



COSTOCK CHRONICLE 2014

Holy Cross Convent, Highfields, Nottingham Road, Costock, Loughborough LE12 6XE



MOST PEOPLE thinking about monks and nuns, if they ever do think about them, presume we float around on clouds of prayer without a worry in the world. Those of you who know us, however, are aware that that impression is very far from being the truth. Yes, people who come here do comment on the peaceful atmosphere but the peace is *made*; it doesn't come naturally. "Seek peace and *pursue* it," says St Benedict in his Rule.

So it was very helpful when Ampleforth Abbey hosted a conference for Guest Masters and Mistresses from the 14th-17th January. Sr Mary Bernadette and Louise attended and found much to stimulate new ideas. A popular idea has been a prayer walk, guiding people round the grounds, pointing out what they may see and suggesting thoughts for meditation. Our website and facebook page appear to be very popular and there are constant requests from people who want to have Quiet Days or residential retreats.

IN MARCH Judith Pollard, a priest in the final year of her curacy at Newark, came on a placement for two weeks and contributed much to our life in that short time. Shortly after she left we had a sadness in that our postulant, Gabriele, decided God was not calling her to join our Community and she left us on the 26th March. We are very grateful for all she gave us during her six months with us and wish her every blessing for the future.

AN EXCITING event was going to Lambeth Palace on the 28th March at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is well known that he wishes to foster the religious life in all its manifestations and he invited representatives





The early wildflowers in Intake Wood at Holy Cross.

from both traditional and emerging communities to meet and explore '*Roots and Shoots*'. Keynote addresses were given by Archbishop Justin and Fr Etienne Veto of the Chemin Neuf Community, some of whose members are now living at Lambeth Palace, providing a prayer presence there. There was time for small groups to meet and talk together and it was amazing to find the variety of charisms represented, from large world-wide networks of 3000 or more such as the Church Mission Society and the Northumbria Community, through Moot, based at St Mary Aldermary, London, down to small local groups such as The Order of the Black Sheep, based at Chesterfield as well as long-established communities.

REVEREND MOTHER MARY LUKE has preached at several events this year. The first was on Friday 7th March, when at the invitation of Margaret Hopewell she was invited to be the preacher at the Women's World Day of Prayer at Old Dalby and was made to feel very welcome. The irony was that the subject around which the service was built was 'Streams in a Dry Land'. In March England had experienced the worst floods for years with relentless rain for weeks! But it was good to realise the significance that water has in such countries as Egypt which have long periods of drought and be thankful that, on the whole, our climate is a moderate one.

3.



REVEREND MOTHER then made history on the 26th May by being the first woman to preach at the Walsingham National Pilgrimage. Sr Mary Julian, Sr Mary Michael and Louise went with her on the Sunday before to give her support and were very kindly given accommodation for two nights by the Sisters at the Priory of Our Lady. The weather forecast was not good for the bank holiday Monday. Everywhere else it poured with rain but Our Lady was smiling on the pilgrimage as the weather in Walsingham was beautiful all day; sunshine with just enough breeze so it wasn't too hot. The pilgrims were enjoying themselves and Mother Mary Luke's sermon seemed to be well received. The text can be read on our facebook page. Asked afterwards if she had been nervous she said that it was only after the event that she realised quite how nervous she had been but the warmth of the crowd and the atmosphere made her forget it.

4.



MORE DAUNTING in a way was being invited to give a forty-five minute paper at the MONOS Conference at the end of June on some aspect of Benedictine spirituality. MONOS is a Christian Community living out a calling to know themselves, others and ultimately, God. It has its origins in the Great Christian Tradition of monasticism, reflected in New Monasticism expressed through the Rule for Living of the Northumbria Community. They are based at the Mercian Centre at the Abbey Grange of the Cistercian Abbey of Mount St Bernard which is about eight miles from us. The Centre serves the Church and the wider community, offering hospitality in the Tea Room, retreats, conferences, workshops and musical events. Those who attended the conference came from a wide variety of backgrounds: Catholic, Anglican, Free Church, no Church, but all with a desire to learn how the Benedictine ethos can be lived outside the formal religious life. Mother Mary Luke spoke on St Benedict's Steps of Humility as illustrated by St Bernard's Twelve Steps of Humility and Pride. The other papers were extremely informative, having as subjects St Antony of Egypt, Thomas Merton as a guide for lay people, Poverty in the Rule of St Benedict and the Practice of the Presence of God.

THE FINAL OUTING for Mother Mary Luke was on the 6th October when she went to speak about the religious life as lived by our Community to the Mothers' Union of St Michael and All Angels, Hughenden Valley, High Wycombe. It was a very warm and welcoming group with a lively question session afterwards.



A rainbow over our south fields at Costock.

5.



The Lighting of the Paschal Candle outdoors and the singing of the Exultet in Chapel.



ONCE AGAIN our Visitor, the Rt Rev Dr David Hope, came to share Holy Week and Easter with us and he presided at the liturgies of Maundy Thursday, the Holy Saturday Vigil and Easter morning with Canon Kenneth Court presiding on Good Friday and acting as deacon, singing the Exultet on Holy Saturday. There was a bigger than ever congregation at the Vigil with over thirty people from local congregations joining us to celebrate the first Eucharist of Easter.

ON SUNDAY 18TH MAY we went to Southwell Minster for the Dean, John Guille's, farewell service. He will be much missed. On top of the departure of our bishop, Paul Butler, now Bishop of Durham, and the Archdeacon of Nottingham, Peter Hall, now Bishop of Barking, it means that the diocese is without three out of five of its senior clergy.

6.





AS MOST OF YOU WILL KNOW, our Warden, Canon Gavin Kirk, is the Precentor of Lincoln Cathedral and because of that connection on the 31st May we were invited to the blessing of the new statue of Our Lady of Lincoln. It has been carved by Aidan Hart, and we were privileged to hear him speak before the service on the spirituality behind his carving. It is stunning; in polychrome, it is a three dimensional icon and can be seen from the west end of the cathedral in its place in the Lady Chapel, dominating the south aisle.

ONCE AGAIN THE HIGHLIGHT of the year was a liturgical event—Sister Mary Michael's Golden Jubilee on the 5th June. Our Warden, Fr Gavin Kirk, celebrated the Jubilee Mass and, in recognition of Sister's deep concern for ecumenism, the sermon was preached by Fr Bill Gull (Roman Catholic) and the blessing was given simultaneously by Fr Gavin (Anglican), Fr Bill and Fr David Gill (Russian Orthodox). Visitors from overseas included Ingrid Gjertsen and Agnes Haug from Norway.

SISTER MARY MICHAEL WRITES: 2014 has been a year of jubilees for myself and several of my friends. In particular it was a great joy for me to share in



Sister Mary Michael with Fr David Gill, Fr Bill Gull and Canon Gavin Kirk.

the celebrations at All Saints, Notting Hill and at Cristens Gard (Christians Acre) at Slagarp, South Sweden, with Fr John Brownsell and Sr Gerd. It was truly the icing on an already rich cake; holiday and pilgrimage all rolled into one. Thank you many times over.

My hosts spared no effort to give me a taste of Lutheran and Swedish culture in the area: the countless little churches in a terrain very similar to the countryside here---no wonder the Vikings made themselves a home in these parts! Then the cathedral at Lund with its fabulous mechanical clock and the adjacent university campus; the church of the Holy Cross at nearby Dalby (any connection with the village of Old Dalby near us in Leicestershire?)

The highlight however was a day spent in Roskilde and Copenhagen, over the amazing new bridge across the Sound, into Denmark. My maternal grandfather was Danish so I was returning to my roots. An alfresco meal in the 17th Century waterfront district of Copenhagen, followed by a tour of the city by canal boat and then on foot brought the day to a happy conclusion.

There is much more I could say but as a final word I recommend Sr Gerd's retreat/guest house as a welcoming place to stay for a break. Her email is: tedeum@telia.com

ANOTHER EVENT was Fr Keith Williams' Silver Jubilee of ordination the 29th September which he celebrated in our chapel. His wife, Hilary and several people from his parish in Nottingham were present to celebrate with him.

WE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED in planning a conference to promote the religious life in the church of england and foster vocations. It took place at St Mary's



Above: Fr Keith after his Jubilee Mass. Below: The Religious at Wellingborough.



Church Wellingborough on the 18th October. Religious from several communities, both men and women, formed the team, among whom were Sister Mary Catherine and also Louise Watson, who facilitated the day. Ten attended, mostly young people of both sexes and were keen and interested. It is hoped that the venture will be followed up in the months ahead.

TWO OF OUR STAFF have retired this year. Peter Lallo left at the end of September. He had worked for us as our full time gardener since 1987 and part-time since his 'first' retirement in 2002. During his time the kitchen

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garden produced so much food that we had to ask him to reduce the quantity. ‘But Reverend Mother,’ he would say, ‘it doesn’t cost you anything. I get the seeds from my cousin/brother-in-law/uncle’. That’s fine, but forty-eight pumpkins!

SUE DONAJGRODZKI came in November 2002 to help nurse Sr Mary Laurence. After sister’s death in 2006 Sue took over some receptionist and housework duties and, being a very gifted needlewoman, upholstered chairs and sofas, altered curtains and made and mended our habits, as well as making goods for sale in our shop.

We are very grateful to Peter and Sue for their faithful and loyal service to us for so many years and wish them a fruitful retirement.

AS WELL AS attending to the needs of our guests and visitors we also need to have some input ourselves and therefore we were very pleased when Christina Baxter agreed to lead us in some Bible Studies. We have worked our way through Philippians and are now beginning 2 Chronicles.

ON FRIDAY 5th September Fr James Leachman OSB and Fr Daniel McCarthy OSB gave us and some of our priests two fascinating talks on how architecture and liturgy are intertwined.

THIS YEAR, from the 27th-31st October, we had a Community retreat conducted by Fr Paschal Worton, vicar of St Mary’s, Summertown, St Pancras.

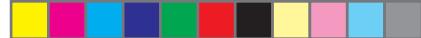


Catstock Chronicle



THEA AND I ended last year’s report anticipating Christmas and the arrival of the stable with its nice straw and cosy box to sleep in. We are pleased to announce that all happened as anticipated and we



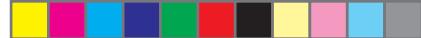


were commended for *a*) being prophetic - the lion shall eat straw like the ox and *b*) kind-hearted in warming the manger for the baby Jesus. After that things took a turn for the worse. On the 16th January we went to the vet. Thea was pronounced to be the perfect weight but I, Summa, was told I was overweight. Me! Overweight! I've never been so insulted in my life. I have big bones! Now the staff have cut my rations so I get less food than Thea and she is smaller than me. I can barely summon the strength to go outside and have to spend most of the day in a chair sleeping. What do they expect when I have to exist on a starvation diet. Overweight indeed! The final straw came in August. We had noticed a cat lurking about the grounds - a miserable specimen with no tail and made it quite clear that it was not welcome. But what do our staff do? They feed it and eventually it takes up residence in *our* front hall. The staff call her Charlie as at first they thought she was a boy; (how can they be so obtuse?!). We are doing our utmost to scare her and frighten her off as **WE DO NOT WANT ANY USURPER HERE**



Hi! I'M CHARLIE. I drifted into this place sometime in July and although living rough was fine when the weather was hot and there were lots of tasty mice and voles about, when it got cold and very wet towards the end of August it wasn't such fun. Then dishes of food started appearing and I was eventually lured into the building. Now I am happily ensconced in the hall where three meals a day arrive regularly. The only drawback is the presence of two other cats who think they own the whole place. Well I might be smaller than them but they know nothing about street fighting and I am now getting the satisfaction of having them submit to me when they encroach on my territory. I have not yet, though, managed to infiltrate their quarters, but given time . . .

II.



And so we come to the end of another year which has been a momentous one in the world. How do we as Christians respond to the virulent hatred and violence shown in the Middle East and reflected in our country and others around the world? Do we respond with anger and hatred for the people who perpetrate atrocities or try to disparage Christianity and banish all religion? Do we fight back using violence?

Instead of fighting evil with its own weapons, though, Jesus, the Word, became flesh, became weak.

'Were our minds not blunted by familiarity we should be shocked by that statement. Even before the revelation of God's Trinitarian life, before men knew that the Word was a Person, the 'word' of Yahweh in the Old Testament stood for what was strong and abiding. But 'flesh' meant weakness and transience. 'All flesh is grass', but 'the word of our God will stand for ever'. Yet the eternal Word was born flesh of our flesh.' (from '*The Coming of God*' by Maria Boulding)

That should give us some hope for the future. 'When I am weak, then I am strong,' wrote St Paul and it certainly seems true that God's power is made perfect in weakness. It is God's world, his creation and we have his word that the gates of hell will never prevail against the Church. This Christmas, then, let us rejoice that weakness is all-powerful because the battle against sin and death has already been won. Jesus born in a stable, forced to flee to Egypt to escape being murdered, was nevertheless the one who paid the price of evil by absorbing and transforming it, instead of always asking others to pay the price. Let us follow his way in faith and hope, and love will prevail.

We wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year.



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