



## ANGLO-CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY

### Newsletter—December 2010

#### CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Some, though I imagine not all, of our members will know that I retired as Rector of St George's Bloomsbury on 31st October last year. Having broken my leg on holiday in June my last months were not quite what I hoped but I had already decided to retire once the new chandelier had been installed. The restoration of St George's had cost over £10 million and taken the best part of a decade. Rather exhausted, I felt that a new priest was needed to carry the mission of the "new" St George's forward and I am delighted that the new rector (inducted on 21st September this year) is Fr David Peebles the Chaplain of the London School of Economics.

I was also conscious of my mother's need for greater care. She has lived with me since the death of my father and during the last three years has begun to suffer from dementia. She will be 97 in December. We are now happily settled in Canterbury, not far from my sister and where I grew up and have found a home at St Mildred's near the castle where we have been made very welcome.

We have a full programme of lectures for the coming year. I do wonder how historical research will fare in the future with university cuts and fewer postgraduate students. It does not seem to me that as much research is being done especially in 20th century Anglo-Catholic history as I would hope at that level; I imagine, however, that there may well be local historians researching particular topics that I am completely unaware of, so if members do know of work being done, please do let me know. I am happy to be contacted by e-mail: [holmado@aol.com](mailto:holmado@aol.com) *Fr Perry*

#### AUTUMN LECTURE 2010

This took place on Monday October 4th when Dr Dominic Janes, Senior Lecturer at Birkbeck College, University of London and a member of ACHS, gave a paper entitled "The Victorian Persecution: Anglo-Catholics & Martyrdom" A copy of a printed version is enclosed with this Newsletter for all members. Despite a tube strike on that day, there was a good turnout.

#### JANUARY 2011 LECTURE

This will take place on Monday January 31 at 7pm in St Clement Danes Church, Strand, London. Martin Wellings, Superintendent of the Oxford Methodist Circuit will speak 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. His study of Anglican Evangelicalism in the late C19 & early C20, "Evangelicals Embattled" was published in 2003.

Members will be interested in Mr Welling's paper on "The Oxford Movement in Late Nineteenth Century Retrospect: R.W. Church, J.H. Rigg and Walter Walsh" in R.N. Swanson (Ed), "The Church Retrospective" (Boydell & Brewer, 1997).

#### FUTURE VENUE FOR ACHS LECTURES

Recent lecturers have requested the use of audio-visual facilities which venues used in the past have not provided. Many lecturers would prefer to include illustrations displayed by laptop PowerPoint images or to run DVD presentations.



Accordingly the Committee is investigating central London meeting places which have suitable AV facilities and combined with comfortable seating and good acoustics. Nearness to public transport is also a major requirement and central London is likely to remain our preferred option. Any suggestions members have will be most welcome, as we do not need to hold all our lectures in the same place and some members would prefer the use of different venues.

## **NEW ACHS WEBSITE**

We are currently working with a web designer to develop a new website for the Society and replace our current web space. We envisage that this will raise our profile and bring in new members. The site will allow us to explain our aims and history, advertise our events, share our news, and advertise available and forthcoming publications. Members will be encouraged to suggest news for the website by emailing the Secretary; or for example, to make an announcement of a forthcoming event which will be of interest to members or to recommend a book including a review thereof.

## **ADVANCE NOTICE – SUMMER AND AUTUMN LECTURES 2011**

The Summer Lecture is planned to coincide with the AGM, on Monday 13 June 2011. Dr John Stuart of Kingston University will speak on “Anglo-Catholicism and the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa in the 20th Century”. UMCA celebrated its centenary in 2010.

The date of the autumn lecture is not yet finalised but it will be held in October 2011 when Fr Pereiro will lecture on the intellectual development of Henry Manning.

Venues and dates are available on the Events page

## **REPORT: AUTUMN LONDON WALK – SATURDAY OCTOBER 16**

Another very good turnout of members enjoyed what has now become our customary good weather, with only one shower interrupting a cold but fine day. We saw an enormous variety of churches, with only one problem, in that we could not get entry to St. Mary, Kennington, although we were able to see through the glass doors: I have since had an apology from the rector, who had forgotten us despite a reminder. All that remains of the Victorian church is the tower and we were able to see the attractive post-war rebuild. We started at the remarkable Pearson church of St. Peter, Vauxhall, with its largely undisturbed Victorian sanctuary, and followed that by St. Anselm, Kennington Cross, which looks somewhat down at heel. After the disappointment at St. Mary, we were entranced by the contents of the replacement St. Agnes, Kennington Park, which was beautifully kept. Next was the magnificent St. John the Divine, Kennington, followed by the late 1950s church of St. Paul, Lorrimore Square. This is a highly regarded post-war church with important fittings. We had lunch in the crypt of St. Peter, Walworth, and were able to see the church, one of the great churches of Sir John Soane, beautifully restored. This was followed by St. John, Larcom Street, a typical back street shrine which many members did not know: however they were excited by the reliquaries. We followed this by the replacement St. Matthew, Newington, which is involved with much social work, and from where we had seen the reredos of the old church in Portsmouth in July. We finished at St. Hugh, the former Charterhouse mission in Crosby Row, which is about to be demolished. All who participated, I think, enjoyed a very varied day. The walk next year will be in the Pimlico area and we hope will be equally enjoyable.



## **PRIEST IN DEEP WATER**

The Committee is pleased to recommend this book to members and we have negotiated a reduced price. It is hoped to publish a review in the next Newsletter. Why not be the first to post a review? Email your reviews/comments to the Secretary.

## **THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST PAULS**

### **The Rev Dr Robert Beaken**

At 12 noon on Saturday 11 September 2010 a special Eucharist of Thanksgiving was celebrated in St Katharine's Church, Little Bardfield, Essex, to mark the centenary of the foundation in 1910 of the Brotherhood of St Paul, a theological college, by the rector, the Rev. Edward Mears. Mears (1864-1947) studied at The Queen's College, Oxford. Following his graduation in 1887 he embarked upon a career as a schoolmaster, and was also ordained priest in 1900. He became rector of Little Bardfield in 1906 and remained for thirty-four years until his retirement in 1940.

With his educational background and experience, Mears conceived of the idea of opening an Anglican theological college along sound catholic lines for ordinands from poorer backgrounds. Study at a theological college in the early twentieth century was expensive and ordinands mostly had to find the fees themselves. Some of the religious orders sought to remedy this situation by inaugurating schemes to train ordinands from poor backgrounds. The theological colleges run by the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield and the Society of the Sacred Mission at Kelham are well known, but the Benedictines at Nashdom Abbey also prepared a number of men for the parish ministry between the wars.

Mears decided in 1910 to open a theological college in his parish to train men who might otherwise not have fulfilled their vocations, and which, in the words of one former student was run on a 'shoe string.' In his earlier life, Mears had undergone a dramatic spiritual awakening which left him with a warm affection for St Paul. He therefore called his college *The Brotherhood of St Paul*. Mears conceived of a brotherhood of men living in community in preparation for ordination, and constituted himself the first 'warden' of the Brotherhood. The ordinands were obliged upon their arrival at Little Bardfield to pledge obedience to the direction of the warden in regards to studies and general life of the community. At the conclusion of their training they were each released from this obedience.

The ordination course at Little Bardfield cost a total of twenty five guineas, though books were extra. The ordinands lodged with families in Great and Little Bardfield. During term time they were expected always to be dressed in a cassock, with a cross at the belt. Mears held four terms a year, with a week's holiday at Christmas and a fortnight in the Summer. Ordinands aged under twenty-three studied for nine terms, those over twenty-three for eight. Each day began with the Eucharist in St Katharine's. A large room at one end of Little Bardfield Rectory was used for lectures and examinations, which the ordinands nicknamed the 'Room of Pain.' Scholarly country clergy were recruited to assist with the lectures. Latin and Greek were taught to all ordinands from the beginning to enable them to read the New Testament in both languages. Special emphasis was laid on a thorough knowledge of the Bible. Seven separate courses were given covering the Old Testament in general, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Apocrypha, the Synoptic Gospels, the Fourth Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles, the New Testament Epistles, and Revelation. A considerable portion of the New Testament was studied in Greek, whilst one book was studied in a Latin translation. Many ordinands were coached to university level.



Between 1910 and 1914 ordinands from the Brotherhood of St Paul were accepted for ordination like students from any other Church of England theological college. After 1914 it became difficult to find English bishops to accept them for ordination. Bishop Edgar Jacob of St Albans, whose diocese then covered Essex, was wary of giving official recognition to the Brotherhood of St Paul in its early days, for fear that it might fizzle out, but he held Mears' work in high esteem. John Watts-Ditchfield, the first bishop of the new diocese of Chelmsford, created in 1914 to cover Essex, took rather a different view. Watts-Ditchfield was a severe and authoritarian low-churchman, who had no understanding or sympathy with catholic theology or spirituality. During the 1914-18 War, for example, Watts-Ditchfield famously pressurized the enclosed community of Anglican Cistercian nuns at Pleshey over their reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, and in the end they left his diocese and settled in Buckinghamshire. Watts-Ditchfield arrived unexpectedly at Little Bardfield Rectory one day in 1914 to confront Mears about his use of vestments and reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. An argument developed between the two men, and Mears ordered Watts-Ditchfield off the premises. Watts-Ditchfield never visited the parish again during his nine years as bishop of Chelmsford.

Mears' reaction may have been counter-productive because bishops talk to one another and Watts-Ditchfield was unlikely to keep quiet about his reception in Little Bardfield and his apprehension of what went on there. It may not be coincidental that around this time ordinands from Little Bardfield began to find it difficult to get English bishops to ordain them and in consequence they sought ordination overseas at the hands of colonial bishops. The occasional Little Bardfield ordinand still managed to persuade an English bishop to ordain him during the 1920s and '30s, but mostly they went to Africa, Australia, Canada and the U.S.A. The Brotherhood was officially recognised as a theological college by a number of African dioceses. Interestingly, there seems to have been no shortage of ordinands willing to study with the Brotherhood of St Paul – there seems to have been around twenty ordinands in training per year between the wars – in the knowledge that they would have to go overseas at the end of their course. Nor does Mears appear to have experienced any difficulty placing his ordinands with colonial bishops, who would occasionally visit Little Bardfield seeking new curates for their dioceses, and would sometimes preach in St Katharine's church.

Correspondence amongst the papers of Archbishops Lang and Fisher at Lambeth Palace show that some English bishops and clergy were worried that the training offered by the Brotherhood of St Paul may have been of uneven quality and thought that the library might have contained a wider selection of books. However, one former student of the Brotherhood of St Paul went on to become a bishop of Worcester, a second became a bishop in Canada, two were appointed to the ecclesiastical household of Queen Elizabeth II and one was elected the superior of the Society of St John the Evangelist in Canada, which would all seem to indicate that their priestly formation in Little Bardfield cannot have been too defective. A little over three hundred priests were trained for ordination by the Brotherhood of St Paul, the majority of whom served in parishes, on mission stations and as military chaplains during the Second World War. Following Mears' retirement in 1940, the Brotherhood of St Paul moved to Barton in Yorkshire, where Canon S.C. Joad was the warden. In 1952 the Brotherhood moved first to Tottenhill, near King's Lynn in Norfolk, and then to Great Snoring, near Walsingham. The unravelling of the British Empire, declining numbers of ordinands, and the failure of an attempt in the mid-1950s to secure official recognition from the Church of England, despite a generous report from the C.A.C.T.M. theological college inspectors who visited the Brotherhood, all contributed to its eventual demise. The Brotherhood of St Paul finally came to an end in the spring of 1957, after an existence of forty-seven years.

Mears may have been something of an irascible character and probably had only limited resources at his disposal, but he was a gifted teacher with a love of the New Testament – he published a commentary on St John's Gospel – and a devotion to the Anglican parochial ministry. His vision of



using his educational skills, his house and his parish to enable young men from poor backgrounds to realize their vocations to ordination, at a time when the Church of England did not make it easy for them to do so, was a noble and generous one. It is said that a priest, knowingly or unknowingly, will affect the lives of thousands of people during the course of his ministry. Many people throughout the world, in consequence, must have been helped by clergy whose priestly formation took place in Little Bardfield.

Edward Mears' vision and the vocations of the men whom he prepared for ordination was remembered in a special Eucharist of Thanksgiving held in St Katharine's Church, Little Bardfield, on Saturday 11 September 2010. The preacher was Father Jeremy Sheehy, rector of Swinton and Pendlebury, and formerly principal of St Stephen's House, Oxford. The service was celebrated as it would have been in 1910, with the Book of Common Prayer, enrichments such as the Benedictus and Agnus Dei, and propers sung to Gregorian chant, as it would have been known to Edward Mears and his first ordinands.

If you have any information to impart or you wish further details please contact Father Robert Beaken, The Vicarage, Braintree Road, Great Bardfield, Essex, CM7 4RN. Telephone 01371 810267. E-mail [Robert@webform.com](mailto:Robert@webform.com) Father Robert is a member of the Society and has lectured on Archbishop Lang.