



ANGLO-CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter—May 2011

JANUARY 2011 LECTURE

This took place on Monday January 31 at 7pm in St Clement Danes Church, Strand, London. Martin Wellings, Superintendent of the Oxford Methodist Circuit spoke on “Some Methodist Responses to Anglo-Catholicism in Victorian & Edwardian England. From “The Soul of Dominic Wildthorne” to the Wesleyan Guild of Divine Service. Martin is also Chaplain to Methodist Students at Oxford University and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. A printed version of this lecture has been circulated to members and additional copies may be purchased from the Secretary. (£4 post free).

ADVANCE NOTICE – FUTURE LECTURES

13 October 2011: The autumn lecture will be held at 7pm when Fr Pereiro will lecture on the intellectual development of Henry Manning. To be held at St Matthew’s, Westminster.

Fr. James Pereiro is a member of the Theology Faculty of Oxford University. He has written extensively on 19th century ecclesiastical history. His “Cardinal Manning” was published in 1998; his latest book “Ethos At the Heart of the Oxford Movement” in 2008 (both by OUP).

January 2012: Barbara Pym & Anglo-Catholicism, to be given by Mr T.A.J. Burnett on Monday 13th February 7pm at St Clement Danes

AGM 2012: The Revival of Retreats by Canon John Tyers

All lectures are open to non-members.

ACHS WEBSITE

This may now be accessed at: www.achs.org.uk Members are encouraged to suggest news and other items for the website by emailing the Webmaster, John Maiden via the site.

TWELVE MORE LOST CHURCHES OF LONDON

In 2006 the Society published Michael Yelton’s Occasional Paper entitled Empty Tabernacles - Twelve Lost Churches of London. This is now out of print but Michael is starting on another group of lost churches. These will be as under and Michael will be most grateful to hear from any member with information, reminiscences or best of all printed material related to any of these churches:

1. St Hugh, West Bermondsey
2. St John the Divine, Balham
3. St Andrew, Battersea
4. St Thomas, Regent Street
5. St Columb, Notting Hill
6. All Hallows, Southwark
7. Lady Margaret Church, Walworth
8. St Peter, Limehouse
9. St Saviour, Poplar
10. St Clement, Barnsbury
11. St Jude, Gray’s Inn Road



12. St Thomas, Acton Vale

Please contact Michael Yelton by email: mpyelton@yahoo.com

ISAAC WILLIAMS MEMORIAL

Isaac Williams (1802-1865) was a prominent early Tractarian and a student and disciple of John Keble. A life-long, loyal Anglican, he was well known in his time as a writer and poet. After graduating at Trinity College, Oxford he was ordained Deacon in 1829 and served his first curacy at the Church of St Peter, Windrush, Gloucestershire where he "...meditated in quietness, read devotional works, studied Hebrew and wrote poetry". ("Isaac Williams", Catholic Literature Association, 1933). In 1831 he was recalled to his College as Fellow and later Dean. The PCC of Windrush church decided in 2010 to erect a memorial to him in the church; a fund raising appeal was made to which the Society contributed. The oval wall mounted memorial is of polished natural slate and is inscribed:

In Thanksgiving for Isaac Williams 1805-1865
A Leader in the Oxford Movement
Curate of Windrush 1829-1833

Around the edges are two quotations from his works:

"Be Thou My Guardian and My Guide"
"Of Heaven's Kingdom We Inheritors Were Made"

The memorial was dedicated on Easter Day this year and coloured leaflet has been produced by the church; free copies available – email the Secretary.

FEATURED ARTICLE

The Only Anglican Church In Communion With Rome: Saint George's Sudbury and Father Clement Lloyd Russell by John Martyn Harwood

I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy House; and the place where Thy Glory dwelleth
[Psalm 25, Douai version]

Strictly speaking this subject does not count as a piece of Anglo-Catholic history at all, as the church of St George in Sudbury, Middlesex, was always firmly within the Archdiocese of Westminster. I hope that by the end of this article, readers will have forgiven me and understand why I claim space in your Society's publication.

If any church's tradition could be said to be sui generis, St George's could and this was because of the vision of one man, its founder and priest for nearly forty years. Clement Lloyd Russell was born in 1884, the son of Henry Lloyd Russell, vicar of the Church of The Annunciation, Chislehurst and a prominent Tractarian. There is an early and amusing mention of him in the infamous report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline (1906) which was established to put an end to "illegal" ritual practices in the Church of England. Among the hundreds of pages of evidence is an entry about The Annunciation, Chislehurst, on 18th September 1904. The vicar strongly refutes any charge of lawlessness, taking a traditional Tractarian position and mentioning examples of past episcopal approval. He does however become a little defensive when replying to the report of a "visitor" that the festival of Corpus Christi was solemnly kept. The notice in the church porch announcing this, he maintains, was "placed there by my son, and I told him, after I became aware of it, of my disapproval".



This indicates that Clement's position was a good deal more advanced than the respectable High Church ritualism of his father. However, the son never experienced or embraced anything resembling "baroque" Anglo-Catholicism but remained an Edwardian High Churchman and medievalist to the end.

The younger Russell was ordained a priest of the Church of England in 1908 and for a short time was one of a tribe of curates at St Andrew's, Willesden Green. In 1910 he experienced a crisis of conscience and was received into the Roman Catholic Church. After almost no formal training (he always maintained that he knew practically nothing about Roman Moral Theology or Canon Law) he was ordained deacon in 1914 and priest in 1915. He was sent as curate to work under a tyrannical parish priest at the Holy Rosary Church in Marylebone, London.

Sudbury

This was a low point in Father Russell's life but in the early 1920s he received an offer, which had the approval of Cardinal Bourne, from a very wealthy lady who wished to fund the building of a new church in one of London's growing suburbs. He found himself in the happy position of being able to choose the site, architect, style of building, furnishings and dedication of the new church and parish. The foundation stone was laid in November 1925 and Father Russell moved into the newly built presbytery a few months later. He remained there, never taking a holiday, until his death in 1965.

Saint George's church, in the non-descript district of Sudbury, near Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex, was completed in 1927 and solemnly consecrated (a rare occurrence in those days) on the 18th April 1928. Its architect was the almost forgotten Leonard Williams, a modest church builder who died before this, his last work, was completed. Again unusually, it was entirely free from debt. At a time when "side altars" were usually wooden stands for holding statues and flowerpots, St George's possessed four properly consecrated stone altars, designed on English medieval lines, dedicated to St George (the high altar), Our Ladye (Fr Russell's invariable spelling), the Archangel Michael, and St Thomas of Canterbury.

The Church

He that hewed timber afore out of the thick trees: was known to bring it to an excellent work.
[Psalm 74, Prayer Book version]

The church from the outside still looks much as it did in 1927 and can be seen on its current website. It is a dignified perpendicular gothic building of warm stock brick and much stone dressing. The clergy house is joined to the church which can be accessed from it. The whole composition is very charming and romantic despite the clearing of many trees which used to surround it. There are two large bells, also properly consecrated and anointed.

But it was chiefly for its furnishings that St George's was famous. Over many years Fr Russell acquired or had made innumerable objects of piety to adorn his new creation. Slowly the altars were all vested with rich frontals in all the liturgical colours – this meant at least six or seven sets for each of the four altars. Each also had the inevitable riddle posts with angels holding candles. Between these, curtains of the highest quality hung, again in the different colours. Canopied images of the dedicated saints stood above. All the woodwork was carved and nothing of plaster was allowed in the church even temporarily.

The rector, as Fr Russell was often called, had no objection to popular devotions and was not of the austere "Benedictine" school; however the devotions had to have medieval precedents. No images of the Sacred Heart or Our Lady of Lourdes were permitted but near the back of the church,



opposite the main door, was a large oak “tableau” depicting the Five Wounds of Christ and with a carved statue of the Lord at its centre. This was of course a very popular cult in late medieval England. Above were emblazoned the words (and I quote from memory for the entire shrine has since disappeared): JHESU BY THYE WOUNDES FYVE: SHEWE ME THE WAYE TO VERTUYOUS LYFE.

For many years it remained a puzzle to new parishioners especially those of simple faith but eventually the shrine acquired its devotees.

Above the Lady altar, was enthroned, in September 1928, a beautiful carved image of Our Lady of Walsingham. This was the first one based on the ancient seal to be erected in a Roman Catholic church. It was only six years after Fr Hope Patten had placed his Walsingham statue in the parish church there. Of course Fr Russell knew of all that had been achieved by the Anglicans at Walsingham and was anxious to spread the devotion in his own Communion. Thereafter the appropriate Marian Antiphon was always sung after all evening services in front of her image. In 1933 a second statue of the Blessed Virgin was unveiled in the Lady Chapel: this was a magnificent alabaster carving of medieval origin, showing her standing and holding her Son and, in the other hand, a sceptre. It had been found in Devon, restored and presented to Fr Russell. Several experts claimed that it had originally formed part of the reredos behind the high altar of Exeter cathedral, and it still retained traces of colouring. A beautiful carved wooden screen enclosed the Lady chapel, decorated with images of Saints Lawrence and Katherine in memory of the last two chapels on the ancient pilgrims’ “Walsingham Way.”

This is only a partial description of the church’s contents; there were also two carved eagle lecterns, one of which stood in the centre of the choir for use by the cantors, and additions were still being made right up to the rector’s death. In 1962, for example, the huge rood beam, rood, statues of Saints Mary and John and attendant cherubim on “wheels” were re-gilded and in the same year expensive iron gates and a fine image of St John the Baptist were added to the Baptistery.

The Services

Those who still remember St George’s before 1965 will recall its liturgical life even more than the beauty of its furnishings. Starting from modest beginnings, Fr Russell gathered around him a team of enthusiastic helpers to form choir and servers to assist him in the offering of the rich round of services he desired. By the early 1950s he had established Sung Masses and Solemn Vespers on all Sundays and great festivals, with vespers being sung even on “Days of Devotion”, including all the feasts of the Apostles. Christmas was particularly well served with solemn first vespers; solemn matins and midnight mass; sung masses of the dawn and day (celebrated at 9.30 and 10.30am respectively); solemn second vespers, procession and benediction and solemn vespers with procession on each of the following four days (they were all Days of Devotion!) The grandest and most fashionable Anglo-Catholic church in Edwardian days could not have done more.

The number of singers and servers, who were all housed in the sanctuary, rarely exceeded thirty-five which the rector considered a rather inadequate figure though most clerical visitors viewed it with envy. Needless to say those who served at the high altar were not only rigorously trained but were richly attired. The cantors wore copes, the rest of the choir and most servers, full gathered surplices, like those shown on portraits of Tudor bishops, with enormous sleeves and in length reaching below the knee. Famous (or notorious) were the apparelled albs and amices worn by the acolytes and thurifer (even the apparels came in complete sets of liturgical colours) and the alb and tunicle of the crucifer. Fresh chasubles and copes for the celebrant were often added when Fr Russell heard of Anglo-Catholic churches which had abandoned “gothic” styles. He had some kind of source of secret information about such matters. Everything used in the worship of God was of



the highest quality down to the candles, incense, altar breads and wine. The music of course was strictly plainsong and under the direction of men who had Benedictine monastic training.

The number of sung services was actually increasing in the years just before Fr Russell's death whereas elsewhere, both in the Roman Catholic Church and in the Church of England, they were in steep decline. I can remember when matins on Pentecost Eve was introduced for the first time, in 1959. However, it cannot be said that any services at St George's other than low masses were ever very well attended. This worried Fr Russell not at all. When the church was first opened only twenty Roman Catholics lived in the area and there was no real need for a new parish at all. In 1962 mass attendance was found to be 1,175 souls. The rector arranged worship in the same way for both numbers. On one dark evening, a server nervously told him, before vespers began, that there was no one in the church at all. "Nonsense" he replied, "the nave is full of angels".

The Man

As can be guessed, Fr Russell was not free of eccentricities. Life in his clergy house was a strain for most curates, who did not tend to stay long. First there was the Dickensian clutter of vestment presses, cuckoo clocks (all set at slightly different times, though never British summer time), large cats as eccentric as their master, books and antique silver. Then there was the conceit that he was a beleaguered Anglo-Catholic vicar liable to be disciplined by his diocesan, though successive Cardinals actually showed astonishing indulgence towards him (it should be remembered that before the Second Vatican Council the overriding priority of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England was the establishment of a RC school in every parish; Fr Russell never attempted to do this and never even mentioned the need for one.) "The Archbishop is coming" he would say, "We must hide the acolytes' albs" or: "When I am dead they will come and turn all my vestments into bed covers just as the Reformers did". Actually, in a sense, this prophecy was fulfilled. Some wag had once called St George's "The only Anglican church in communion with Rome". This was probably intended as a taunt but Fr Russell wore the label with great pride (perhaps he remembered his father's church at the start of the Twentieth Century) and would often quote it to startled newcomers.

Fr Russell wrote everything by hand using the most extraordinary late medieval Gothic script. Many parishioners claimed they could not read the notices in the church porch at all. The local postman was made of sterner stuff and took great pride in being able to deliver all the rector's letters without difficulty. He especially approved of the priest's complete non-use of abbreviations – Saint not St or London North West rather than NW. How Father would have hated (it still makes me feel slightly guilty) my use of "Fr" in this article.

Often such highly motivated men can be ill-mannered or off-hand; Fr Russell by contrast was the mildest and most easy-going of souls, other-worldly and quite without authoritarianism. Servers and young choir members would sometimes ask him to inscribe their missals. He always used the same text for this, taken from the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Authorized Version: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them". In his later years he allowed a poor Irishman who drank rather too much to live permanently in the clergy house and provided for him generously in his will.

Much was rumoured about Fr Russell's supposed fascist leanings. I believe them greatly exaggerated. He certainly supported Mussolini in the 1930s but so did many others, and he admired General Franco all his life. Hitler he wrote openly against in the parish magazine after the war started. I believe that the fascist rumours were partly based on the certain fact that two members of his choir were prominent members of Mosley's Party and later were conscientious objectors. In truth Father was not much interested in events that took place after 1530.



The Aftermath

But now they break down all the carved work thereof: with axes and hammers.
[Psalm 74, Prayer Book version]

Clement Lloyd Russell was hit by a car, crossing the road outside his church, and died soon afterwards, on 11th January 1965. He was 80 but in good health and still running St George's along usual lines. His death at least saved him from having to make inevitable and difficult choices, for the Second Vatican Council was in full swing. Already low masses at St George's were being said in English. Fr Russell's tradition would have received little sympathy from the new sort of Roman Catholic who regarded the Council documents as on par with the Four Gospels, nor from their conservative opponents, Anglo-Irish and stubbornly philistine, nor even from modern Anglo-Catholics eagerly following every trend of the Liturgical Movement. In the mid Sixties his ideals of liturgical worship could not have been more unfashionable. This needs to be clearly stated. It should also be added that he had almost no sympathy with the budding ecumenical movement. Without of course realising it, he was in his spirituality and his priorities, extremely close to Eastern Orthodoxy. If any reader thinks this far-fetched, read Russell's own summary of his aims, which concludes this article.

The priest appointed as his successor, Wilfrid Purney, tried to maintain some continuity but the looming liturgical changes from above demoralised Fr Russell's old supporters. The men's choir was disbanded in June 1966 and most of the servers ceased to attend about the same time. Services began to resemble those elsewhere in the archdiocese. Fr Purney however, always kept the church looking as it had always done and no "re-ordering" was permitted. After his death the long-delayed deluge came with the arrival of those "who knew not Joseph". Because of the late date of the building and its furnishings, those opposed to major change could not appeal to the law or preservation societies. Between 1990 and 1996 St George's interior was completely gutted. Most of the furnishings and hangings disappeared, the consecrated stone altars were desecrated and destroyed and an extraordinary octagonal-shaped altar was placed in the centre of the church. But it would be fruitless, and perhaps libellous, to continue. Fr Russell would perhaps have simply remarked that King Edward VI's visitors had returned to earth.

Conclusion

I want to conclude by quoting from Fr Russell's own words because it is important to understand that he was much more than just a "character". Here he is writing in the parish magazine in the 1940s, but he very often expressed himself in similar terms, as I heard him do so several times:

And beyond all, I want the sanctuary, especially at sung mass and at vespers and benediction, to speak to people of the glories of Heaven, and that, as far as is humanly possible, there shall be gathered there a splendour of colour and light, beauty of vesture, and ordered movement that compels the most wandering and distracted of undisciplined minds to realise that something far, far more than the satisfaction of human devotion is being accomplished – that the eternal and invisible GOD is being worshipped, and that all that is being done, is performed to render the easier, a response to the invitation "Sursum Corda!" There, at all events, is and has been my great endeavour.



BOOK REVIEWS

Anglo-Catholic in Religion: T.S. Eliot and Christianity by Barry Spurr (Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, paperback, £25)

This is an important and much needed book. It is also very well produced, and members of the Society will be immediately arrested by the wonderful colour photograph of the sanctuary of St. Stephen, Gloucester Road, by our own John Salmon, on the cover.

Previous biographers of Eliot have either misunderstood or simply neglected his religious beliefs and the central part he played in Anglo-Catholic thought and writing from the late 1920s until his death in 1965. Peter Ackroyd, in his masterly study first published in 1984, for example, brushes off Eliot's involvement with St. Stephen in a few lines, whereas in fact, as Barry Spurr shows, attendance at mass and other ceremonies was at the very centre of Eliot's life. Professor Spurr comes at the matter from the opposite direction: in other words he starts from the perfectly proper assumption that his reader may know nothing of the ethos and practice of Anglo-Catholicism in the inter war period, explains it, and explains Eliot's involvement with the Movement.

It is clear from the book that Eliot's views were far more "advanced" than has sometimes been acknowledged. I did not appreciate for example that after he was widowed, and before he entered into his late period of happy second marriage, he had decided to retire to Nashdom, then entirely Latin in language and spirit. His confessor for some years was the Revd Sir Percy Maryon-Wilson, Bart., a governor of the Walsingham shrine and parish priest of St. Mary, Somers Town. Eliot also wrote, in 1943, a polemic tract for the Committee for the Defence of Church Principles entitled *Reunion by Destruction*, which argued very strongly against intercommunion with the Church of South India. As Professor Spurr argues, Eliot became the best known Anglo-Catholic layman in England for a time, and it is a measure of the eclipse of knowledge and understanding of his point of view that that aspect of his life has been so underrated.

After dealing with the context in which Eliot moved and his personal faith, Professor Spurr goes on to examine the overt references in Eliot's poetry to Anglo-Catholicism and exposes many fallacies put about by those who have no deep understanding of his beliefs. There are also interesting appendices including one in which the author sets out strongly the case against Eliot being regarded as an anti-Semite.

This book is strongly recommended: it reads well, is informative and well argued. One small glitch which the observant will notice is that St. Silas, Kentish Town, is mistakenly termed St. Simon, an error which Ackroyd also made.

Michael Yelton

Priest In Deep Water: Charles Plomer Hopkins and the 1911 Seamen's Strike by R.W.H. Miller

The Revd Robert Miller is a Roman Catholic priest in the West Country. He is also an authority on the interaction between the churches and seamen in various parts of the world. This book is a rewriting of an MA thesis dating from 1993. He corrects much of what was written on the subject by Peter Anson, and refers to his subject as "somebody Anson neither understood nor knew much about".

The life of Charles Plomer Hopkins was extraordinary. He was born in 1861 and as with many others of his generation embraced what was then the rising tide of the Anglo-Catholic Movement. However, while many of those who were so touched laboured in the slums and suburbs of the cities of England, Hopkins became a seaman's chaplain in Burma and India. During a short period in London in 1888-9 he was professed into a small parochial religious order, the Society of St. Paul,



which had been founded in the now long-vanished parish of Holy Trinity, Shoreditch, by the parish priest, the Revd A. Osborne Jay.

Hopkins then returned to the East, to become the port chaplain in Calcutta, where he refurbished the chapel in accordance with Anglo-Catholic principles. However he became increasingly involved with the welfare of seamen, and his brotherhood supported many who became embroiled in legal proceedings with their employers. In the meantime he was dragged into a sexual scandal after having allegations of propositioning a young man made against him: he was wholly vindicated by court proceedings which he himself instituted but there appears thereafter to have been an undercurrent of such assertions against him, which Father Miller thinks were without foundation.

In 1894 Hopkins returned to this country to take charge of the then mother house of the Order of St. Paul at Barry in South Wales, but in the following year he purchased a substantial plot of land near Alton in Hampshire, on which in due course was constructed the Abbey of St. Paul. Life at the abbey was described by Compton Mackenzie in *The Altar Steps*, the first part of his well-known trilogy, in which here as elsewhere the disguise applied to well known figures was light.

Hopkins' path was then complicated by the antagonism towards him of Randall Davidson, then Bishop of Winchester. However he continued to campaign vigorously on behalf of seafarers, and in 1903 the OSP published a *Prayer Book for Catholic Seamen*. Hopkins coupled this with Christian Socialism, and he played a prominent part in the 1911 seamen's strike, which although it is named in the title is only part of the subject of this well researched book.

There is however less about the development of the Abbey at Alton and Hopkins' later years, which is an omission which is unfortunate, although it appears from the Introduction that there are very significant gaps in the archives of the Order, and that the writer was not given all the assistance he wanted.

This is a very detailed book, not all of which is of immediate interest to the non-specialist, but it throws a powerful light on an interesting and idiosyncratic figure, and does not avoid dealing with the controversial features of the subject's life. It is available from the Lutterworth Press, PO Box 60, Cambridge CB1 2NT at £25, which may at first sight appear expensive but reflects its specialised nature.

Michael Yelton