Rosa had married Bonomi in 1775 in England. According to Bonomi, Angelica was his wife's 'only female relation in the world'.

PROGRAMME 1986/87

All lectures will be held in the parish hall of St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle upon Tyne, on Tuesdays, at 7.00 p.m.

7 October 1986	Annual General Meeting. Rev. W. J. Nicholson (Chairman), *The Significance of Saint Cuthbert.*
11 November 1986	Robin Gard M. A. *Catholic Lay Societies in the Nineteenth Century.*
9 December 1986	John White Ph. D. *Newman for our time.*
24 February 1987	Members' night. Short papers on current research.
24 March 1987	Very Rev. Luke Magee C.P. *The Passionists in England*

Coach Excursions

11 October 1986 (Sat., half-day)	Belsay and places of Catholic interest nearby.
May 1987	Seahouses and the Inner Farne Island.
13 June 1987	Jedburgh

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