Northern Catholic History

No. 32 1991

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 yearly, in May.

PATRONS: The Rt Rev. Hugh Lindsay, Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, and The Rt Rev. Owen Swindlehurst, Auxiliary Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle.

OFFICERS 1990/91

CHAIRMAN	Rev. D. Milburn, D.S.H.
GENERAL SECRETARY	Miss E. Swallow, 1 Spittal Terrace, Gosforth, Nc. 3
PROGRAMME SECRETARY	Miss J. O'Callaghan, 30 Burnopfield Gdns., Denton Burn, Nc. 15.
OUTINGS SECRETARY	Miss M. Davison, 6 Larkspur Terrace, Nc. 2.
TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	P. McGuinness, 3 Otterburn Ave., Gosforth, Nc. 3
EDITOR	R.M. Gard, 21 Larchwood Ave., Wideopen, Nc. 13.
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	Officers: Mrs J. Scollen, G. Thornton, G. Wills, J.E. Woollaston

Annual Subscription	£6.00 (with *Northern Catholic History*) or £4.00 (membership only).

NORTHERN CATHOLIC HISTORY

Published yearly (in May) £4.00, postage extra.

Copies of Nos. 9-31 available from Mr Gard (above) at reduced rates.

© North East Catholic History Society and contributors.

Articles and enquiries welcomed by the Editor.

ISSN 0307—4455

NORTHERN CATHOLIC HISTORY

No. 32 1991

CONTENTS

Editorial Notes		2
Bede: An Appreciation	G. THORNTON	3
The Dominicans in Newcastle: Part i, 1239-1539	B. HODGSON OP	11
Blessed George Swallowell	A.M.C. FORSTER	18
The Benedictines in the North East in the Eighteenth Century	G. SCOTT OSB	28
Maria de Stacpoole, 1840-1872: Letters from France during the Franco-Prussian War	P. McGUINNESS	44
Mercy Mission to Sunderland: Works of the Sisters of Mercy on Wearside, 1843-1990	M. ENDA RSM	56
Programme		End cover

Illustrations:

Descent of the English Benedictine Congregation to 1900	29
Structure of the English Benedictine Congregation to 1900	29
English Benedictine monasteries on the Continent	30
Benedictine missions in the North East, 18th century	32
Swinburn Castle, c. 1800	37
Birtley 'chapel house'	34
Maria de Stacpoole, 1840-1872	47
St Wandrille Abbey, 1882	46

NORTH EAST CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY

The seventeenth A.G.M., held in St Mary's Cathedral Centre on 3 October, was well attended. Following the tradition set by Fr Nicholson, our late chairman, the formal business was brief, but the events of the previous year and the activities of the new season ahead were reviewed, the officers thanked for their devoted work, and elections made for the coming year (see inside front cover). On the Committee's recommendation, the members agreed to increase the annual subscription, which had been held at the previous rate for some years, and also to publish just one booklet a year, instead of the previous Autumn and Spring issues. With the resulting postage and other economies and from a slightly increased income, it is hoped to sustain the new annual edition for many years, but new subscribers and members are much needed. Members are assured that the single edition will contain as much material as in the two half-yearly issues. Following the business, the members' knowledge of Newcastle was once again tested by Peter McGuinness with another tantalizing slide show and quiz. On Saturday, 6 October, a full coach of members enjoyed guided tours of both St Peter's, Monkwearmouth, and St Paul's Jarrow.

The two Autumn talks, by Professor John Cannon on Religion and the Monarchy *on 7 November and by Norman Emery on* Esh Hall and its Secret Treasure *on 5 December were totally absorbing and very well received, and it is expected that the two talks in the new year will be equally popular.*

Several of the articles in this edition are the subject of papers given to members and are printed for the benefit of our wider membership. Unlike other local Catholic History Societies, the Society does not restrict itself to post-Reformation history. Thus, the first two articles are by George Thornton on Bede, complementing Fr Milburn's article in the last edition on St Benet Biscop, and by Fr Brendan Hodgson OP on the Dominicans in Newcastle in medieval times. (The return of the Dominicans in the nineteenth century will be told later). Even so, the Society is very concerned to keep alive devotion to the martyrs who died to preserve the faith in this country, and, happily, recourse has been made again to the researches of the late Dr Annie Forster to tell the story of Blessed George Swallowell, martyred at Darlington in 1594. This is followed by the paper which Dom Geoffrey Scott OSB gave to members as the Fr Nicholson Memorial lecture in October 1988 on the Benedictines in the North East. From his continuing research into the history of the Dunn family, Peter McGuinness then reviews some letters which Maria de Stacpoole, a member of the Dunn family, wrote from France during the Franco-Prussian War. Finally, Sr Mary Enda RSM records the valiant work of the Sisters of Mercy on Wearside, again the subject of a talk to members.

The editor assures contributors who have generously sent articles that they will be published in due season, but earnestly solicits additional articles and shorter communications.

Robin Gard, Hon. Editor

BEDE: AN APPRECIATION

George Thornton

Every year since 1958 the annual Bede Lecture has been given at Jarrow; one lecture concluded by wondering how it was that Bede, in the face of difficulties beyond our imagining, was able to achieve so much in that remote, bleak and still barbaric world into which he was born. Making no claims to originality, this essay attempts to explore this fascinating question.

When Bede was born on the lands of the monastery at Monkwearmouth in 673, Europe was experiencing an hour as dark as 1940 in our own time. Since Mahomet's death in 632, the Saracens, as Bede called them, had conquered half of Christendom and were threatening to over-run the rest. Most legionaries had departed as long ago as 410 as Rome was being sacked by the Goths, so that the native British were left open to successive waves of invading Angles, Saxons and Jutes, barbarians from the North German plains. Yet, remarkably (Bede would have said providentially), this desperate situation was rich in promise for the future.

Christendom was not finally saved from Islam until Charles Martel's victory at Poitiers in Aquitaine in 732, but already by then one of the most remote and illiterate provinces of the former Roman Empire had seen the growth of a civilisation without parallel in European history.

The Roman Empire had collapsed as much from the people's loss of faith in themselves and in their gods as from conquest from without: the Church of Rome, already four centuries old, was well placed geographically to fill the magisterial and spiritual vacuum left by the collapse. In this land Christian missionaries could point to the ruins of once great Roman towns and temples, to abandoned roads and to Hadrian's Wall, still 12 feet high, to the Roman fountains still playing in Carlisle, as visible evidence of the transient nature of things of this world in contrast to the everlasting glory promised to those who faithfully accepted and followed Christ's message.

Like the Romans before and the Communists today, the Anglo-Saxons in seventh century Britain were finding their gods inadequate, for they offered no prospect of life after death. The names of the days of the week remind us of heathen gods, as do place names like Wednesbury and Tewkesbury. Gateshead (Goatshead) was a place of sacrifice. Life was usually short and brutish, dominated by birth, pestilence, storms, day and

night, and often ended abruptly in battle. Relief came when deeds of heroes and victories were recalled with song and feasting in the lord's hall. But the Christian message offered an explanation of the mystery of human existence, a code of morals for behaviour and a vision of life after death; compassion, not vengeance, was the keynote. One of Edwin's chief men likened life

> to the swift flight of a single sparrow through the banqueting hall, inside a comforting fire, outside the storms of winter. While he is inside, he is safe; but after a few moments of comfort, he vanishes from sight into the wintry world. Even so, man appears on earth for a little while but of what went before this life or of what follows, we know nothing. Therefore, if this teaching has brought any more certain knowledge, it seems only right that we should follow it.

Whereupon, Coifi, the high priest, took arms and a stallion and desecrated the pagan temple by hurling his spear at it.

Naturally, some felt resentful. The group on the headland at Tynemouth scoffed at the monks being blown out to sea on their rafts by an offshore wind; 'Let no man pray for them', they shouted, 'for they have robbed men of their old ways of worship'. Others lamented the loss of the old ways by writing poems. But Christians too could sing of heroic deeds; the monk Aldhelm on the town bridge, or Caedmon in the hall, sang of the story of Creation, of Exodus, of the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection, themes to match any sung by Saxon minstrels in the hall.

Tribal divisions and loyalty to the king often meant that royal conversions were followed by mass baptisms of the subjects. After King Edwin's conversion, the tall, slender, stooping Paulinus spent thirty-six days during his mission in Northumbria from 627 to 633 AD instructing the people and 'washing them in the cleansing waters of Baptism in the nearby River Glen'. Some kings, like Ceolwulf, became monks and abbots of monasteries. Christianity was additionally welcome for it preached loyalty to due authority, brought social order and discipline, and improved the prospects of political stability and peace. Its ideal was a universal brotherhood transcending tribal differences.

It would be naive to think that all old beliefs and customs were suddenly and totally displaced by those of the new faith. In the epic poem, 'Beowulf', pagan and Christian images are as mixed as the sculptured symbols on the Anglo-Saxon stone crosses of Bewcastle and Ruthwell. On a panel of the superbly carved whale-bone Franks Casket [1] the Germanic

smith-god Wayland is seen fashioning drinking vessels from human skulls alongside the Magi bringing gifts to the infant Jesus. Christians, no less than Romans, paid much heed to portents of the sky: an eclipse of the sun on 3 May 664 was followed that year by a sudden pestilence, 'raging far and wide with cruel devastation it struck down a great multitude of men'. In 793 Alcuin was asking 'the meaning of the rain of blood' in the city of York, though the sky was clear; later that year Lindisfarne was sacked by the Vikings, the following year Jarrow suffered. In Egbert's Penitential it was decreed that 'Those who send forth storms shall do penance for seven years'. [2]

There is no doubt that Bede found much inspiration in the teachings and holy lives of the leading figures of the seventh century conversion of these lands. He was loud in his praise of Pope Gregory who sent Augustine to Kent so that the Angles whose 'graceful features conceal minds void of God's grace ... should become joint-heirs with the angels in heaven'; he admired Augustine, 'who guided King Ethelbert and his people from the worship of idols to the Faith of Christ'. He gives a detailed description of the missionary endeavours of the worthy and learned Paulinus, the first Bishop of the Northumbrians. Although disapproving strongly of Aidan's 'inadequate knowledge of the proper observance of Easter', he still writes of him: 'He cultivated peace and love, purity and humility, he was above anger and greed, despised pride and conceit, was diligent in study and prayer ... I greatly admire and love all these things about Aidan ...' He had a special love of Cuthbert who died when Bede was fourteen years old. Even though he wrote a full account of his life and virtues 'both in heroic verse and prose a few years ago', Bede still considers 'this venerable servant of Our Lord' worthy of six full chapters alongside his 'History'. A later illustration shows Bede presenting the draft of his 'Life of St Cuthbert' to the abbot of Lindisfarne for his approval, probably on the occasion of his only visit to that island.

If these men, with the pious martyr King Oswald, with Hilda, Abbess of Whitby, Wilfrid, founder of Hexham Abbey, and many others, were constant sources of stimulation and inspiration to Bede, the one who had the most direct influence at least in his earlier years was his first Father-abbot. Probably of Romano-British stock, certainly one of King Oswy's ministers, Biscop(us) took his monastic vows and the name Benedict at Lerins. By the time he became the founding abbot of St Peter's Monkwearmouth, in 674, he had experience of seventeen monasteries and of extensive

continental travelling. He had also a great love of books and learning. Benedict would welcome the seven year old boy Bede when he entered St Peter's and would be the dominant influence in those formative years until he died in 690, when Bede was seventeen. Last year we celebrated the 1300th anniversary of his death. Bede described him as 'a model leader' and undoubtedly he imbued Bede with a love of scholarship and learning. He returned from his six journeys to Rome 'loaded with abundant spiritual merchandise', relics, sacred pictures and, vital for Bede's future work, 'many books on all subjects of divine learning which had either been bought at an acceptable price or given to him by the generosity of friends'. Thus libraries were established at Jarrow, Monkwearmouth, Hexham, Whitby and York, which provided the resources for the Northumbrian Renaissance, enabling Northern England to hold the intellectual primacy of Western Christendom at the beginning of the eighth century. The number of books in the Jarrow library was probably around 200, 120 different works have been identified, mainly sacred books, lives of saints, writings of the Fathers, Latin grammars, a few secular works, even fewer classical authors, perhaps Pliny's Natural History, but no Homer or Aristotle; it is safer to read the Apostles than the pages of Plato, said Bede.

It is remarkable how Northumbria, especially Lindisfarne, Jarrow and Monkwearmouth, situated geographically on the north-western fringes of the once great Roman Empire, became so quickly an intellectual crossroads for Northern Europe, as Rome was for the Mediterranean lands. The sea-bound location and the safe harbours offered by the Rivers Tyne and Wear helped in a time when most travel and trade was by sea. The Viking long-ships were still a century away. Ideas, techniques and artefacts from Ireland and the land of the Picts, from Gaul and Italy, and from as far away as Syria and Palestine, met at Jarrow/Monkwearmouth in Bede's time.

Benedict brought stone-masons and glaziers from Gaul to fashion the new monastery at St Paul's in blocks of sandstone and to instal the first-recorded coloured glass in its windows; thousands of fragments have been pieced together to form a church window tracery today. The natives were taught the use of lathes, of roofing with lead and using mortar. The interiors of the churches were white-washed and hung with sacred pictures; the liturgy enriched by the teaching of the Gregorian chant, as in St Peter's, Rome, by the arch-cantor John. Although the Synod of Whitby in 664 had decided that the Church should follow the Roman rather than the Celtic traditions, a difference centred mainly on the correct time to

celebrate Easter, yet Bede and his contemporaries benefited greatly from the fusion of the two cultures.

> In him two streams of spiritual influence seem to meet and blend, the evangelistic passion of the Celtic missionaries and the disciplined devotion of the Benedictine monks ... he stood at the point of a new departure—a Benedictine monk in the yet living tradition of Celtic piety, an English student in the rich treasury of Celtic learning, a discipline of Rome inspired by the intellectual passion of Ireland. [3]

While our hearts may be with the Celtic monks in their missionary adventures as exiles for Christ—a spirit beautifully portrayed in the whimsical allegorical tale of 'The Voyage of Brendan'—our heads must concede that the Church, once established, needed firm structures, close unity and strong leadership. Bede was a convinced Roman, his monastery was built *in more romano* and dedicated significantly to Saints Peter and Paul, his criticism of the Celtic date for observing Easter is a recurring, almost obsessive, theme in the History, for he believed that this led to friction and disunity. Jarrow was a touchstone of Roman orthodoxy. Yet the early flowering of the Northumbrian Renaissance owed much to the Irish Church, not only to the monks who came by way of Iona to Melrose, Coldingham and Lindisfarne, but also to the Irish monastic schools which welcomed young British nobles kindly and 'without asking for any payments provided them with instruction and books'. The King of Northumbria went to Ireland 'to acquire celestial wisdom', the brother of Coelfrith 'to study the scriptures'. [4] Bede is fulsome in his praise of the Irish evangelists and leaves us in no doubt of the magnitude and beauty of the Irish contribution.

One consequence of the meeting of the Celtic and Roman streams was that 'Scribes writing side by side stirred one another on to great deeds. One masterpiece of calligraphy follows another'. [5] The conditions in which the few surviving gems, like the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Codex Amiatinus, were produced tell us much about the skill, dedication and patience of Bede and his fellow scribes. There was no printing press, no paper, every letter had to be meticulously copied by stylus on wax tablet or by quill on calf-skin parchment, for the art of handwriting was in its infancy: six or seven pages a day was an average output. Absolute silence was the rule; there was no heating, the abbot Cuthbert apologised to the German bishop Lul for the small number of books he sends: 'During the past winter the island of our race has been very savagely oppressed with cold and ice ... so that the hand

of the scribe becomes sluggish'. Since there were no spectacles or opticians to salve tired eyes, one can readily sympathize with the informal jottings occasionally found in the margins: 'the lamp is not very bright', 'this parchment is very rough', 'I do not feel very well today', 'the sailor is not more glad to reach harbour than the weary scribe to arrive at the last line of his manuscript'. [6]

About Bede himself we know little, only the few bare details he gives at the end of the History. We know nothing of his family background, his interests as a boy, his humours, his physical appearance. We do not have an authenticated autograph. We can only know him through his writings; fortunately, they were prodigious and give us a clear portrait of his talents.

First and foremost, Bede was a monk following closely the Rule of Benedict of Nursia. [7] Ordained deacon at nineteen, then priest at thirty, he was a biblical scholar and theologian, and, lastly, a student of secular knowledge and an historian. Most of his writings are scriptural commentaries and lives of saints, his wide knowledge and breadth of interests are well seen in his range of secular books: 'A Book of Epigrams', 'On the Nature of Things', on 'Orthography', on 'The Art of Poetry', on cosmology and computation. But it is in his best known and last major work, 'A History of the English Church and People', that his qualities are best seen.

The History was written for several reasons: to oblige esteemed patrons like the most glorious King Ceolwulf, to inform posterity, to give models of behaviour so that the thoughtful hearer [8] is encouraged to imitate good ... and to avoid all that is sinful and perverse; and to show God's wondrous workings in the history of man, the Providence—guided advance of a people from heathendom to Christianity. If more is recorded of good deeds than of bad and the cast is of saints rather than rude warriors this is understandable.

The focus is very much on the Northumbrian Church in a wider English context and scant attention is given to Bede's own times, to Wilfrid, to Mercia: the other kingdoms are as subsidiary to Northumbria as the Britons and Irish are to the English. [9]

Bede draws heavily on earlier histories and sees much of his task as correcting, and revising and changing emphases: this is particularly true of Eddius Stephanus' biography of Wilfrid with a narrow partisan view of the Conversion belittling the role of the Irish and also, to a lesser extent, of Gildas' 'On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain', of the anonymous

(Lindisfarne) Life of Cuthbert and the Whitby Life of Pope Gregory I. [10]

Bede has been variously described as 'an isolated figure' whose 'real world was the world of books' and of writing in monastic seclusion of a lay world he hardly knew, never witnessing a violent act or experiencing royal wrath. Bede focused on an 'idealized past, rather than a devalued present'. [11] Certainly he travelled no further than Lindisfarne, to Hexham, probably to be ordained, and to York to visit the school which produced Alcuin. Yet his disciplined intellect, powerful imagination and reflective mind in fifty-five years of cloistered study, 'serving Christ in secure freedom', enabled him to travel vast regions of human experience. [12] The vow of *stabilitas* paid rich dividends. It is impossible to conceive anyone divorced from the real world writing a letter such as the one to Egbert in York detailing the problems of the Church and suggesting remedies.

Nor were the times peaceful. In Bede's lifetime Northumbria had five kings of whom only Alfrid and Oswy died peaceful deaths. Within weeks of the dedication of St Paul's in Jarrow in 685 King Egfrid of Northumbria, who had given the land to the monks, was killed in battle fighting the Scots. Bede too was well aware of the deeply felt dissensions between Wilfridians and anti-Wilfridians.

In the History the language is lucid, the sources carefully evaluated, 'the muddle of events and data is translated into an image of continuity, coherence and meaning by the imaginative magic of story-telling'. The tales of Brother Brycthelm bathing in the icy Tweed, of the cowherd Caedmon, of the sad farewell to the beloved Coelfrith, abbot for twenty-seven years, and many others, are pearls of story-telling.

Neither four centuries of Roman rule nor the two since the legions left had thrown up anyone of intellectual stature in Britain. Bede was the first to understand the Past, to grasp the concept of history, to present a mass of detail in attractive narrative and so produce 'the masterpiece of Dark Age historiography' which deservedly won for him the title 'Father of English History'.

Bede was an original thinker centuries ahead of his time. He pronounced the world round like an orb not flat like a shield. He regularised the use of the BC/AD system of dating first conceived by the Syrian monk Dionysius. He encouraged the use of the vernacular in the Pater Noster and Credo, and the local element in liturgy by homilies on local saints on their feast days. He urged daily Communion as on the Continent rather than thrice a year at Christmas, Epiphany and Easter as was the custom in this

country.

If we attribute Bede's achievements to his rich and challenging spiritual and cultural inheritance, to his own personal qualities, 'simple, sane, loyal, trusting, warm-hearted, serious, with a sense of pathos,' [13] and to the peaceful, ordered life in his monastery ruled by abbots as outstanding as Benedict Biscop, Coelfrith and Eosterwine, then we are still left with a mysterious element we cannot explain; the ineffable genius and gifting of the Holy Spirit. He was indeed a man who could ' live without shame and die without fear.' [14] He developed to a remarkable degree those most admirable of human qualities, sanctity and scholarship.

May we all find our constant delights where Bede found his;'learning, teaching and writing' are as edifying and enjoyable today in this last decade of the twentieth century as they were 1300 years ago in a draughty monastery by the Tyne at Jarrow 'on the misty edge of civilisation'.

NOTES

All quotations, except where otherwise stated, are from *A History of the English Church and People,* Bede. Penguin Classics, 1968.

1. The original is in the British Museum, a facsimile is in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle University.
2. Quoted in Peter Hunter Blair, *Northumbria in the Days of Bede,* Gollancz, 1976. A most useful book with his *The World of Bede,* Secker and Warburg, 1970.
3. Bishop Henson of Durham, quoted in A. Hamilton Thompson, *Bede, his Life, Times and Writings,* 1935.

4/5. *Celt and Saxon Studies in the Early British Border,* various essays. CUP. 1964.

6. Phillippe Wolff, *The Awakening of Europe,* Pelican, 1968.
7. How closely is a debatable point; Bede never mentions the Rule of Benedict in his 'History' and only obliquely elsewhere with reference to the election of new abbots on merit. We are told that the daily life was based on the teaching of Benedict Biscop 'from experience gained in 17 monastic houses' though this was probably heavily influenced by the Rule of Benedict.
8. Bede's lucid style and vivid stories were intended to please the ear of the illiterate listener as well as the eye of the educated few who would read.

9/10. *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (AD 550-800)

(iv) *Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid,* Walter Goffart, Princeton UP. 1988.

11. J. Campbell Anglo-Saxons Ithacon, New York, 1982.
12. *Benedict's Disciples,* essay on Bede by Dom Alberic Stackpoole OSB (ed.) D.H. Farmer. 1980.

13/14 *Saints and Scholars* Dom David Knowles OSB, CUP. 1963

The reader is recommended to visit St Peter's, Monkwearmouth and St Paul's, Jarrow near to the excellent Bede Monastery Museum.

The writer gladly acknowledges the help given in the preparation of this essay by Miss E.A. Redgate of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and by Mr J.P. White.

THE DOMINICANS IN NEWCASTLE: PART I, 1239-1539

Brendan Hodgson OP

The rapid spread of the Dominican Order across Europe in the thirteenth century can only be described as phenomenal. The Friars were a 'new breed'; their life-style a blend of the monastic and the pastoral. There were no areas of activity to which they were not prepared to devote themselves: academic circles, diplomatic missions, counsellors of kings, preaching engagements, and all manner of pastoral work—anything which offered opportunity to spread the Gospel message.

The Dominican friar prepared himself by prayer, study and the Regular Observance of his day-to-day priory life. He would go out from his cloister to his preaching and pastoral work, returning afterwards to re-immerse himself in contemplative life. This has ever been the pattern of Dominican Life. The friar lives according to the Rule of St Augustine and the Constitutions of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans).

Within eight years of the Order being founded by St Dominic the brethren had spread through France and Europe, arriving in London on 10 August 1221. Five days later they made their first appearance in Oxford. This was their express purpose in coming to England—to settle in Oxford, the centre of English learning. They had temporarily passed over the opportunity of a foundation in Canterbury, and disregarded the obvious advantages of staying in London. [1] It was only after becoming settled in Oxford, that the important cities of London, York and Bristol were chosen. [2] The London foundation was made in 1224—three years after Oxford.

Such must have been the fervour and example of those early brethren that their numbers increased very rapidly—so much so that by 1233, within twelve years of the founding of the Order they were sufficient in number to found—after other houses elsewhere in England—a house in Carlisle. [3] In every foundation there was always a sufficient number of brethren sent to form a community, usually twelve to thirteen brethren. [4]

The date of their arrival in Newcastle is not known with certainty. They were in Newcastle six years after the foundation of Carlisle Priory for, early in 1239, Henry III, on a visit to the Borders, made them a gift, in recognition of their hospitality, of '150 Ells of white cloth, valued at 4d'. [5] What is significant about this royal gift is that it seems to have been customary for a monarch to make gifts *impartially* to all Orders of Friars

within a town or city when visiting, and there is record that in 1237 the King made gifts to the Franciscans of Newcastle. [6] This suggests that the Dominicans had no foundation in the town in 1237 but did have in 1239, when the King made his gift to them. Thus, the Newcastle foundation can reasonably be placed between 1238 and early 1239.

The following year (1240) the King was again in Newcastle, and this time made a gift of '4 Ells of white cloth to each of the friars, and 16 pairs of shoes' [7] —which perhaps tells us that the community in that year numbered sixteen brethren ...?

By 1250 English Province, (which included Scotland and Ireland) was firmly established, and a Chapter was held at the London Priory that year. To this Chapter the Prior of Newcastle and his Socius made their way—and were admonished for 'architectural grandeur' in the construction of priory buildings, and for arriving at the chapter on horseback! [8]

The spread of the Order throughout England and the Continent in so short a time is difficult to understand. It was not simply that there must have existed a great spiritual thirst among the people of the thirteenth century, but perhaps it was a combination of this thirst together with the more appealing life-style of the mendicant friars, for they observed the vow of poverty, dressed simply, penetrated every level of society, and led a much more rigorous life than the majority of the clergy of their day. In addition, their preaching and learning was something new to the age.

In almost every instance, the arrival of the brethren in a particular town or city was a response to invitation, an invitation usually accompanied by a gift of land or property from which they might operate. Some houses were royal foundations, others were founded by nobles, some by burgesses of a town or city, and some were episcopal foundations. [9]

The *manner* of the Newcastle foundation is not known, but thought to have been a noble foundation. [10] The original site, the Blackfriars we know today, was said to have been given by three sisters, but no names have been preserved of these worthy ladies. [11] Sir Peter Scott and his son, Sir Nicholas, are reputed to have been great benefactors of the Newcastle Priory, and are mentioned as being possibly the founders. They were merchants of the City, and Sir Peter Scott was the first chief magistrate to bear the title of Mayor, ca. 1251. [12] (Almost 200 years after this date, in an *inquisition post mortem* (I.P.M.) to determine who was the heir of John de Hawkeswell—a lineal descendant of Sir Peter Scott—mention is made that

Sir Peter Scott was the founder.) [13] It is likely that Sir Peter Scott and his son Nicholas actually *invited* the Dominicans to the town and that they were the founders of the Priory, a priory built on the site *donated* by the three sisters. The only recorded addition to the original property of the Newcastle Priory during the thirteenth century was of half a street on the west side of the site, which the King granted in 1280 for the enlargement of the plot. [14] Several holdings were acquired in the next century, [15] but the full extent of Priory lands is not known. Estimates put it at from ten to twelve acres. The site *within* the walls was roughly from Stowell St on the west to Low Friar St on the east; the northern boundary ran from Morden Tower to the junction of Low Friar St and Newgate St—where the Gatehouse (White Cross) stood. [18] The southern boundary was from Heber Tower to Westgate. Low Friar St was also known as Shod-Friar St—a name used to distinguish the Dominicans from the Franciscans. [19] Three acres lay outside the walls.

The Friars had constructed an aqueduct to bring fresh water to the Priory, and continued it into the town for the benefit of the residents. An inquisition was taken in 1264 by Adam de Jessemuth (Jesmond), Sheriff of Northumberland, and the Mayor of Newcastle, by which it appeared that

> the aqueduct made by the Friars Preachers of that town, under a royal grant, from a certain fountain beyond their courtyard, and to their monastery, and from thence into the town, ought to remain as an advantage to the public at large, the King confirmed it to them for ever. [16]

Unfortunately, the details recorded concerning Blackfriars Priory have little to do with the religious life of the brethren, dealing as they do mainly with licences, pardons, messuages of land, indentures, etc. We know little of what transpired within the walls of the Priory, what regular contact they had with different groups, churches in the town, preaching engagements, etc. We do know that by 1276 they had a reasonable library, for Walter of Merton, Bishop of Rochester, in his Will directed that the copy of 'Epistolae Pauli Glossatae', which he had borrowed from the Dominicans of Newcastle, be returned. In the same Will he made a monetary bequest to the priory. [17]

In 1280 the City Walls were renewed and strengthened against the threat of raiding parties from the Borders. This rebuilding meant that part of the new wall would divide Blackfriars garden, thus denying them access to the rest of their garden outside the wall. They petitioned the King, who granted them leave to construct a postern gate in the wall (still to be seen),

on condition that in the event of threatened attack upon the City the opening was to be bricked-up. [20] Shortly after this strengthening of the town wall, a ditch was dug outside the walls. To overcome this further difficulty of access to their garden the friars obtained a licence from the King in 1312 allowing them to construct a drawbridge across it. [21]

The year 1318 saw the King again granting them favours, this time in the form of a messuage of land to permit enlargement of their house and garden. [22] Four years later (1322), after the battle of Norham, the King stayed with the Dominicans, giving them the customary 'pittance'. [23] It seems clear that they enjoyed royal favour, for again in 1330 they were granted licence for further enlargement of their property. [24]

Blackfriars became something of a 'royal hotel' for parties travelling to and from the Border. In 1334 the Priory church was the scene of an historic and no doubt colourful event, when Edward Baliol, King of Scotland, did homage to Edward III. [25] The following year the King and the Royal family stayed in the Priory during the greater part of October and November, and, as reward, they were granted a measure of corn worth 50s, a tub of flour worth 40s, and a cask of wine worth 5 marks 'as a return for the hospitality which the King and Royal Family had received in this house'. [26]

The year 1342 saw yet a further royal grant, allowing them 'to renew and set up again certain gates in their grounds, for ingress to, and to shut up their house.' [27] This had become necessary as a consequence of a mob breaking down the gates in order to lay hands on the Earl of Warren, who was in the Priory at the time, and had somehow incurred their displeasure.

Life within the Priory walls would have gone on much the same as in any of our priories today. The friars observed the same Rule, wore the same habit, and had the same ideals. An exception to this was a custom which grew up in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. There was an anchorite, who lived in the Priory cemetery on the north side of the church. His name was John Lacy OP, and he had written a book of devotion in his own hand, and with his own illustrations, for the Vicar of St Nicholas', Roger Stonysdale, with instructions that when the vicar died it was to be passed to each successive incumbent, and that each in addition would pray for the soul of the said anchorite. This book is now lodged in the library of St John's College, Oxford. How it got there is unknown, but in 1969 four copies were made and distributed to the Dominican Archivist, St Nicholas' Library,

Newcastle University Library, and to the Provost of St Nicholas', who caused it to be copied. [28]

One further piece of Dominican tradition which has been handed down concerns the lantern tower of St Nicholas' Cathedral. It is said to have been built by a Dominican Brother, and that, as a result, the Dominicans had been granted the right of saying Mass in the Cathedral once each year. There exists a licence permitting the saying of Mass each year 'on asking leave of the vicar of that church for the time being, although such leave should be refused them'. [29]

Little is known of events immediately prior to the Reformation, on the eve of which the Prior of Blackfriars was Richard Marshall. [30] He was fully aware of the dangerous plan Henry VIII had for the Church. He would almost certainly have had contact with his brethren in other Dominican houses elsewhere in the country, and would know the pattern events of the previous two years had taken. He was no Thomas More or John Fisher, lacking the courage of these two, but was honest about it. In the spring of 1537 he left his brethren and fled, tendering his resignation by letter saying:

> Fathers and brethren ... the cause of my writing to you is this time to show that for fear of my life I am fled, for because of my preaching in Advent and also in Lent the first Sunday I am noted to be none of the Kings friends, though albeit that I love the man as a true Christian man ought to do: but because I have not, according to the Kings commandment, in my sermons prayed for him as the supreme head of the Church, neither declaring him in my sermons to be the supreme head of the Church. But rather contrary I have declared St. Peter the Apostle and his successors to be Christ's Vicar on earth ... I was also admonished shortly to preach in Newcastle and both to pray for him as supreme head and also to declare him unto the people, which thing I cannot do lawfully.

He then gives seven reasons justifying his resistance, and concludes:

> I am in heart well willing to die in these my opinions, notwithstanding I feel flesh grog with death. Wherefore, fathers and dear brethren all, for the premises in this present writing, I give up my office and request you to choose you another prior. Secondly, I beseech you all to pray for me as your poor brother in Christ, and now in Christ's cause departed from you. [31]

Richard Marshall fled to Scotland, and the brethren elected as their new prior Roland Harding, who was doubtless more amenable to the royal tyranny. [32]

The end of the Dominican Priory came on 10 January 1539, after 300 years, when the Priory was surrendered to the King's Commissioner. The community at the time of the surrender numbered fourteen brethren: Frs Roland Harding (Prior), David Simpson, John Sowerby, Charles Newton, Thomas Wylcher, George Borrowden, Andrew Marshall, George Tait, Thomas Bullock and Andrew Pye; Brothers Lawrence Robson, John Watson and Ralph Trotter. [33] These fourteen names appear on the Deed of Surrender, although they are not signatures, being all written in the same hand.

The community were turned out without pensions. The prior received a 'gift' of 6/8d, each priest 5/-, and the brothers 3/4d. [34] What became of them afterwards is not known. Richard Marshall, who resigned, makes a brief appearance in Scotland in 1551 where he is 'learnedly informing his audience there, that the Pater Noster should be addressed to God, and not the saints'. [35] He makes a further brief appearance on the Continent a few years later.

As in other instances of suppression, the buildings and land became the property of the King, who later sold them to whoever had the necessary means. In the case of Blackfriars, the main range of Priory buildings were sold to the Newcastle Burgesses, the King reserving to himself the lead, bells, stone iron and timber of the church. The church was eventually destroyed and its stone used to build the first lighthouse at Tynemouth and the High and Low Lights at North Shields. [35a]

Perhaps we may allow ourselves a little pious reflection at this point, to dwell on the thought that, although the Friars could not now spread the light of the Gospel, the very stones of their former church would now become the foundations carrying the lights which would guide vessels secretly landing priests in the lower reaches of the Tyne?

It is to the credit of the City of Newcastle that the former Priory has been restored to its present condition, and constitutes perhaps the most extensive remains of a Dominican Priory in England.

NOTES

1. W.A. Hinnebusch OP, *The Early English Friars Preachers*, (Rome 1951) p. 60.

2. ibid., pp 60, 61 3. ibid., p. 61. 4. ibid., p. 61, (CONST. OP required twelve brethren—and the nature and purpose of the Order required theologically trained preachers.)

5. Brand, *Hist & Antiquities of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, vol. 1*
6. G. Anstruther OP, *The Dominicans of Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (1948), p. 5
7. Brand, op. cit. 8. Hinnebusch op. cit., p. 241; Acta Cap. Gen. OP, p. 55.
9. Hinnebusch, op. cit., p. 498 (Appendix). 10. Brand, op. cit., p. 123
11. Hinnebusch, op. cit. p. 94; Brand, op. cit., p. 123
12. Brand, op. cit., p. 123n.
13. Hinnebusch, op. cit., p. 94; *Palmer Hist. Ncle. Relig XVII*, p. 71 (I.P.M., John of Hawkeswell)
14. Hinnebusch, op. cit., p. 94; (CPR 1272-81, p. 394)
15. Cotton, *Hist Anglicana*, p. 113 16. Brand, op. cit., p. 123
17. W. Hobhouse, *Life of Walter de Merton* (Oxford 1859), p. 45
18. Hinnebusch, op. cit., p. 501 (Appendix V) 19. ibid. p. 245
20. ibid., p. 206; (CPR 1272-81. p. 397) 21. Brand, op. cit., p. 125
22. ibid., p. 125 23. ibid., p. 126 24. ibid., p. 126
25. ibid., p. 127 26. Anstruther op. cit., p. 5
27. Brand op. cit., p. 127 28. Hinnebusch, op. cit., p. 205
29. *Cathedral Church of St Nicholas Newsletter*, May 1969; Brand, op. cit., p. 128
30. Anstruther, op. cit., p. 6 31. ibid.
32. ibid. 33. ibid.; Brand, op. cit., p. 127
34. ibid., p. 130 (see also p. 131n, and Anstruther, op. cit., pp. 6-7)
35. Brand. op. cit., p. 131.
35a. Appleby-Miller FCA, 'Tinmouthe's Pharos', *Smith's Dock Journal*, July 1930, pp. 194-199; Oct. 1930, pp. 249-55

FURTHER READING:

G. Anstruther OP, *The Dominicans in Newcastle upon Tyne*, 1948.

C.F.R. Palmer, 'The Friars-Preachers, or Blackfriars, of Newcastle-on-Tyne', *The Reliquary*, Vol. XVIII, 1877-8, pp. 71-6, 161-6.

W.H. Knowles, 'The Black Friars Monastery in Newcastle', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 3rd Series, Vol. XVII, 1920, pp. 314-36.

B. Harbottle and R. Fraser, 'Blackfriars, Newcastle upon Tyne, after the Dissolution', *AA*, 5th Series, Vol. XV, 1987, pp. 23-149.

R. Devas OP, *The English Dominicans, 1221-1921.*

BLESSED GEORGE SWALLOWELL

Ann M.C. Forster

'... his soul receiving a whole hire, though he came not to the vineyard before the eleventh hour.'

So commented Fr Richard Holtby SJ in concluding his account of the martyrdom of Bl. George Swallowell.

George Swallowell, executed at Darlington in 1594, was undoubtedly the person referred to, in an early Catalogue of Martyrs, as ' a minister hanged in his own parish'; the exact significance of this description will be discussed later. Of his parentage and early years nothing is known except that he was first associated with Sherburn Hospital during the Mastership of Thomas Lever (1562-1577). This ancient institution was founded in the twelfth century for the maintenance of poor lepers of both sexes. The statutes were reformed in 1434; it was then laid down that the government was to be by a Master who should be a priest, and who should maintain four chaplains, four clerks, two boys to be taught reading and plain chant, thirteen poor brethren, and two lepers *si in partibus deperiri possint.* As the last phrase indicates, leprosy was then almost extinct; the hospital was becoming an alms-house and educational establishment, and as such it came within the grasp of King Henry's Ecclesiastical Commissioners, one of whom, the infamous Dr Leigh, succeeded in acquiring the Mastership and revenues for his own use.

In 1557, Anthony Salvin, the then Master, petitioned on behalf of the Hospital, claiming that the whole of the possessions had been leased away by the two late Masters, Thomas Leigh and Anthony Bellasis. As the result of his efforts a Commission of Enquiry was set up, but before anything could be done Salvin was deprived for his refusal to accept the spiritual supremacy of Elizabeth.

He was followed by Thomas Lever and Ralph Lever, Thomas's brother and successor. The Levers were Genevan Protestants, who had returned from abroad on the death of Queen Mary. Their attempts to carry through the reform of the Hospital met with little success, and it was not until 1585, when Thomas Lever was dead and Ralph had ceased to be Master, that the 'Act for the Incorporation of the Hospital of Christ in the town of Sherburn in the Bishoprick of Durham' was passed, regulating the leasing of property, and raising the number of poor brethren to thirty. The Master

was to be a preacher. [1]

George Swallowell's connection with Sherburn Hospital—he was probably educated there— began during the Mastership of Thomas Lever and was maintained, with occasional periods of absence, for the rest of his life. There were several ecclesiastical livings dependent upon the hospital and in the gift of the Master. To one of these, the chapelry of Trimdon, Swallowell was presented, in 1576, by Thomas Lever, [2] and as Curate of Trimdon he attended, in person, the visitation held in St Nicholas' church, Durham, by Swift, Bishop Barnes' Vicar General. [3] It was said on that occasion that he had 'no licence'. On October 6, 1577 he was ordained deacon in the chapel of Durham Castle by Bishop Barnes. [4]

In 1579 Ralph Lever nominated him for the vicarage of Kelloe, of which the chapelry of Trimdon formed part; but Bishop Barnes rejected the nomination and put in a candidate of his own, [5] despite a formal protest lodged by the Master and brethren of the Hospital.

About 1585 the Lever connection came to an end, and Valentine Dale was appointed Master. He was a layman and a civil servant, and was frequently employed by the Queen on diplomatic missions abroad. It is possible that during his periods of absence, George Swallowell acted as Master. When Valentine Dale died, in London, in 1589, Bishop Hutton appointed as Master Robert Bellamy, and in spite of opposition from the Queen, who also had a candidate, succeeded in getting his man appointed.

Robert Bellamy was a native of Yorkshire: Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, 1556, and M.A. 1560: Bachelor of Medicine 1562 and Doctor of Physic 1571. He had been chaplain to Bishop Barnes, and in 1577 was made a Prebendary of Durham. He had held the living of Houghton-le-Spring since 1584 and now resigned it to take up the Mastership of Sherburn. He was, the Bishop said, 'an honest man, a Preacher and a Physician, to have charge of both souls and bodies of the poor impotent persons of the Hospital'. [6] This is the man who, according to the statement made by George Swallowell at his trial, 'seeketh my blood'.

So far we have seen Swallowell as the earnest young reader and preacher, formed by the Levers in extreme Protestantism. Now comes the first indication of a changed outlook. It was an incident which occurred one day towards the end of May, 1590: a man called Finch, also employed at the hospital, came in from Durham, full of an execution he had witnessed there, of four young seminary priests; and Swallowell, when he heard the

story, commented 'No doubt, these priests were martyrs before God!' [7]

Certainly, this execution must have been something of an event. The priests executed were Richard Hill, Richard Holiday, John Hogg and Edmund Duke, all very young and captured almost immediately on landing in England. It may have been this which first started Swallowell thinking; or it may have been a conversation he had when visiting a gentleman imprisoned for recusancy in Durham gaol. According to a contemporary account, [8] Swallowell had been *sent* to interview the gentleman; according to the same account 'he who came to catch was himself caught'. We do not know the name of the gentleman in question, nor the year in which the conversation took place. In January 1592/3 there were twenty-nine persons, nineteen men and ten women, imprisoned for recusancy in Durham. Among them were three gentleman of the name of Trollopp, of a family which had a particular interest in Sherburn Hospital. [9] One of these may have been the gentleman involved, but this can only be conjecture.

In the course of the conversation the matter of Anglican Orders came up, and Mr Swallowell, was driven to admit that in the last resort the Orders of his Church were dependent upon the spiritual supremacy of the Queen. The gentleman pointed out the absurdity of making a woman, whom St Paul would not allow even to speak in the Church, the Church's head and the fountain of spiritual jurisdiction; and Mr Swallowell, being in good faith, admitted the force of the argument. [10]

He seems, at the time to have been employed as reader or curate, and teacher, at Houghton-le-Spring. [11] It may be that Dr Bellamy, who had lately been Rector of Houghton, had procured him the appointment to get rid of him. This is understandable if, as seems not unlikely, Swallowell had in the past been acting-Master at Sherburn, and might have had hopes of succeeding to the Mastership; in any case, as the latter stated plainly, Bellamy was hoping to make profit of the vacancy which his (Swallowell's) removal would create at Sherburn. The Houghton curacy however, came to an abrupt end. After giving the matter due consideration, George Swallowell made up his mind, and once convinced of the inadequacy of his position, he was not content to keep his opinions to himself. One Feast day he mounted the pulpit and there proclaimed that 'he had hitherto been in error and had been teaching them evil doctrine, and that it was devilish to think that the Bishops and Ministers in their Church were truly such; and therefore he would no longer officiate there.' He gave as his reasons,

besides those he had learned of the gentleman, those he had thought out for himself and those he had come across in books published in past years by Puritans against the Bishops. [12]

He was arrested afterwards and committed to prison where he remained a year, suffering very cruel treatment. [13] According to this reckoning the sermon must have taken place about Midsummer 1593. At a Gaol Delivery held at Candlemas 1594 an indictment was preferred against him, and he is said to have given way to some extent; [14] but the affair had become so notorious that the authorities determined to proceed against him to the full, and referred him to the Assizes, which opened in Durham on Monday, the 22 July.

Presiding was Lord Huntingdon, President of the Council in the North; with him were the Bishop of Durham, Matthew Hutton, Mr Justice Beaumont, Baron Ewens and other Justices of the Peace. When George Swallowell was brought to the bar, he found himself standing between two seminary priests, John Boste and John Ingram. Both had been captured in the North, taken to London for examination and brought back for trial. They had arrived at Durham about a week previously. Boste had been kept there, and Ingram taken on to Newcastle and lodged in the Newgate for four nights, the 16th to the 19th July. He was than returned to Durham.

An account—apparently almost verbatim—of the proceedings, which lasted for three days, the 22nd, 23rd and 24th July, has been preserved for us by Fr Holtby. [15] The events of the third day were recorded also by Bl. Christopher Robinson, [16] who himself suffered martyrdom not long afterwards. He had started out from Westmorland on the Tuesday and made a forced journey, coming into Durham at eight o'clock on the Wednesday morning, just in time to witness the condemnation and death of his friend John Boste.

The Monday was occupied with the opening ceremony and the sermon, preached by the Bishop. The trials commenced on the Tuesday. John Boste refused to plead. Rather than have his blood upon any man's head, he said, he would admit his priesthood. He was thereupon removed from Court. John Ingram pleaded not guilty, and stated in his defence that he had not been in England above a few hours, and that only of necessity, having been driven to flee over the Border from Scotland to save his life; and that his arrest had been made actually mid-stream, when he was crossing the Tweed on his way back. He claimed therefore that under the Statute of 1585, which made it High Treason for a man ordained priest by

the authority of the See of Rome after the first year of the Queen's reign, to enter into England etc., he was not indictable.

The indictment against George Swallowell was for 'persuading'. The case against him rested on two written statements, those of Willie and Finch. John Willie had deposed that Swallowell had told him that he (Willie) could never be saved by any religion but by the Catholic faith, for which the four priests were lately executed at Durham; that the Queen, being a woman, could not be Head of the Church, 'with divers other words tending to treason, and withdrawing the said Willie from his due obedience to her Majesty's laws'. It seems likely from the wording, that Willie had been one of those present at Swallowell's farewell sermon. The prisoner asked that Willie be called into Court, but he was not forthcoming.

Finch however, appeared and gave evidence in person that Willie had told him that George Swallowell had spoken as reported in the deposition. He also deposed to having himself heard Swallowell speak the words: 'No doubt these priests were martyrs before God'.

The jury gave their verdict that same afternoon. They found both Ingram and Swallowell guilty. Ingram protested that he was condemned for religion only. Swallowell on his knees pleaded for mercy; and at that point the judge adjourned the Court.

The following morning all three were brought in, and asked what they had to say before sentence was pronounced upon them. When it came to Swallowell's turn, he cried out:

> Good my Lords, be good unto me. I am falsely and maliciously accused. Dr Bellamy seeketh my blood, for some advantage to himself by making profit of my place in Sherburn house when I am gone. I was brought up there, under Mr Thomas and Mr Ralph Lever, and by them preferred. I beseech God to bless the Queen's Majesty, and confound all her enemies.

President. 'Wilt thou defy the Pope, and his laws, and all seminary priests and Jesuits?'
Swallowell. 'Yea my Lord, I defy them all.'
Beaumont. 'Will you fight in her Majesty's behalf, against the Pope, the King of Spain, and all Papists, her enemies?'
Swallowell. 'I will fight against them while I am able to stand.'
President. 'Will you take the Oath of her Majesty's Supremacy?'
Swallowell. 'Yea, my Lord, whensoever you will.'

Whatever knowledge he may have had of Catholic teaching—and we

shall see presently that he possibly had very little—this question of spiritual supremacy was one which he had faced and resolved. His answer indicates a complete breakdown; blind panic possessed him. For the moment it seemed that his pleading might be successful. The judges sat back and conferred among themselves, and the Court hummed speculation as to whether or not his life would be spared.

John Boste, however, was under no delusions regarding this: He seized this opportunity. 'Oh dear brother,' he said 'what have you done? As you tender your own weal, save your silly (i.e. your poor) soul. You are to die; judgment will not be revoked. Profess that faith with your mouth which we know you believe in your heart'. At these words Swallowell was 'struck in a great dump of confusion.' [17]

There was a hush as the judge came forward again, and pronounced sentence of death, with all its grim details, upon Boste and Ingram; sentence which they received upon their knees, reciting the *Te Deum*, and kissing one another's hands. Then suddenly there came an agonising cry: 'My Lord, for God's sake, let me have my word again!'

'Swallowell,' said the judge, 'look well what thou doest; for although thou art condemned, yet the Queen is merciful.'
'I am resolved ... I am resolved ...' he answered.
'In what resolved?'
'In matters of faith,' was the reply.
'And by whom?'

'Even by these, martyrs before God, *martyrs before God*,' (his voice rose) 'for though you make as if they die for treason, yet in very truth they die for religion; and if it were a thousand deaths I am very well content with them to suffer. My Lords, let me die with these two blessed martyrs. I will be a Catholic, and die as they do; and I here do renounce and am sorry for that which last I said against the Catholics, and am now by these two blessed martyrs' example resolved to be a Catholic.'

His words were drowned by the clamour in Court. Some people burst out laughing; others showed their distress. Under cover of the general disturbance, Mr Boste leaned towards Swallowell and clapped him on the head. 'Hold thee there,' he cried, and we can almost hear the ring of his native Westmorland; 'hold thee there, and I warrant thee!' And according to one authority, he then and there gave him absolution, an action noted by the President, who exclaimed angrily: 'away with Boste, he is reconcil-

ing him!'

George Swallowell faced his last ordeal alone, for the company he had craved was denied him. For the sake of example it was decided that the three should die on different days in different places, and to Darlington was awarded the honour of being the scene of the martyrdom of Bl. George Swallowell. It took place on the Monday following, the 29 July. He was made to walk to within two miles of the town, and then laid on his back in the cart and so drawn to the gallows. As he arrived, four ministers came forward and tried to prevail upon him to recant. He refused to listen to them. 'Mr Sheriff,' he said, 'you promised me that I should not be troubled. Pray take them away.' Then they cast up at him that he was a minister himself, and he answered that it was true, and he was sorry for it.

At the foot of the ladder he knelt down and prayed; then, being told to mount it, he begged leave to speak to the people. 'I renounce all heresy,' he began, and the Sheriff interrupted him: 'Now hear me. Thou art condemned for a traitor against the Queen's Majesty and art to receive thy punishment according to thy deserts. Confess thy fault, and ask the Queen's forgiveness.' He answered that he had offended God, and asked his forgiveness, for that he had given to Caesar more than was Caesar's due, whereupon the Sheriff cut him short and struck him with his rod. When the rope was put round his neck he begged the Catholics present to say for him three *Paters,* three *Aves,* and the Creed. He recited his own prayers, in Latin, and, as he made the sign of the cross, the ladder was turned. He was dead, or practically dead, when the rest of the sentence was carried out. His remains were buried under a furze bush, on the bakers' dungheap at Darlington. [18]

Some further points in connection with Bl. George Swallowell may now be considered. First, is it possible to discover anything in connection with his birth and parentage?

He was, all accounts agree, executed at Darlington. In particular, Fr Holtby expressly states so.

An early Catalogue of Martyrs (Stonyhurst MSS Anglia vii n. 26) has: 'John Boste ... Durham, John Ingram ... Newcastell,—a minister, hanged in his own parish for professing ye Catholic faith.'

These two accounts, taken in conjunction, indicate that Darlington was, in some way, George Swallowell's 'own parish'. There is no indication anywhere that it was the scene of his labours; we may therefore conclude

that it was his birth-place. In the parish register of Pittington in Co. Durham (in which Sherburn is situated) there are many entries of Swallowells (or Swalwells), among them some of the name of George. It is probable that he came of the same stock. None of these Pittington Swallowells appear in records of recusancy.

On the other hand there is a George Swallowell, who first appears on the Recusants Roll convicted of recusancy in 1606, of Carrhouse near Darlington. [19] It does suggest that he may have been a relative, possibly even a son, of the martyr. Later on he was living at Wolveston near Billingham where he owned a cottage in right of his wife Anne, also convicted, and with them Cecilia Swallowell, widow. [20] In 1634 he was in trouble for keeping a Papist school, and after many months in prison, was discharged on the score of poverty. [21] Nebulous though the connection may be, it does indicate that there was a Catholic family of Swallowells living in the vicinity of Darlington a few years after the martyr's death.

Next, what exactly had Fr Holtby in mind, when he wrote: 'he came not to the vineyard before the eleventh hour? Was he referring to a late reconciliation or a last hour repentance?

In support of the latter we have the statement of Bl. Christopher Robinson that George Swallowell 'laying aside his ministry became a Catholic;' and the experience of Fr Charles Thursby SJ that 'Mr Boast standing by putt his hand upon his head and absolved him publickly before the whole Court ...' a statement which suggests that Swallowell was already a Catholic. Fr Holtby, who was in a better position than either of these to know the truth of the matter, makes no mention of it at all.

Thus there is still a possibility that George Swallowell, though greatly attracted to the Catholic Church, had never been formally reconciled. It must be remembered that his imprisonment followed swiftly upon his public declaration, and that such instruction as he may have received came probably from his fellow prisoners. [22] They had familiarised him with Catholic devotions—the 'Hail Mary' which comforted his last moments was something he had never learned from his Genevan preceptors—but it is possible that he had never seen a priest. Certainly John Boste was in gaol at Durham during the week preceding the Assizes, but we can not assume that he would be accessible to the Catholics imprisoned there. John Ingram, we know, had been allowed a visitor, but that was in Newcastle, and she was the wife of an important personage who had formerly had him in custody. Otherwise the precautions taken to keep guard over him were

very strict. [23]

Fr Holtby says:

> It was God's Providence that he (Swallowell) was reserved to see the examples of the two priests, and so to have this occasion to win his crown; for he had been at a gaol delivery, at Candlemas before, brought into the bar, and was reprieved by the Lord President and remitted unto the general assizes before the judges; and if this occasion had not been, it is very possible that he should have been quit and continued in his former estate.

This statement, on the face of it, may simply mean that, but for the example of the priests, George Swallowell would almost certainly have apostatized; but the words are capable of another interpretation: that he was a convert in desire, but not in fact, and that his final submission came only in that moment when he cried out '*I am resolved ... in matters of faith ... even by example of these blessed martyrs ...*' It was a sublime act of acceptance of all the faith which they professed and for which they were prepared to die. 'I will be a Catholic,' he said, 'and die with them.' This generous, impulsive man, possessing something of the temperament, with its qualities and its defects, which characterised the great Prince of the Apostles, merited as his epitaph: 'he came not to the vineyard before the eleventh hour;' and these words are usually taken to signify, not merely a last hour repentance, but a last hour election.

SOURCES

Catalogue of Martyrs 1587-94. Stonyhurst Angl. vii, n. 26 (in C.R.S. vol. 5, p. 293.)

Fr Richard Holtby, SJ, 'Persecution in the North'. (Stonyhurst Angl. ii, n. 12 (in J. Morris, *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, Vol. III, pp. 193 ff.)

Fr Richard Blount SJ, Letter dated 6 November 1594 (in Diege de Yepes, *Historia Particular*, p. 641)

Relations of Rev. Christopher Robinson. Knaresborough MSS (in C.R.S. vol. I, pp. 85 ff.)

Evidences of Fr Charles Thursby, SJ, Rev. Cuthbert Trollopp, Rev. – Jackson, in *Chalcedon Returns* (W.C.A. Aiv, pp. 12-14)

Bishop Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 1924 ed. p. 206.

J.B. Wainewright, *Blessed George Swallowell* written for vol. 4 of *Lives of English Martyrs* (never published).

V. Rev. Canon W. Brown, *Life of Blessed George Swallowell*, (in Northern Catholic Calendar, 1902).

R. Surtees, *History of Durham*, vol. 1.

NOTES

1. R. Surtees, op. cit., pp. 127ff.
2. ibid., p. 108
3. Ecclesiastical Proceedings of Bp. Barnes, Surtees Society Publications, vol. 22.
4. Register of Bp. Barnes, f. 2 v.
5. ibid., f. 8 v.
6. R. Surtees, op. cit., p. 141.
7. Holtby, op. cit.
8. Blount, op. cit.
9. S.P. 12. 244/8 i. The Trollopps of Thornley as patrons had the right of presentation to one place in the hospital, a right which was transferred to the purchaser on the sale of Thornley in 1679. In 1682 the 'Thornley brother' was deprived for recusancy.
10. Blount, op. cit.
11. He is said to have taught at Kepier, a school attached to Houghton. (Mackenzie & Ross, History of Durham I, p. 351 f.n.)
12. Blount, op. cit.
13. ibid.
14. ibid.
15. Holtby, op. cit.
16. Robinson, op. cit.
17. Jackson, op. cit.
18. ibid.
19. Recusants Roll E.377/16. The exact location of Carrhouse has not been ascertained, but from the position of the entry on the Roll, it was probably in either Aycliffe or Heighington parish, both adjacent to Darlington.
20. E377/32
21. Surtees Society, vol. 34, p. 77
22. Rev. Cuthbert Trollopp says that he was 'ignorant'; and Fr Blount that he was 'not well up in the fundamental truths of religion ... yet knew it to be the true religion, and wished to die in it.'
23. Chamberlain's Accounts (Newcastle upon Tyne) record payment made to eleven men for guarding him at night.

Editorial Note

This article by the late Dr Annie Forster was first published in *The Ushaw Magazine*, December 1970, and is re-printed here by kind permission of the Editor, Sr M. Cecily Boulding OP.

For recent biographies of St John Boste and Bl. John Ingram, see

F. Rice, *One of the Greatest Stags of the Forest, St John Boste, Martyr.* St Godric's Durham. Obtainable from Fr Rice, 19 Barnard Close, Newton Hall, Durham, DH1 5XN

M.J. Cashman, 'Blessed John Ingram, 1565-1594: The Gateshead Martyr', *Northern Catholic History*, No. 29, Spring 1990. Obtainable from The Editor, Mr Gard, @ £1.50, incl. postage.

THE BENEDICTINES IN THE NORTH EAST IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Dom Geoffrey Scott OSB

Catholics in this corner of England are fortunate in having their history well researched and written up by a line of devoted local historians—it is by no means the same elsewhere in this country—and in preparing this article I acknowledge a great debt to Dr Annie Forster, Fr Vincent Smith and Fr Bill Nicholson, to whose incomparable knowledge of this area I have merely added what I have been able to glean from Benedictine sources.

The main purpose of this article is to describe the Benedictine presence in the North East in the eighteenth century, in effect the history of the various Benedictine missions, but it will be perhaps helpful to refer firstly to the continuity of Benedictine life from the sixteenth century and to the monasteries on the Continent to which the missioners belonged.

THE MONASTERIES ON THE CONTINENT

The monasteries on the Continent from which the English Benedictine Congregation derives were St Gregory's, Douai (now Downside), St Laurence's, Dieulouard, in Lorraine (now Ampleforth), St Edmund's, Paris (later Douai and now Woolhampton), and Lambspring, in Germany, and also Cambrai for Benedictine nuns. All dated from the early seventeenth century. Figure 1 sketches the descent of the English Benedictine Congregation to 1900, figure 2 outlines its structure, and figure 3 locates the monasteries on a political map of 1721. In the eighteenth century, Lambspring seems to have had the strongest connection with the North East and Yorkshire which supplied many vocations to that monastery. Lambspring, in return, sent many of its monks as missioners to this part of England. It survived until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

None of these monasteries were autonomous but were governed by a President General who headed a General Chapter which met every four years. It was the President, ultimately, who gave permission for the clothing and profession of novices, and chose priests to work on the English Mission. As one would expect, the monasteries had great gaps in the middle age range, and were inhabited mainly by the younger and the older members of the communities. Dieulouard, the smallest community, had, on average, ten to fifteen monks resident during the eighteenth century; Lambspring, the largest, and the only one which was an abbey, had twenty

FIGURE 1 DESCENT OF THE ENGLISH BENEDICTINE CONGREGATION TO 1900

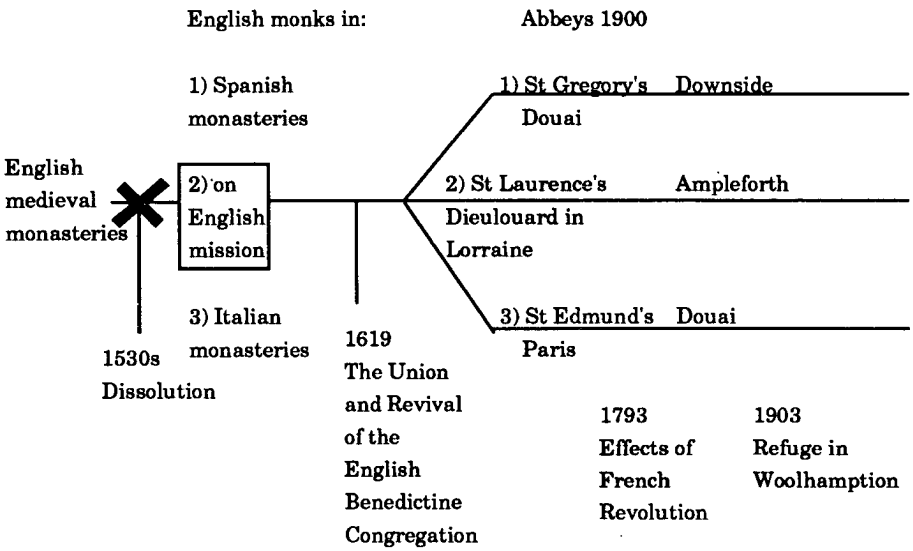
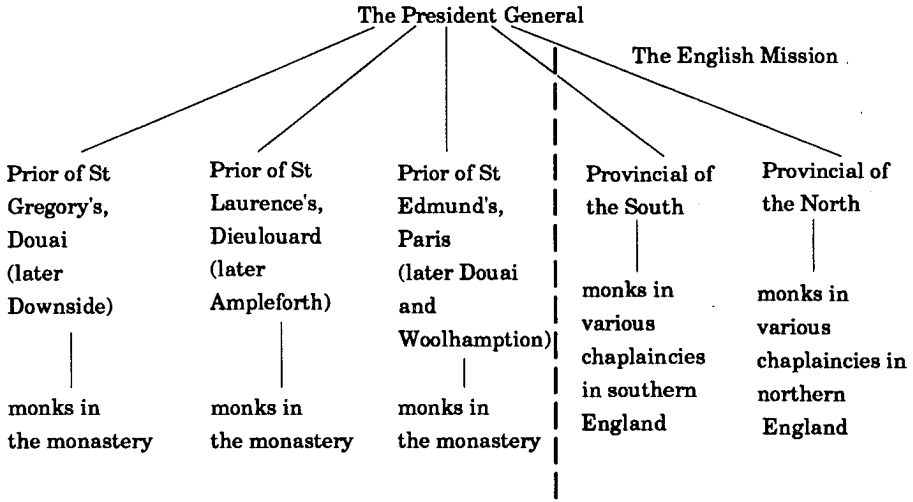


FIGURE 2 STRUCTURE OF THE ENGLISH BENEDICTINE CONGREGATION TO 1900



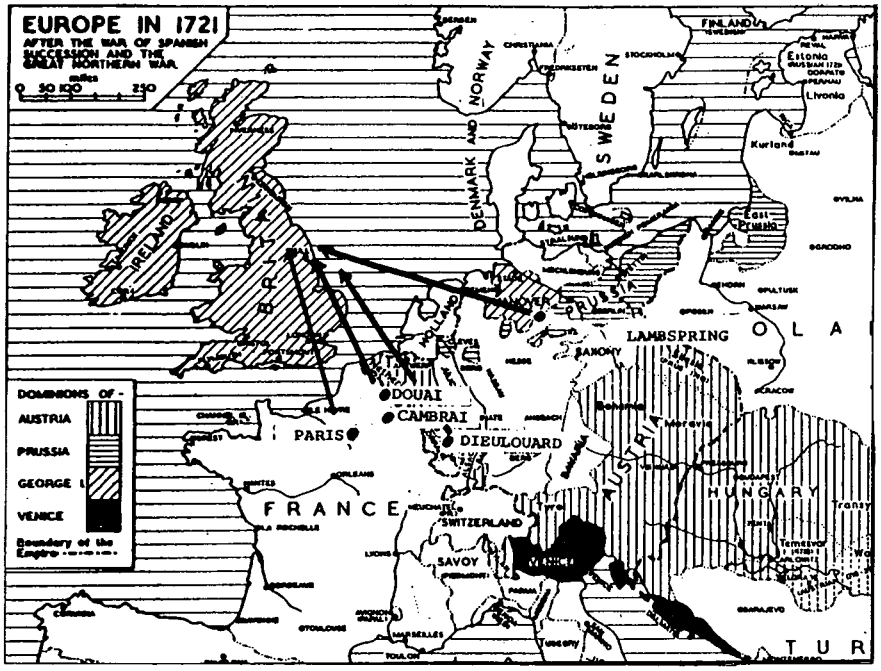


FIGURE 3 BENEDICTINE MONASTERIES ON THE CONTINENT

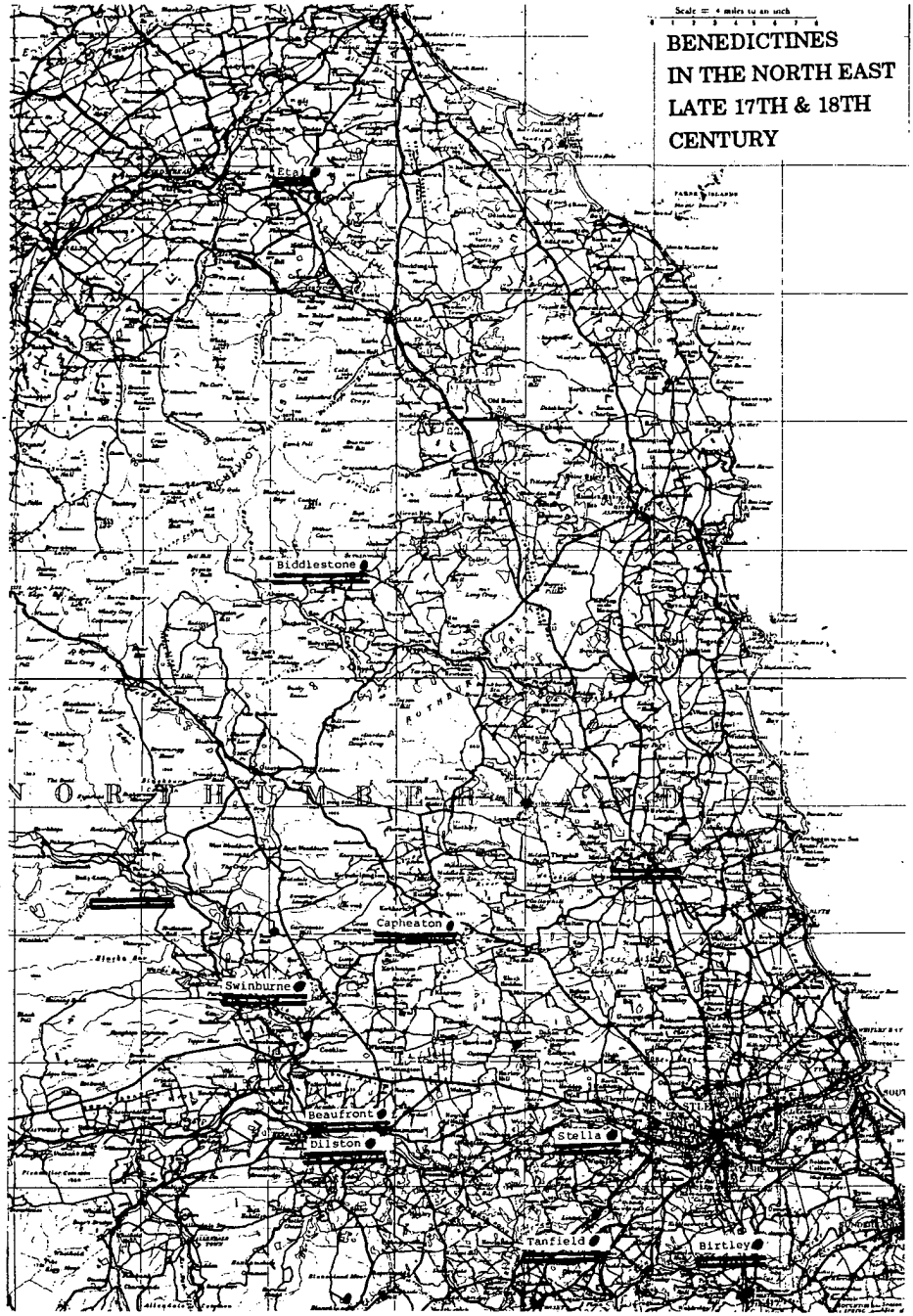
to thirty resident in the same period. Except for Lambspring, which had an enormous complex of conventual buildings, these monasteries were unassuming edifices. The main work of the monasteries was in education, either providing facilities for the study of theology or running schools for the children of English Catholic laymen. Most had cottage industries, farms and breweries. Besides funds from property and benefactors in England, the monasteries' main source of income came from benefices: St Edmund's, Paris, which, being on the left bank area of Paris, had no lands around it, had fourteen such livings in the eighteenth century, and some of the monks who were missioners in England were titular priors of this or that French monastery, and the funds from their livings were taken by St Edmund's.

The daily routine of the four English Benedictine monasteries was organized more by house customaries than by the Constitutions, the first

printed set of which dates from the later seventeenth century. These customaries specified times of office, the degree of ritual allowed on various feastdays, the number of days of fasting and abstinence, the duration of holiday periods, and humbler matters, such as the date (1 November) when fires were allowed in the individual cells. The Constitutions and the Definitions, which were issued by each General Chapter and which interpreted the Constitutions in the light of new and different circumstances, were more interested in maintaining the signs of unity —types of habit, forms of address, the hierarchy of precedence, and job descriptions for those holding office. Above all, and perhaps not surprising, the Constitutions, and especially the Definitions, were interested in finance, the consuming concern being to define the financial relationship between a monk living on a mission with his own resources and his monastery. Generally speaking, such a missioner kept his own fortune, but his effects, or *spolia*, were returned to his house after his death. Good order was kept through a visitation by the President to the monastery every four years, and the acts of visitation show the inevitable castigations—far too much talking in times of silence, too much frequenting of others' cells, inattendance at office and meals, stealing of books from the library, mixing with people outside the monastery, insufficient attention to spiritual duties, and *caveats* against smoking, drinking, and mixing with the opposite sex. Many of these restrictions of the conventual life did not apply to members of the English Mission, and one needs to be aware of the sharp differences between the somewhat constricted and cloistered life of the monastery and the much freer, individualistic career of the monk missioners. It is not surprising that there are numerous examples of missioners' reluctance to return to their monasteries.

THE MISSIONS IN THE NORTH EAST

Over half of the monks in the eighteenth century were to be found on the English Mission. Figure 4 shows some of the more important eighteenth century Benedictine missions in the North East. Those to which reference will be made are underlined and less important or brief Benedictine presence is indicated by a dot. One is immediately struck by the fact that the origin and continued existence in the eighteenth century was dependent on the support and favour of Catholic gentry: the Riddells in Etal, the Selbys at Biddlestone, the Erringtons at Beaufront, the Charltons at Hesleyside, the Riddells at Swinburne, the Swinburnes at Capheaton, the Derwentwaters at Dilston, the Widdringtons at Stella, and the

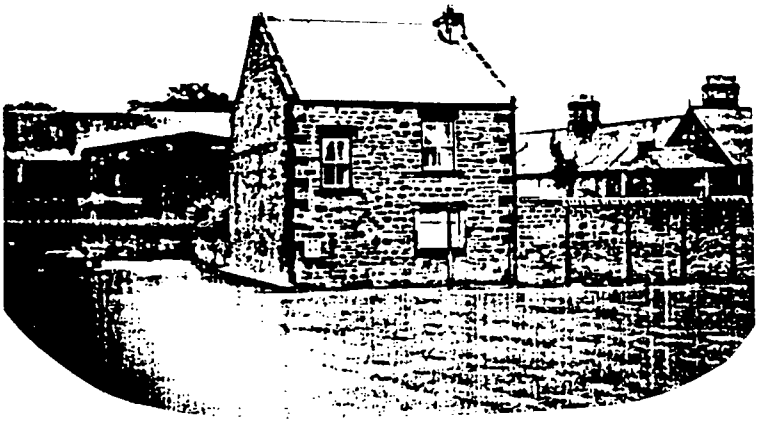

Scale = 4 miles to an inch
BENEDICTINES
IN THE NORTH EAST
LATE 17TH & 18TH
CENTURY
Etal
Biddlestone
NORTHUMBERLAND
Capheaton
Swinburne
Beaufront
Dilston
Stella
Tanfield
Birtley

Swinburnes at Tanfield. Even those missions which in the course of the century became established as independent of the gentry in urban settings acknowledged gentry support in the past, for Morpeth owed its origin to the Riddles and Birtley to the Tempests. Of course, many of these gentry were heavily involved in the coal industry, and Benedictine chaplains gradually found themselves ministering to the mining community around the big house. This was the case at Stella, and at Lumley Park, from which Birtley evolved. The transformation from a gentry chaplaincy to an independent mission took place in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and explains why some Benedictine missions managed to survive so long—whilst the Benedictine presence along the Tyne valley had disappeared by 1800, Morpeth and Birtley had monks staffing them until the 1970s. The other places located on the map by dots indicate a brief Benedictine occupation, often the result of chaplains going on a circuit of neighbouring gentry families: Thirlwall was visited by the Dilston chaplain, and Tone Hall by the monk at Swinburne. We know of these fleeting outbursts of Benedictine activity from a variety of sources, which include Catholic mission baptismal registers, Anglican diocesan and civil authority returns, Benedictine account books, ledgers and private correspondence of Catholic families and of the monks themselves.

The Benedictines in the North East were ruled by the Northern Benedictine Provincial, or the Provincial of York, who for long periods in the eighteenth century lived as a missioner at Capheaton. Jurisdictionally, he came midway between the President and the priors of the monasteries. It was the Provincial's task to hold Provincial Chapters, apply for new missioners, visit missioners, work with his own council, especially in regard to disciplinary matters and missionary funds, and to represent the interests of the monks before the secular or religious authorities.

In England, monks who were chaplains to families, presided over the evolution of a chaplaincy into a more or less independent mission. The buildings tell the story. Early eighteenth century chapels were high up in the rafters, in concealed places within the family home, then grew greater in size and opulence and were soon on the ground floor, and finally became, by the end of the century, separate buildings alongside the mansion, or at a distance serving the local Catholics rather than the family of the original patron. In 1746, the Benedictine mission had moved from Chester-le-Street to Birtley, and we hear of the first chapel, attached to the priest's house, as 'a small unlighted chamber'. It was replaced by a bigger building

← FIGURE 4. BENEDICTINE MISSIONS IN THE NORTH EAST IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



THE 'CHAPEL HOUSE', BIRTLEY, THE SITE OF THE CHAPEL OF 1780

in the 1780s, which by 1837 was itself described as 'an abominable place, so exceedingly damp and rather out of the way, and certainly has no attractions'. It was this insalubrious building which was replaced by the present church in 1843. The seventeenth century chapel at Stella, whose Hall was demolished in 1955, had a chapel in the north wing reached by an outside spiral staircase. At Beaufront, where the Erringtons had had monks as chaplains since at least the late seventeenth century, a large gothic chapel was designed to replace the small house chapel in the more enlightened 1780s. In 1777, John Errington sought advice from Fr Augustine Walker OSB in Rome: Please 'procure me,' he said, 'a plan of a chapel to hold a large congregation. I would have it neat, light, of the Gothick construction, the less ornamented the better, with a place for a Bell if required'. (This was presumably the chapel built at Beaufront Woodhead). Thirty years earlier, the chapel at Capheaton, probably in the west wing of the house, had been upgraded by having 'pillars' (probably pilasters), a cornice and a 'great window' added. The architectural history of Morpeth was similar to Birtley's: from 1782, a small chapel down an alleyway was used for mass, only to be replaced by the present church in 1849.

The monk who came straight from his monastery abroad ministered first to his own patron and/or congregation, to whom he was beholden for his livelihood. North Eastern congregations looked after by monks were socially mixed, a feature owing more to the influence of the patron's Catholicism perhaps than to any indigenous Catholicism. At Birtley, the earliest evidence we have is of the priest travelling around the district as

a tinker, selling knick-knacks to avert suspicion as to his real function. Relations with non-Catholics were not always friendly, and became very strained at periods of tension. Following the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion, for instance, the monk at Stella was sent to Durham gaol, and was seen being hauled through Winlaton on horseback, his feet strapped under the horse's belly. If the eighteenth century was an age of enlightenment and increasing toleration, we should expect the monks to have found it easier to reach a *modus vivendi* with non-Catholic neighbours. In England, given centuries of Protestant distrust and suspicion, the monks had to fight hard to win acceptance, and what we see in the North East is an underlying improvement in relations, offset occasionally by pockets of traditional resistance to Popery. Inevitably, these latter occurred in small rural communities, when local interests were able to put a brake on the period's overall advance towards religious toleration. In 1751, at Capheaton, the local vicar objected to the monk chaplain christening a child, and reported him to the Anglican bishop, and, even as late as 1777, the monk chaplain at Hesleyside was forced out by persecution from the local parson.

The vast majority of congregations served by monks in the North East were loosely what some modern scholars call 'seigneurial', that is, they were attached in some way to a Catholic gentry family, which was largely responsible for the maintenance of the chaplain. Patron and chaplain shared a variety of common interests. Thomas Swinburne of Hamsterley corresponded with the Benedictine President during 1766 about his relations and the children of friends in the Benedictine schools on the continent. Ten years later, he was demanding from the same superior a Benedictine to serve Pontop where he admitted that the poor salary for a chaplain of £20 a year might be supplemented by offerings from Catholic neighbours. An early chaplain here returned to France in 1784 to become prior of Paris. The Swinburnes were willing to let him go, provided masses were said three Sundays a month by the Benedictines at Beaufront and Birtley. Monk chaplains naturally became very intimate with the families they served and continued to be interested in the news of the marriages of the children. If these monks returned to the continent, they were used by the family as agents; by this method, the Swinburnes procured Cambrai lace and vine plants from Paris.

At Beaufront, the Erringtons had supported the Derwentwaters at Dilston, on the other side of the Tyne valley, during the '15 Rebellion, and the bond between these two Catholic centres survived that fiasco. In the

1730s, they were looked after by the same monk missioner, and the interest on the fund of £300 for a Benedictine, left in 1666 by Lady Radcliffe of Dilston, was paid during the eighteenth century to the monk at Beaufront. The Jacobitism of the family also survived the Fifteen: two letters in the Royal Archives at Windsor, written in 1737 by the Benedictine President to 'King James III', bring 'Mr Errington of Beaufront to His Majesty's attention', describing his as a young married man and heir, keen to do the king some service. When members of the Errington family toured the continent with their wives, their Benedictine contacts ensured that they were introduced to the noble and great as they went on their way. Often, they visited the English monasteries themselves—Henry Errington, for instance, was present at a monastic profession at St Gregory's, Douai, in 1757.

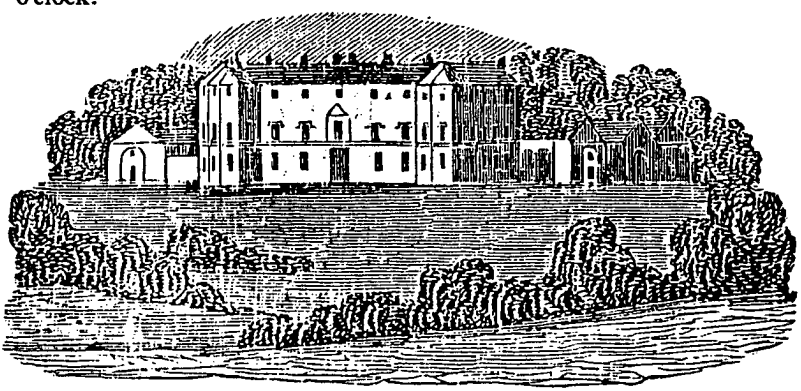
In Coquetdale lay Biddlestone Hall, the seat of the Selbys, a family who preferred Jesuits as chaplains, but who from 1767 until 1821 had one Benedictine chaplain, Fr Ambrose Naylor. The family was particularly keen on the educational opportunities opened up by knowing the monks. In 1719, the family invested £300 in Lambspring to provide money to educate Selby sons, mentioning the possibility of some of them taking the habit—a Selby of Yardhill did so. Generations of Selbys thus passed through the Benedictine schools, not, however, without some friction between the family and the school authorities. In 1769, the latter were informed that the Selbys would remove their children from St Gregory's, Douai, 'if the *toga talaris* is not changed'—this was the traditional ankle-length cassock. The family obviously wanted to move with the times.

The Swinburnes at Capheaton were both Jocobites and Benedictine-educated. The family had a line of nine monk chaplains, spanning most of the eighteenth century, and five daughters became Benedictine nuns during that time—one of them, Dame Margaret Swinburne, became Abbess of Cambrai. I was very pleased, a few years ago, to be shown by Mr Browne-Swinburne at Capheaton a miniature of one of these holy ladies. The first known chaplain was Cuthbert Farnworth, at Capheaton 1727-53, who had been tutor to Sir John Swinburne, the subject of the famous story of the 'lost heir of Capheaton'—he had been shipped abroad after the Fifteen and his identity concealed, and was only re-discovered much later, mainly, it seems, through his physical resemblance to the Swinburnes. Chaplains at Capheaton, with a congregation of about fifty, were wealthier than some of their brethren, for they enjoyed a salary of £80 a year from the

family (£20-£25 was the usual salary), but they earned this sum by shouldering a number of other responsibilities, such as acting as housekeeper in the family's absence, looking after the gardens, and cleaning and stocking the fishponds. The Baronet was entrusted by the English monks for much of the century with the invested funds of the North Province.

We need to remember that patrons could be quite particular in their choice of chaplains. In 1785, Fr John Turner, then at Morpeth, wrote to the Benedictine President at Douai:

> You will have received (Mr) Riddell's request to have one of our Body to do duty to his family at Felton or Swinburne Castle. I do not recollect having assigned a reason for his appearing to have an objection to a fat unweildy man. As he and some of his family may not infrequently go for days to Swinburne Castle, he apprehended it might be unpleasant to have a person of that description to accompany him, tho' to another man agreeable and even amusing. (The Provincial) knows the great Regularity which is kept up in (that family) and how much Mr Riddell admires good sense, particularly sobriety. The Family is accustomed to have Prayers at the half hour past eight o'clock.



SWINBURNE CASTLE, c. 1800

Threaded through all the story so far, we must not forget the Benedictine tradition of prayer and spirituality. The seventeenth century had seen an important revival among the monks and nuns of mystical or 'affective' prayer, whose main proponent had been Augustine Baker. By 1700, this rarefied plant was well-nigh dead, except in the convent at Cambrai where, as late as 1690, the Yorkshire nun, Dame Justina Gascoigne, was experiencing the so-called 'bitter desolations'. We must imag-

ine the Swinburne daughters at Cambrai being raised in the same tradition, and we might hazard a guess that the late seventeenth century manuscript of Augustine Baker's edition of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, once at Thropton and now at Ampleforth, came from a Benedictine centre like Biddlestone, or perhaps Netherwitton. The monks on the English Mission, however, were not blind to the need to provide catechisms and popular devotional works for their congregations. The Capheaton accounts show the Baronets purchasing catechisms, as well as copies of *The Creed Expounded*, a rather superior catechism published by the Benedictine Bernard Wythie in 1735. The congregations at Tanfield and at Swinburne joined the Rosary Confraternity in 1751. This had been established by the Dominicans, and some Benedictine baptismal registers include lists of members of the Confraternity.

As regards the intellectual life of the day, the most important influence by far was that all-embracing movement called the Enlightenment, which in the names of reason, science and common sense swept away all that appeared stuffy, superstitious or anachronistic, and looked forward to an utopian future. Its tide lapped the shores even of North East England. In the recesses of the Derwent valley at Hamsterley Hall, Fr Augustine Walker wrote scientific and literary papers for delivery to a society formed among the English monks in Paris for the advancement of learning and science. This happened in the 1750s, forty years before Newcastle had its own Literary and Philosophical Society. His paper 'On the Coal Works about Newcastle' examined the strengths and weaknesses of the waggons then in use, explained the system of waggonways, and marvelled at the Causey Arch. Four years later, he applauded George Bowes' laying out of Gibside, then the height of fashion with its landscape gardens, laid out as a *Ferme Ornée*. Walker's pupil, Henry Swinburne, remodelled Hamsterley itself a few years later, landscaping it 'with a painter's eye' (Hodgson), while he was winning for himself an international reputation as a traveller and collector. Like Henry Errington of Beaufront, Henry Swinburne supported moves for Catholic emancipation in the early 1790s, being prepared to take the oath of loyalty to George III.

The Enlightenment was a mixed blessing for the Church for its aggressive spirit of enquiry and reaction against piety undermined the pillars of Catholicism, causing many of its most influential children to apostatize and leave the faith. In Northumberland, the monks were particularly aggrieved when Sir John Swinburne of Capheaton rejected his

Catholicism in 1786. Sir John had been educated in Benedictine schools and at the time of his apostasy was employing a monk as chaplain. In the eyes of the world, Sir John's apostasy was sensible—it allowed him to become the M.P. (of Northumberland) and an important Freemason. The tremors of shock it sent through the monks can be sensed in contemporary correspondence. In December 1786, Henry Swinburne commended his nephew's wish to stand as an M.P., adding: 'I have half persuaded the curate (presumably the monk chaplain) that the masses he has said on the altar of which you laid the first stone are not worth a farthing since you made the perilous leap'. It seems that at Capheaton the chaplain was living in the village from May 1782 through Sir Edward Swinburne's express wish, 'and he was to have no concern at the Hall but to say prayers (there) when he was expressly invited'. The implication here that Sir Edward was as lukewarm as his son in his Catholicism becomes clearer in a letter of April 1785 which describes how the chaplain had been ill, and how the doctor had ordered plenty of riding on horseback to gain exercise:

> But Sir Edward will not allow him a horse, not even when called to assist his Congregation. He also complains much of the great discouragement he meets with in the discharge of his pastoral duties, and indeed it is but too plain that neither Sir Edward nor Mr Swinburne are much burthened with religion.

Sir John's apostasy occurred in the Summer of 1786—a letter of the time has this comment:

> You must have heard of Sir Edward Swinburne's eldest son renouncing the errors of popery, with a view, as it is believed, of sitting in Parliament for this county. From the little I have heard of him, I could not be surprised at any step of this nature, nor if his Father had showed him the example or his Uncle Harry Swinburne, for they are all of a piece. I have a most despicable view of our Catholic nobility and gentry in general, as they seem to surpass the rest of the world only in extravagance and the fashionable views of the age.

Although 'void of religion', Sir John seems to have grudgingly kept his chaplain on for a while because the Benedictine Provincial professed he could not immediately transfer him elsewhere. Even so, Sir John refused to allow him to minister to his Catholic tenantry. During 1788, Bernard Ryding, the last Benedictine chaplain left Capheaton and transferred to Yorkshire.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century monks in the North East not only had to cope with the bad, they had the mad on their hands as well. During 1787, a commission of lunacy was taken out against John Erring-

ton, the last 'chief' of Beaufront, who, being of an ancient family, had taken it into his head that he was entitled to a dukedom, and on his arrival in Hexham that Spring, assumed the title of 'Duke of Hexham', and applied to the King and College of Heralds to have it registered and placed over his front door.

> These circumstances, together with some letters of an extraordinary nature to the first lady of the kingdom (presumably the Queen) occasioned such alarm that his family were obliged to have recourse to this harsh measure.

In 1780 the 'chief had already demanded the removal of his chaplain following a difference between them as to what should be said or done in the chapel. In 1787, the Provincial found himself prevailed upon by the mad 'duke' to remove the chaplain:

> Mr Errington tells me he requires prayers (Mass) daily. I informed him I could not with any degree of propriety insist upon any subject saying Mass every day, but that if he thought proper, he might have morning prayers when the Gentleman did not think proper to say Mass.

This is an interesting sidelight suggesting that, even at this late date, daily mass was the exception rather than the rule in some chaplaincies. But it was well nigh impossible to work sensibly with a lunatic, and the Provincial, in frustration, admitted: 'I fear he is so whimsical that it will be difficult to retain him as Patron. This is the third change during my short reign'. When the latest chaplain arrived at Beaufront in the Autumn of 1788, the Provincial laconically noted: 'Mr Pope (the new man) does well at Beaufront as he has never met Mr Errington'. By 1793, Fr Pope had had enough, and moved to Hesleyside; soon after that, the chapel, which was at Beaufront Woodhead, a little distance from the house, fell into ruin.

The abrupt end of the life of the more independent chaplains at Beaufront and Capheaton was not what happened generally elsewhere. The more usual pattern was for a family to commence a Benedictine connection by maintaining or financing a chaplain through a trust. Later, the chaplain might establish a chapel independent of his patron's house and find himself ministering to the needs of a congregation no longer attached to the family. In this way, the monks in the North East were prepared for the great missionary labours awaiting them among the vastly increased working class populations of the nineteenth century.

Birtley's origins had lain in a 1696 foundation of £300 to support a Benedictine to minister to the poor Catholics in Lumley Park. The donor was William Tempest, coal agent of Richard Lumley, Earl of Scarborough.

Although the two Lumley brothers conformed to Anglicanism after 1690, their three sisters married zealous Catholics. This early apostasy ultimately caused the removal of the chaplaincy to Birtley, where the monk was still maintained on the Tempest fund, although he increasingly ministered to an independent congregation almost wholly involved in the coal industry. In the mid-eighteenth century, for instance, it was the Brandlings, the wealthy Catholic coal owners in Felling, who gifted further money to the Birtley missioner provided that he said mass at Felling; their agents, members of the Humble family living in Birtley, remained important benefactors of the mission until the beginning of the twentieth century. Once the monk had moved from Chester-le-Street to Birtley in 1746, to what was then little more than an outlying coalmining hamlet of Chester-le-Street, he seems to have been supported not only by coal owners but also by local merchants, Thomas Hills being one such. The monk at Birtley, Fr Robert Daniel, had this to say of the mission in April 1779:

> The very existence of this place is at stake unless something be done which would not be in the power of a young man without friends and without money to accomplish. You know very well how my Predecessors were tossed about after the defection of the Lumleys and their case is like mine and my successors unless some settlement be formed for them. Mr & Mrs Cowle are both dead and none of the family left here, but four grandsons whose disorderly life makes them very unfit company for one of our cloth. Accordingly, I have been looking out for some time for a more suitable habitation ... tho' the Congregation is pretty numerous ..., I can only think of one where a person may live comfortably, which is with Thomas Hill, a merchant and tallow-chandler here in Birtley, who is willing to take me at £16 p.a. But then he wants the convenience of a chapel, I shall be under the necessity of building one.

The baptismal register for Birtley, which begins just before the mission moved there, shows a rapid increase in numbers of the congregation from the 1770s—from two baptisms in 1770 to sixteen in 1791.

The same desire by a monk for an independent congregation rather than a chaplaincy wedded to a family is explicitly stated in the correspondence of the chaplains at Capheaton and Etal (the Riddells) in the 1780s. Morpeth's Mission was the fruit of such aspirations for, in 1778, Thomas Riddell, using money left to him as trustee, bought a house in Oldgate, and built a house and chapel, giving the mission an endowment also. In October 1777, Fr John Fisher, then in the East Riding, commented:

> There is a proposal on the carpet for having one of ours at Morpeth, a good

town in the North. A gentleman of fortune in that County, but no remarkable friend of ours, tho' educated at Doway, and sprung from a family much attached to the Body formerly, has made some overtures (to the Provincial). The fund is intended to be made at £60 p. an. ... but if he keeps the power and the direction of it in his own hands, it may be with the Incumbent, as with his own domestic chaplain: *Turn out at an hour's warning*, and consequently not worth accepting.

All these developments in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, suggest that the Benedictine missions in the North East were poised in preparation for the great changes which would overtake them in the following century. The old Benedictine chaplaincies in the uplands of Northumberland and Durham would gradually be closed down as the monks moved eastwards to the more heavily populated and industrialized pockets along the coastal plain.

Birtley and Morpeth were ready to face these developments and would continue their direct link with the monks until the 1970s, and founded other missions around them. From the small Sidney chaplaincy at Cowpen were to come Blyth, Bedlington and New Hartley. Today, Cowpen, with Fr Andrew Gibbons resident, is the last Benedictine survival in the Diocese. But the nineteenth century also saw the monasteries, after their departure from the continent, settling down in their native land. Thus, St Lawrence's came from Lorraine and, after some wanderings, were given Ampleforth Lodge in the North Riding by Fr Anselm Bolton, a monk of their Community. Bolton himself moved from the rural obscurity of Ampleforth to seek retirement in the expanding colliery town of Birtley, where he died in December 1805.

Editorial Note

This is a slightly abbreviated version of a paper given by Dom Geoffrey Scott to the Society on 26 October 1988 as the annual Fr Nicholson Memorial Lecture for that year.

MARIA DE STACPOOLE, 1840-1872: LETTERS FROM FRANCE DURING THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

Peter McGuinness

The continued search for details of the Dunn family in Newcastle has uncovered a large middle class family with many interesting facets. Like many others in the area their wealth stemmed from involvement in the coal trade and shipping. They later invested in other profitable ventures of the day, such as insurance, railways, law, and architecture.

One of the family, Thomas Dunn, the proprietor of the Broad Crown Glass Works, became involved in the newly formed Town Council in 1835. [1] He was elected Sheriff and then Mayor in 1842. In 1839 he married Catherine Mary King in the chapel at Ingatestone Hall. [2] There was only one child, a daughter, Maria, born in Newcastle in 1840 when the family were living at 6 Saville Place. [3] Sometime after 1845 they established themselves in London, but, sadly, her mother died when Maria was only eight years old and her father died in 1853. Maria, their only child, had been 'much loved' and, when orphaned, was 'brought up by two guardians who adored her'. [4]

In his will, [5] Thomas Dunn asked his nephews, William and George Dunn, and his brother-in-law, James Kirsopp, to act as guardians and executors to his will. They were to look after an investment portfolio, the interest of which was to be used to 'support, maintain and educate Maria', with any surplus being used to enhance the portfolio.

The 'adoring guardians' were William and George Dunn, for James Kirsopp died in 1856. Maria first went to school at Roehampton Convent, then on to Saint Leonard's-on-Sea. [6] When not at boarding school, she spent some time at Bath House, the home of her bachelor uncle, William. This Newcastle mansion was sited approximately on the north side of Rutherford Street at the junction with Bath Lane.

There were no provisions in her father's will should Maria marry before her twenty-first birthday. He did, however, direct that a sum of £5,000 be paid to her from the estate on her coming of age, at which time she was to have control of the income from the investments, 'free from the control and engagements of her husband'. Material goods such as books, prints, portraits, paintings, plate and jewelry were to be given to her at the

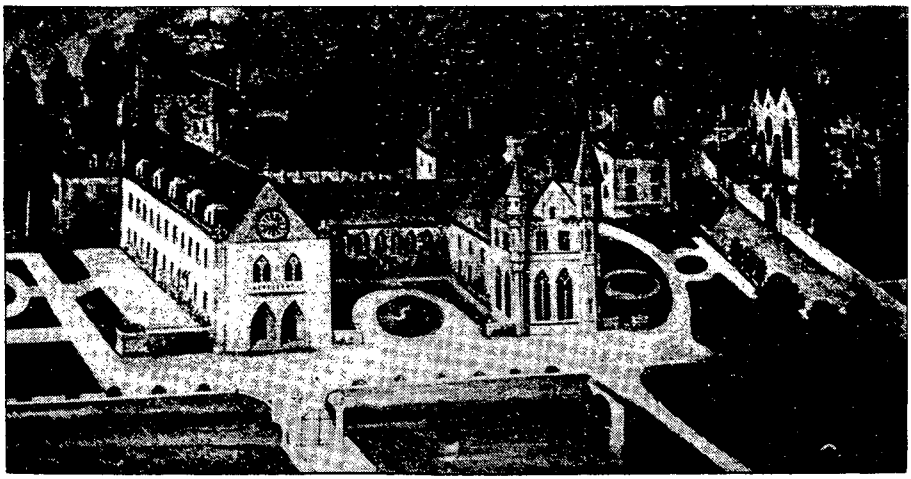
same time.

Maria appears to have spent some time in London and there she met George Maria Stanislaus Koska, the Marquis de Stacpoole. He was the second son of the first Duke, a gentleman whose family roots went back into the twelfth century. They were established in Ireland but their name derives from the Lordship of Stacpoole in Pembrokeshire. [7] George Maria Stanislaus, or Stany as Maria came to call him, was born in Rome in 1829 and educated at Oscott and Stonyhurst. He had spent some time doing military service and, during the political upheavals in Italy, rendered personal service to Pius IX, then in exile at Gatea. It almost cost him his life but 'fortune favoured the brave' and, as a result, he always had access to the Pope. [8]

They were married in June 1859 at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Chelsea, by Cardinal Wiseman. [9] At the time she was just nineteen while her husband was thirty years of age. While honeymooning in France, they came across the property that was to become their country home. Family tradition has it that, when visiting the ruined monastery of Saint Wandrille, near Rouen, Normandy, the couple overheard a tailor and a shoemaker quarrelling. They were using rather strong language which Maria thought blasphemous and she suggested they should buy the old abbey and 'put these people out'. [10]

The abbey, founded in AD 649 by a disciple of Saint Columbanus named Wandregesilus, was in a wooded valley through which ran a stream called La Fontenelle. The monastic house took this name and the community followed the rule of Saint Benedict. It played an important role in the early Church but was destroyed during Viking invasions. Revived by the Norman dukes, it flourished until the French Revolution, when the community was dispersed and the abbey church allowed to fall into ruin. The monastic buildings were first used as a textile factory but, by the time Maria and Stany came upon the scene, the property was divided between two owners. [11]

In 1863 Stany finally succeeded in buying both parts and they began to create a summer home modelled on an English country house, despite the criticisms of the purists of the day who considered the Count an 'architectural vandal'. [12] The conversion work was carried out during the early years of their marriage between their wanderings around the various capitals and spas in Europe. They also spent some time in their house in



ST WANDRILLE ABBEY, NEAR ROUEN, NORMANDY, AFTER RESTORATION BY COUNT DE STACPOOLE, FROM A PAINTING OF 1882.

Paris, which was described as being vast and fronting onto the Seine, close to the Pont de l'Alma. [13]

There were two children: George, whose pet name to Maria was Georgy, born in their Paris home in 1860, and Maria Josephine, always referred to as Josephine, born in 1867 but place unknown. Both children were spoken of in a series of letters dated between the years 1868 and 1872 [14] mostly from Maria to her cousin, George Dunn the sole survivor of the guardians mentioned in her father's will, his brother William having died in 1862.

The letters cover family affairs and business transactions which George carried out for his cousin. The most important of these was the transfer of her dividends from the portfolio created by her father and enhanced by the executors. However, she was in Europe in troubled times. Napoleon III had worked hard to lift France out of a political wilderness but in 1870 he came up against the ambitious Bismark. The events which followed led to a confrontation between Germany and France that became a disaster for the latter and led to internal strife. The notes that follow are drawn from Maria's letters which give some insights as to these events but, sadly, make no real personal comments on the reasons for them, nor in fact

does she make any remarks on the great religious happenings of the period, such as the declaration of Papal Infallibility in 1870.

In March 1869 Maria reported that she had read all about 'the grand doings at Newcastle with the new archbishop and regretted your absence'. This event was the presentation of a crosier and pectoral cross to Monsignor Eyre who had been appointed Archbishop of Anazarba. He had been the administrator of St Mary's for some twenty years but, when elevated, he was appointed Apostolic Delegate to Scotland. [15]

There was a hint of a special event to take place on the 13 October 1869 in Newcastle and she anticipated reading all about it in *The Register*, a newspaper or magazine at present untraced. The event alluded to on this occasion was the installation of an organ in St Mary's. The instrument, manufactured by Thomas C. Lewis and Company, London, was used for the first time at a mass celebrated by Archbishop Eyre, who no doubt had been a major fund raiser in his time at the church. [16]

In July 1870 the first comment appeared concerning trouble in France asking 'what do you say to the war?', and expressing a fervent hope that George was not pro-Prussian. Stany's family certainly were, for several held posts in the Prussian army. This is the only reference to the situation, there being no comments on the events that led up to the French Government feeling that a war was the only way forward. Despite the graveness of the situation, Maria returned to general topics asking about Bath House, the health of Aunt Dunn and other family progress. The news of the birth of a new baby, a boy, had caught

MARIA DE STACPOOLE, 1840-1872

up with her and she sent belated congratulations. The fact that it was to be called Thomas after her father was an added joy.

At the beginning of September 1870 they were back in Fontenelle, but this appeared to be an unexpected visit for Maria telegraphed George to inform him, on receipt of a letter from him. This letter contained the sad news that Aunt Dunn [17] was failing and Maria hoped that Stany would be asked to attend the funeral as her representative, remarking that George would have to request his presence as he would not go uninvited. The war had obviously affected their plans for they had 'thought it prudent to bring down our valuables from Paris'. They were also preparing to receive wounded troops. There was also great sadness around for many local men had gone off to war.

Elizabeth Dunn died on 2 September 1870 [18] and the news was telegraphed to Maria. Much to her regret, it came too late to enable Stany to attend the funeral. Under the circumstances, however, it was probably a good thing for the siege of Paris was under way and it was hardly the time for a lady to be at home unprotected. These were Maria's sentiments though she gave no details of conditions around Fontenelle at the time. In later correspondence, she reported 'that everything and everyone is so upset by this abominable Republic' and unemployment high. This had made them decide to stay put and employ as many as they could. They were also pleased that they had moved home when they did. Those who elected to remain in Paris were soon in dire straits as the Prussian grip tightened on the City.

There was trouble over the will of her Aunt. Most of her money went to the Church and she left no particular bequests to members of the family. The tone of one letter suggested that Maria was a little put out by what had happened but was prepared to put it all behind her. She did, however, make enquiries about one or two items, such as a portrait of Dr Lingard, presented by herself, and gifts of jewelry made by her father. If these were to be placed on sale, she requested George, in his role as executor, to buy them on her behalf. The Hexham and Newcastle Diocese certainly benefited from Elizabeth Dunn's will. The spire of St Mary's was built and there were funds to furnish an orphanage at Tudhoe and to aid the schools at St Andrew's and St Mary's in Newcastle. [19]

Each letter received was answered promptly, for postal communications were under threat due to the hostilities. The war had not reached

their home directly but each day they expected to see Prussian troops in the village and were apprehensive as to what would happen when they did come. A source of succour and strength was of course her Church and preparations were in hand to have a special day of prayer. Despite the uncertain times, Maria commented 'we feel quite safe and comfortable and intend remaining till the very cold weather sets in at all events', suggesting that a family trip to the south of France was still planned. On the political front, Maria remarked that 'The Republic' had no real significance outside Paris and other large towns and she felt it would not survive the war. Fears for their safety had seemingly been expressed and thanks were given for the concern shown. However, as remarked above, they felt safe and were 'doing good besides'.

Preparations went on all around to defend property, and training with weapons was a daily occurrence even in the village. According to Maria, Stany 'declared that Paris must be burnt to fulfill the prophesies; and that Henry the fifth will return'. The prophecy appears to have stemmed from a meeting Stany had with a 'peasant' woman in northern Italy. He held a belief that 'gifted people' could predict the future and the woman had told him that Paris would be in great trouble within a certain time of their meeting.[20] This did happen and he was convinced that the City would burn and that Henry Bourbon, the exiled king, would be welcomed with open arms. To Maria's thinking, however, too many had died and many more would be lost before peace came. Plans to hold elections went ahead despite the troubles. These were of little interest to those in England but were a topic of local conversation and concern.

Peace negotiations had taken place but the demands of Bismark proved unacceptable. As success had not been expected, there was no great disappointment and when they heard the news, the failure was placed squarely on the shoulders of the Socialists. To Maria they were 'France's worst enemy'. To add to their problems, the autumn weather was dreadful and more of the young men of the area were taken to serve. Maria did her best to console the mothers, but the promised elections, 'which might have given us a respectable government', were shelved. Stany's prophecy became enlarged: 'Paris will be destroyed, everything will go from bad to worse, Prussia will meddle but all at once a good turn will take place, Henry V will become king of France, the Pope will triumph at the same time.' George and his wife Marianne were to look out for the prophecy's fulfil-

ment.

Mail appeared to arrive at Fontenelle regularly but it is difficult to tell whether there were delays. However, they were still at home in early October 1870 and safe, although quite anxious. Maria had observed French troops on the move down the Seine and made a trip to Rouen when fighting was in progress only ten miles away. The French efforts always ended in failure and there is a despairing plea as to 'when will the tide of success take a turn in our direction?' A brief note from Maria late in October confirmed that they were still safe and, although Paris was besieged, the country-side was still reasonably open. English newspapers hinted at peace but Maria reiterated her comment that they had little hope of this because of Bismark's demands. A further letter was promised if the Ulhans do not arrive 'or anything else befalls'. There were no events to report from Fontenelle.

Writing from Le Havre in early December, Maria reported that 'nothing has happened to us hitherto.' The Ulhans had made an appearance at St Wandrille but had done no harm. They had made personal contact, Stany being able to speak German. They were desperate for news, however, and had set off at six in the morning with a safe conduct to cross the French and Prussian lines to reach Le Havre at four in the afternoon. The journey normally took five hours but the checks and deep snow had delayed them. They derived no satisfaction from their avid reading of the newspapers and resolved to return part of the way home the next day. The journey took them through woods reportedly full of French troops and they hoped they would not become involved in any skirmishes. The long journey had fatigued Maria and, when sending her regards, asked that any letters be sent to the Poste Restante, Le Havre, suggesting postal problems. In a postscript she commented: 'Here they mean to fight but I fear it is all up!!!' The town was defended but not very well and, if the Prussians had made a concerted effort, it would have fallen.

In January 1871 the family were still at home. They had not gone south as previously hinted despite the harsh weather, perhaps feeling they had an important role to play locally. They were after all attempting to assist the villagers, and Stany was the natural local 'leader'. Maria stated she had ' not much news to communicate', though she fancied that they would be 'glad to hear how we are getting on amidst our enemies'—not very well it seemed, although there appeared to be no personal discomfort.

A small company of two officers and twenty-five men arrived to make

demands upon the parish. When they were finished, they 'carried off no less than 100 bottles of wine, 30 sacks of potatoes, 8 oxen, 8 pigs, 30 fowls, 5 loads of hay, 15 of straw!' This was a sample of what they were enduring and the Prussian demands produced shortages in the countryside and prices rose. A seemingly bigger problem was the patrols that galloped about the area in a drunken state. They fired off their pistols without provocation and to Maria's 'certain knowledge two farmers have gone mad from fright and one priest has died from the same cause', and girls and young women were unable to move through the fields and woods safely. Rail connections were destroyed and the post was now irregular. Postage stamps were unavailable and letters were sent with the recipient having to pay on delivery.

Now that the Prussians had occupied the area, Maria felt that there was no particular danger but was convinced that, had they left their home, it would have been pillaged. Two of their neighbours had gone and their houses had been ransacked and their furniture burnt. The harsh winter no doubt was the reason for the troops behaving as they did, but Maria blamed no particular group. She found the Prussian army officers very overbearing, however, and kept out of the way for fear of losing her temper, while her husband 'manages them so beautifully and talks away in German'. She thought they were brutes and felt 'quite sanguinary and revengeful'. The children were well and her son had wished to become a *franc tireur*, but his mother was grateful that he was not old enough to join the army.

Late in January 1871 negotiations began to bring about an end to the war. During the armistice Maria wrote with concern about the fate of an earlier communication, but was sure the present letter would arrive. In fact, it only took three days to reach her cousin. According to Maria, the Prussians were taking the opportunity to advance and strengthen their positions. Elections were set for 8 February but, up to the time of writing (4 February), the list of candidates was not available. She felt they were being held for the benefit of the Socialists in the large towns. The elections were part of the terms of the armistice, for those elected were to assume responsibility for accepting or rejecting the peace terms. [21]

The respite did not stop the activities of the invaders. On a Sunday, during High Mass, some five hundred soldiers descended on the village. The congregation dispersed immediately and Stany eventually left when a servant came to say that the Abbey had been invaded. The rest of the family stayed on only to find themselves barred from their home. A sentry

refused to allow them to pass and it required the presence of an officer to gain entry. From her previous remarks, Maria would not have taken kindly to the situation and, to add to the problem, they were to be hosts to eight officers and sixteen men, and with ten horses to stable. But all left the following day to march to the town of Caudebec. The family also walked over to the town seeking news and were in time to witness the aftermath of a gunboat bombardment. The newly arrived troops suffered one fatality and several wounded.

The eating habits of the invaders surprised Maria, especially with regard to meat and fish. Herrings, sausage and even meat were eaten almost raw and with great relish. Brandy was drunk by the tumblerful, undiluted. No wonder she recorded drunken men on patrol. A trip to Le Havre was planned to seek news and contact the bank agent. As to peace, this it was not expected and in fact 'war was considered more honourable and no more ruinous than Bismark's terms'.

The armistice was still holding towards the end of February 1871, and the post returning to near normality. Letters thought lost had been delivered and financial business safely completed. The invading forces, however, were not quiet. To her annoyance, they sallied forth every Sunday from the base at Caudebec and stirred up the countryside. Farm stock was carried off and, in one instance, they attempted to raise a tax equivalent to one pound per head on the local population. Stany, however, advised the mayor to resist and there was no further action.

Maria had a chance to show her mettle when two officers out shooting walked into the house asking for wine and for permission to continue their sport in the woods around the abbey. They carried loaded weapons but in Maria's opinion they had had drink enough and she 'received them so coldly that they shrunk off without any refreshments!' Her husband feared some reprisal but no harm was done and she appeared to have enjoyed sending them packing. She was of the opinion that 'they despised those who gave in too easily to their insulting demands'. The weather had become warm and Spring-like but the political front was still undecided. She reported that some four hundred men in the garrison at Le Havre had died from the 'petite smallpox', but quickly followed this remark with the news that they were all well.

The hoped for peace was finally agreed and signed on the 27 February 1871.[22] After a 'victory' parade through Paris the withdrawal began on the morning of 3 March but, writing from home on 20 March, Maria reported

that they had been 'once more invaded by the Prussians'. They had arrived on 14 March and the parish was required to feed one company for an undefined time. Her purse and temper were both greatly strained, to say the least. There was also political unrest, aggravated by clashes between the returning troops and the occupying forces. In the capital city there were signs that suggested the 'prophecies' would soon be fulfilled and she was glad that they were in the country.

The boastful manner of the Prussians did not please her, especially their talk of taking over Austria, 'some bordering province of Prussia,' and English Heligoland. They also predicted another war with France and further boasted of how well they would be prepared. At the end of March the family were still at Fontenelle, and the Prussians too, but they now received payment for goods required, apart from lodging, firing, lighting and cooking. She remarked that she would 'willingly pay for everything on condition they pitched their tents elsewhere!'

How long the family stayed at Fontenelle under the occupation and what adventures they got up to during the summer months is not recorded. They resumed their travelling late in September 1871, but no letters appear with remarks on the events in Paris during the months of March, April and May, when the Commune was set up. This civil war saw the City once more besieged and many died. The event, along with the earlier Prussian bombardment, almost brought truth to the 'prophecy'.

The year 1871 ended with the family in Rome and she wrote on 21 December to send seasonal greetings and a sincere wish that her cousin was fully recovered. Christmas was spent in Rome and then on to visit Naples, a place she had never seen. Her husband and son had been walking in the Vatican gardens with the Holy Father, and Georgy returned with a medal commemorating the great Council, whilst Maria received a basket of fruit. The whole family attended a papal audience which gave her much pleasure but things in general did not please. The loss of the Papal States and the new spirit abroad in the united Italy had introduced 'atheistical schools, meddling persons and infamous caricatures'.

There is no letter to tell of the visit to Naples but they were back in Rome in March 1872 and Maria had been away to a convent to take part in a retreat. She had been refreshed by the visit, finding 'The thorough peace and quiet a treat', and on her return the family had once again attended a papal audience. Unrest in France brought a report of a bomb being thrown into the parish church at Fontenelle during a Lenten sermon,

though fortunately, the device did not explode.

Rome, however, was 'deluged with foreign pickpockets', and one evening a gentleman had been murdered in a very busy street. She gave no details but did admit to knowing of the events in Paris through other correspondents. Prince Fredrick Charles of Prussia was also in Rome and Maria suspected that he 'was up to no good'. So much so that she decided to do a little prophesying herself, stating that 'before the summer is over all Europe and (Continent) will be in a block and the Prussians both overruning France and Italy! Take note of that.'

Sadly, the final letter of the collection is from Stany informing George of Maria's death. The visit to Naples had proved a disaster for there she had contracted typhoid. The illness took hold of her some time late in March and she suffered it until the end of April. All the spiritual aid that could be given was there for her. The Father General of the Dominicans attended her and mass was said in a room adjoining her sick room. The special rites of the Church were administered and papal prayers offered. However, these and probably the best attention of the medical world were of no avail and a brokenhearted husband wrote to tell the sad news. George and family were asked to add their prayers and masses for her soul to others being offered. Her mortal frame lay before the altar in the Dominican church in Rome and was then conveyed to France for interment.

There was, however, one last message for her husband. In the family archive is an undated letter setting out her wishes as to how she would like to be remembered at St Wandrille and regarding the disposal of her personal effects. [23] Her clothes, apart from furs, cashmeres and laces, were to go to her maid. Her jewelry was to be shared between the children and given when they married or reached the age of twenty-one. Friends and relatives were to receive some souvenir from the many pious objects she had collected but nothing was to be sold. Items were to be kept by Stany, the children, friends, servants or given to charity. There was also a request that the various payments she made to local charities would continue but there is no mention of the aid she had already given to relatives over the years.

In Newcastle, the family is still remembered in the Cathedral church, mass being said once a year on their behalf. Maria, however, is not

remembered personally but this may not be true in St Wandrille, where she did much for the community. There was a school established [24] and it seems that during the war with Prussia she and her husband did what they could to help. However, Maria's letters, while providing interesting comments on the Franco-Prussian war and occupation, give the impression that that tragic event in French history was little more than a bothersome irritation in the life of a society lady and her husband accustomed to moving unscathed through the top echelons of European society.

NOTES

1. *Proceedings of the Town Council of Newcastle*, 1835 onward.
2. *Newcastle Journal*, 27 April 1839.
3. *Newcastle Courant*, 2 January 1836, letter to voters.
4. *Irish and Other Memories.*
5. University of Durham, Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic, Durham Probate Records, Thomas Dunn, 1855.
6. *Irish and Other Memories.*
7. Burke's *Irish Family Records*, 'de Stacpoole'.
8. *Irish and Other Memories.*
9. *Newcastle Journal*, 25 June 1839.
10. Unpublished family history.
11. *L'Abbaye Saint-Wandrille.*
12. ibid.
13. *Irish and Other Memories.*
14. Northumberland Record Office, ref. NRO 2988, Box 2: all letters quoted in this article are in this uncatalogued collection.
15. *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 4 March 1869.
16. ibid, 14 October 1869.
17. Elizabeth, spinster sister of George Thomas and Thomas Dunn.
18. Tombstone in Jesmond cemetery.
19. NRO. 2988, Box 2.
20. *Irish and Other Memories.*
21. *The Fall of Paris*, p. 254.
22. *The Seige of Paris*, p. 228.
23. Family history.
24. *L'Abbaye de Saint-Wandrille..*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anon., *The Corporation Annual*, (Boag, 1836).

Baldick, R., *The Seige of Paris*, (Batsford, 1961).

Blount, Sir E., *Memoirs*, (Longman Green, 1902).

Cheetham, N., *Keeper of the Keys*, (MacDonald, 1982).

Collins, M., *The Visitors Guide to Normandy*, (Moorland Pub. Co., 1986).

de Stacpoole, G., 4th Duke, *Irish and Other Memories*, (Philpot, 1922).

de Stacpoole, H., *The de Stacpoole Family*, (Unpublished MS., undated).

Horne, A., *The Fall of Paris*, (MacMillan, 1965).

Norman, E., *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century*, (Clarendon Press, 1984).

Passant, E.J., *A Short History of Germany, 1815-1945*, (CUP, 1982 reprint).

Plessis, A., *The Rise and Fall of the Second Empire, 1852-1871*, (CUP, 1985).

Robertson, E., (ed.), *Loire, Normandy and Brittany*, (Benn, 1978).

Snailham, R., *Normandy and Brittany*, (Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1986).

Various, *L'Abbaye Saint-Wandrille de Fontenelle*, (Editions de Fontenelle, 1963).

MERCY MISSION TO SUNDERLAND: WORKS OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY ON WEARSIDE, 1843-1990

Sister Mary Enda RSM

The work of the Sisters of Mercy on Wearside goes back 147 years, but we need to go back a further ten years to a young woman, Catherine McCauley, who responded to the needs of the poor in Dublin of that time. Ireland was then bitterly divided by Penal Laws that excluded Catholics from the professions. Catherine's experience and knowledge of society, education and management gave her a deep insight into and understanding of the plight of the poor, and this led her to realize the need for education as a means of changing their social conditions.

It was the granting of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 that opened the way to a great rebirth and development of Catholic life in Britain. Not least among these was the founding of Religious Orders which occurred with astonishing speed. On 12 December 1831, the Congregation of Sisters of Mercy assumed Canonical Status, and Catherine McCauley was appointed Superior. She was to pioneer a life-style within her Community which would combine the sanctity of the contemplative with the varied interests of the active apostolate. The new Congregation spread rapidly throughout Ireland and by 1840 twelve houses were in full operation and others planned. The Sisters were involved in education, health care and social welfare wherever they went.

By 1839, the first English foundation was made at Bermondsey, followed by Birmingham and Liverpool. The foundation at Sunderland was at the request of Fr Philip Kearney, parish priest of St Mary's, the only Catholic parish in Sunderland at the time. Fr Kearney had completed the church of St Mary's in 1837, and in 1843 acquired premises for the Sisters in Green Street, a narrow lane leading from the High Street through fields down to the River Wear. The first little group of five Sisters came from St Maries of the Isle, Cork, and included Sr M. Aloysius O'Connell, a niece of the famous Daniel O'Connell. The five had set out on a thirty-hour journey on the steam packet 'Ocean'. It is hard to imagine the thoughts and feelings of those first missionaries as they set out. They spent a night in Liverpool with the newly established Sisters of Mercy there. Next day, they travelled by train to Durham, where they were met by Fr Kearney and completed their journey by horse-drawn carriage to Sunderland. It was late on 15 October 1843 when they arrived at Green Street.

The religious habit was not permitted by law to be worn on the streets and so, for many years, the Sisters retained the outdoor dress adopted by Catherine McCauley—a black cloak and bonnet, very like the costume worn by elderly ladies in 1830, with a gossamer veil over the face. They were the first nuns to be seen on the streets in this country since the Reformation, and, inevitably, they had to endure curious glances, occasional jeers, insults and even some stone throwing, though Catholic men were ready to protect the Sisters from the mockery of these youthful citizens.

From the start, the Sisters took charge of St Mary's girls school, the only Catholic school for girls in the area. Children of all ages and creeds came from the surrounding area and so the influence of the Sisters soon spread further afield. Liaison between home and school was established early. At the same time, the Sisters were developing a small private school, St Bede's within the precincts of the Convent. Catholic parents brought their daughters from far and wide to be taught by the Sisters. Today, we have many definitions of education: Catherine McCauley's was 'Let us fit the children on earth without unfitting them for heaven'. In educational vision, Catherine towered over her contemporaries. She pioneered schools for the middle classes and saw the importance of technical or vocational training, which she introduced in the form of handcrafts, dressmaking, and cookery. It is an indication of Catherine's stature as an educator that her schools in Dublin and Limerick became the first training colleges for female teachers.

The private Convent school in Sunderland grew and flourished and became a fruitful source of vocations for the Community under the guidance of Mother Mary Aloysius. The Sisters became familiar figures in the town and were appreciated and respected. As a mark of this, the Community was presented with a beautiful stained glass window on the occasion of their Golden Jubilee. During this time, rapid industrialization was taking place and the population of Sunderland grew considerably. In 1866, the Sisters were invited to start a school in St Benet's—it began in two attic rooms until the school was built in 1870. In 1891, the Sisters took charge of the boys school in Pann Lane. In 1903, St Patr ick's beside the dock was opened and this whole area became a fruitful vineyard for social work. Apostolic zeal knew no bounds and the influence of the Sisters in reclaiming lost souls made their names legendary in Sunderland.

The work of teaching, instructing and visiting homes and hospitals

went on steadily. Requests for help came from various parts of the Diocese, and whenever Sisters were available these requests were met. Thus, convents and schools were established in Hexham (1858), Darlington (1862), Tow Law (1870), Wolsingham (1890), Ryhope (1891), Seaham (1904), Easington (1923), Gosforth (1928), and Gainford (1943).

In 1902, Mother Mary de Sales became Superior and in the same year the Education Act decreed the establishment of Pupil Teacher Centres. There already existed the Bede Teacher Centre and only if the Local Authority considered it necessary would another centre be allowed. This they did by the narrowest of margins—one vote. To avoid confusion with the existing Centre, the name of the school was changed from St Bede's to St Anthony's. So it was that the private school in the grounds of the Convent, then in the centre of the town, qualified as a Pupil Teacher Centre. New buildings were needed and, the scope being limited, a two-storey building with five classrooms and a Science Room was constructed.

In 1908, Mother Mary de Sales applied to have the school recognised as a Grant Aided Secondary School in response to the Bishop's request when he realized that Government policy was to provide a limited number of Secondary Schools throughout the country for senior pupils. The private school and Pupil Teacher Centre provided the nucleus, with boarding pupils transferred from St Anne's Wolsingham, to Padua (the boarding accommodation) to swell the numbers. Thus, despite having no buildings, teachers or pupils, the Secondary School was on its way, though not before a dreaded inspection by a group of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs). On a cold, rainy day, when all the deficiencies of the Green Street buildings were all too obvious, the HMIs descended. However, the school was granted a capitation grant for every pupil residing in County Durham. Pupils came not only from Sunderland but also from Houghton-le-Spring, Seaham, South Shields, Jarrow, Felling, Gateshead, Ushaw Moor, Crook, Consett, Leadgate, Blaydon, Hexham, Redcar, and even Hull, while there was always a group of girls from Ireland. Sister Mary Thomas was appointed Headmistress, a post she held until 1939.

In 1909, the first part of the present site in Tunstall Road was acquired and was first used as a boarding house. Plans for a new Convent on this site were passed and the present Convent was opened in 1915. For twenty years the Sisters and boarders travelled to and from the Green Street School in the centre of the town. Between 1920 and 1939 other properties were acquired nearby; the present Somerleyton became the

boarding house, and Lourdes house was added. In 1921, a Higher (now 'A') Level Course was introduced and, as with the foundress, Mother Mary de Sales expected a high level of competence in her Sister teachers. She encouraged further qualifications and started a variety of courses, not only in Dublin but also in France and Belgium. In the boarding school she had a resident French teacher or University student who helped with oral French, and Green Street boasted a Language Room where visual aids in the form of magazines, post cards, etc. were keenly studied. The School numbered 400 pupils.

In 1939, St Anthony's School moved from Green Street to Westburn and Sr Mary Gabriel became Headmistress. The War years were very difficult. Air raid shelters occupied the foundations of the new school. After the War, however, the story is one of continued growth and success, the expansion of the curriculum, and the achievement of a high academic standard. In 1946, Direct Grant status was given to the School which it retained until 1974, when it became fully Comprehensive. In 1976, as a result of the abolition of Direct Grant Schools by the Government, the School became Voluntary Aided. It now has 1170 pupils, with a Sixth Form of 200. Many of the pupils come from the junior schools and parishes established on the fast growing residential estates built in and around Sunderland after the War.

Throughout all this time, and still continuing today, we aim to foster the spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical, affective and imaginative development of the pupils, introducing them to as wide a range of experience and skills as will give them confidence to play an active and responsible role in society, as well as fitting them for heaven. Despite the many changes in Education in the past and indeed recently, most of the fine traditions are maintained, and St Anthony's will continue to preserve the high academic reputation which it has acquired in its 147 years of service to the Diocese.

Social and material conditions have also altered and continue to change rapidly. Medical Science has obliterated many diseases of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but we still have and will continue to have sick among us. The Welfare State offers amenities unheard of in the past but problems of loneliness, old age, and now things like drug addiction and a whole host of problems created by our modern society grow daily more acute. We, as Sisters of Mercy in the spirit of the Foundress, continue to respond to these present-day needs but, sadly, the labourers are few.

The ministry of the Sisters during the 147 years has been varied and I would not like to measure its success or failure, for what is that in the eyes of the Lord? The whole history of the Congregation from its inception in 1831 to the present day is bound inseparably with the goodness and kindness of God and His desire to work in and through ordinary women, whose response itself was His gift. Many of the traditional apostolates of the Sisters can be continued without the Sisters. Today, we are called to encourage others to take responsibility for spreading the Kingdom, and we see our role as working beside others in many fields, such as education, further education, adult education, youth work, giving retreats, and the ministry of prayer.

So, what of the future? Our future is uncertain; it entails risk; it does not have the security of the past. In all this, we seek only God's will. We shape the reality of tomorrow by responding creatively to the reality of today. We have Catherine McCauley's example of availability, spontaneity and creativity. She was a woman who flew in the face of tradition to carry out what she believed God was calling her to do. This gift we need to carry us into the future. To quote Fr John Futrell SJ, 'The challenges of the present is the shaping of the future in the Lord. Otherwise the future will shape us perhaps in a way quite opposed to the values of Jesus Christ'.

Editorial Note

This is the text of a talk given by Sr Mary Enda to the Society on 7 February 1990.

PROGRAMME 1990—1991

All lectures will be given in St Mary's Cathedral Centre, Clayton Street West, Newcastle upon Tyne, on Wednesdays, at 7.00 p.m.

3 October 1990	Annual General Meeting, followed by slides and quiz by Peter McGuinness, B.A.
7 November 1990	Professor John Cannon, *Religion and the British Monarchy.* (Fr Nicholson Memorial Lecture)
5 December 1990	Norman Emery, M.A., *Esh Hall and its Secret Treasure.*
6 February 1991	George Thornton, M.A., *The Christian Heritage of Saxon Northumbria*, with slides.
6 March 1991	Jan Rhodes, B.A., Ph.D., *History Transfigured: The Martyrs at Home and Abroad.*

Coach Excursions

6 October 1990	St Peter's, Monkwearmouth, and St Paul's Jarrow.
May 1991	Beverley Minster and St Mary's Church, Beverley.
June 1991	Ushaw College. A tour led by Fr Milburn.

Printed at Darlington Carmel