



COSTOCK CHRONICLE 2015

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



ONCE AGAIN THE YEAR has been full of happenings though there haven't been any major events such as professions or jubilees. Our life of worship, prayer and hospitality continues and there have been several ecumenical gatherings. One of our guests, Jane Gore-Booth, joined us when Mother Mary Luke, Sr Mary Catherine and Louise went to the Unity service at Mount St Bernard Abbey on the 22nd January, which took the form of monastic Vespers and the Archdeacon of Leicester, the Venerable Dr Tim Stratford, gave the address.

The following week, on the 31st January, Mother Mary Luke and Sr Mary Julian went to Notre Dame de Paris in London for the celebration of the centenary of Thomas Merton's birth. During a service when readings from Merton's writing were read, the Orthodox Bishop Kallistos Ware of Diocletia gave a talk. Later on we repaired to St James', Piccadilly, where a talk and panel discussion were chaired by the rector of St James, the Rev'd Lucy Winkett. On the panel were the Rt Rev'd John Moses, former Dean of St Paul's, who had just published a book on Merton titled 'Divine Discontent', Bishop Kallistos, Esther de Waal, Fiona Gardner and Elizabeth Holmes. On the same date the other members of the Community went to Southwell Minster for a Mass for the members of the Society of St Wilfrid and Hilda.

Sr Mary Bernadette went to York Minster on the 2nd February for the consecration of Fr Philip North as Bishop of Burnley.

Interesting visitors from the Jesus Bruderhof based at Nonington in Kent

visited us on the 23rd April. Carol and Tom Kleinsasser were staying for a few days with Fr Andy Hawes who brought them to see us when he celebrated Mass for us. After exchanging histories of our respective communities we discovered that our life-styles had much in common. Yes, our theologies may differ in detail but the fundamentals are the same: there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

A very different ecumenical occasion was again at Mount St Bernard on the 19th May when Mother Mary Luke attended the blessing by Archbishop Arthur Roche of Dom Erik Varden as Abbot. Many other Benedictine and Cistercian monks and nuns were there and it was good to meet again with so many familiar faces. Several of us met up again at Buckfast Abbey from the 16th-19th June for the General Assembly of the Union of Monastic Superiors. It was Mother's first visit to Buckfast, which is the most fantastic place. The church is being restored and re-ordered as a monastery was founded on the site in 1018 and so the monks are busy preparing to celebrate their Millenium in three years' time.



Sister Mary Hannah at a Mass on Jeju Island, Korea.

THERE IS A LOT OF INTERCHANGE between religious communities nowadays and events include a visit by Sr Mary Teresa from the Priory of Our Lady, Walsingham; Mother Mary Luke and Sr Mary Catherine going to Mucknell Abbey on the 12th May for the Life Profession of Sr Sally and on the 7th August to Derby for the 150th Anniversary celebrations of the Community of the Holy Name. They are our nearest Anglican religious community and there is much interchange between us. Unfortunately they couldn't hold the service in the cathedral as it is undergoing extensive renovation but the nearby Roman Catholic church, St Mary's, came to the

rescue and offered themselves as the venue. After the service at which the celebrant and preacher was the Rt Rev'd Dr Rowan Williams, a bus took us back to the convent for a buffet lunch during which there was time to look at the exhibition of the Sisters' life and work over the 150 years as well as meet many old friends. Four of their sisters, including one from Lesotho and one from Zululand came to Costock for the afternoon on August 14th.

On October 17th Sr Mary Julian and Sr Mary Bernadette were in York Minster for the Centenary celebrations of the Order of the Holy Paraclete. Archbishop Sentamu presided, the preacher was the Rt Rev'd Paul Ferguson, Bishop of Whitby. The Minster was crowded with many friends and sisters from the UK and Africa. After the service packed lunches were provided in the transepts of the Minster with time to meet and greet everyone.

Some of the CHN Sisters visiting us in August.



MOTHER MARY LUKE also attended the Conference of Leaders of Anglican Religious Communities at Mirfield from the 12th-15th October. With communities getting smaller and more frail it is important that we support one another and meetings such as these help to encourage each other.

On March 2nd Bishop David Hope came with two assessors, Sr Susan SLG and Angela Sibson, the diocesan secretary of Lincoln, to conduct a visitation. We are very grateful for the time they each spent with each of us and the valuable recommendations they made which we are gradually implementing. Bishop David was back with us for Holy Week and Easter and together with Canon Kenneth Court we had a splendid celebration of the Easter Vigil with more than thirty people from local parishes joining us.

A few weeks beforehand, on the 13th March, 8ctave, the country's only singing ensemble made up entirely of ordained clergy, gave a concert in our chapel of Stainer's 'Crucifixion'. It was stupendous and the chapel was packed. One of the audience said afterwards that it was the best rendering of the Crucifixion she had ever heard.



MOTHER ON IONA. I had long been wanting to visit Iona, especially as I made my life profession of the feast day of St Columba. This year, thanks to the planning wizardry of Sr Mary Cuthbert, I headed north on the 21st May and spent the night with her in her hermitage at Bewerley before both of us travelled up to Scotland. The drive along Loch Lomond, Glen Lochy and Loch Awe was beautiful and we then headed west to Connel and had a night in a B&B, saying our Office together in the sitting room with the sun shining on the sparkling sea of Loch Linnhe.

The following morning Sr Mary Cuthbert dropped me off at the ferry terminal at Oban while she carried on northwards to Sunderland to spend a hermit week in silence and solitude. I made the ferry trip to Craignure on the Island of Mull and caught the bus to Ffionnphort; an exhilarating journey on single track roads through most spectacular scenery. Then a short ten minute ferry trip across the Sound of Iona to the island. I was staying at Cnoc a' Chalmain, an RC House of Prayer run by Sr Jean RSCJ who made me very welcome. Shortly after I arrived there was an amusing episode: a couple with a three year old girl and baby boy called in on their way back from Columba's Bay because Sophie wanted to see a real nun. Apparently Sr Jean would not do as she doesn't wear a habit so she fetched me. They were a delightful family and I kindly obliged by singing 'Doh a deer' and other songs from Sound of Music which was Sophie's favourite show. Luckily my sisters were not around as they are mortified when I launch into song!



Cnoc a' Chalmain overlooking the Sound of Mull.

The other guests at Cnoc a' Chalmain were an international and ecumenical mix with Americans, Germans as well as Scots and English. Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and other denominations were represented. Anne Cooper, a deacon in Guildford who was visiting Iona before she was ordained priest in June, took me under her wing. I had discovered when looking round the Abbey and exploring the surrounds that scrambling up rocky hills was one thing; coming down was a very different matter and that would prevent me from going very far on my own. I could manage the walk to the north end beaches and across the machair to the western side but Columba's Bay was beyond me. However Anne suggested we might go to Staffa to see Fingals' Cave together and she would give me any help I needed.

It was cold and windy; the temperature of both air and sea being about 42 degrees but a whole boatload made the journey and I was delighted to see that there were good steps with a sturdy hand rope attached to the rock going to the top of the island where we were hoping to see puffins. They turned out to be on the sea many feet below so we ate our packed lunches, went down the steps and made our way round the hexagonal columns of basalt to the cave. I didn't go in very far as after a few yards there was no hand rope but it was still very impressive. That evening, at supper, Anne said that as I had managed well at Staffa she thought I could do Columba's Bay with her and Fr Michael Hickey, an RC priest who was also staying at Cnoc a' Chalmain. We decided to go the following day.

The weather pretty well the whole week was, Sr Jean said, dreadful for the time

of year and the Wednesday was no exception. Well wrapped up the three of us made the trek over the hills and bogs in the centre of the island and reached the bay when the rain began. And it rained and rained. In spite of that we searched through the multi-coloured pebbles to see if we could find the special green ones known as St Columba's tears. I found what I thought was one but Fr Michael said it was only a bit of green glass polished by other stones—alas!



A very wet Mother Mary Luke.

The return journey took about an hour and a half and we got drenched, soaked to the skin despite waterproof clothing. When I got back to Cnoc a' Chalmain I had a hot shower and got into bed with two hot water bottles. Sr Jean is well used to guests arriving back soaked and has a hanging rack over the aga for clothes to dry out on.

On Friday, my last day on the island, Gail, an Episcopalian priest from the USA, and I went to Port Ban on the west side where there is a beach with white sand and the sea is a clear bright blue. The sun even shone at times! When you consider that I am a person who hates 'weather' it was incredible that I enjoyed the week immensely; cold, wind and wet notwithstanding. Columba's Bay was the highlight, just standing where he landed and decided to stay as he couldn't see Ireland from the top of a nearby hill. There are many moments in anyone's spiritual journey when we have resolutely to turn our backs on the past and go forward, trusting God. Iona is definitely a place where this sense of having to let go and move on is very strong.

One more detail to make bird watchers green with envy—I not only heard but *saw* several corncrakes.

ON MY RETURN I ‘hit the ground running’ as the next day I was booked to give two workshops at the Southwell Diocesan Clergy Study Day at the Minster. The Rt Rev’d Dr Rowan Williams gave an excellent keynote address on prayer and my contribution was to speak about prayer and silence in the Benedictine tradition. On my return home I was able to greet the Rev’d David and Deborah Thornton-Wakeford from Adelaide who were staying for a couple of days. David is the nephew of our late Sister Mary Benedict and it was lovely to see him and Deb after nearly 21 years.

On the 4th June we were very sad to hear that Fr Graham Sillis, one of the priests who celebrated regularly for us, had died. The last time he celebrated for us was on the feast of St Joseph. Sisters Mary Julian, Mary Michael and Mary Catherine attended his funeral at St Luke’s Derby on the 23rd June. Our thoughts and prayers are with Tania and his sons David and Timothy and all the family.

June 27th was a happy day when Mother Mary Luke, Sr Mary Julian, Sr Mary Bernadette and Sr Mary Catherine went to Southwell Minster for the enthronement of our new bishop, Paul Williams. After an inspiring service we all had refreshments in a marquee in the garden and met up with many other friends from the diocese.

There have been opportunities for ongoing study this year. Dr Christina Baxter has kindly agreed to continue Bible studies with us and we have read 2 Chronicles together and are now beginning 1 Corinthians. In August Barbara Williams was staying for a few days and gave us a fascinating lecture on St Oswald. Louise attended a conference at Swanwick ‘*Finding Balance*’ run by the Retreat Association - *Listen, learn, reflect worship, share, network* with Rt Rev’d Dr Rowan Williams, Christopher Jamieson OSB, Rev’d Barbara Glasson, Dr Ian McGilchrist.

TIME OUT TOGETHER Families need some quality time in each other’s company now and then in order to survive intact. Convents and monasteries are no exception. Thus once again this year we had a ‘corporate holiday at home’ - a slight break in routine for a few days in August, incorporating three outings together on separate days.

First, on the 13th we set off early to visit Yorkshire, where we spent a happy and relaxing day with Sr M. Cuthbert at her hermitage at Bewerley Grange. The weather was kind and we were even able to sit outside and admire the garden for a time. Sister did us more than proud with her sumptuous lunch, catering for everyone’s needs and packing up the leftovers for us to bring home. It was also a joy to pray the office together in the medieval Cistercian chapel – a living link with the past. (*see front cover*).



Canon Johannes Arens & the Dean, David Monteith, with Fr David Maudlin on the right.

Secondly Monday 17th saw us nearer home in Leicester. Back in March the amazing events surrounding the reinterment of King Richard III in the cathedral there had stirred the imagination of countless people nationwide & beyond. It seemed fitting for us in our turn to pay our respects at his tomb and pray for the repose of his soul.

Thanks to the generosity of our clergy friends Fr David Maudlin, priest in charge at St Mary de Castro, Canon Johannes Arens precentor at the cathedral and we were treated to a wonderful lunch, Italian style, followed up by mouth-watering ice cream at Gelato Village. A vote of thanks is certainly called for here.

The refurbishment of the cathedral to accommodate the royal tomb is impressive. The adjacent chapel of Christ the King is a sensitive indication that Richard’s burial place, behind the high altar, is not meant to be a saintly shrine. Due respect has been shown to a monarch hastily buried, and as he would wish prayers may now be made for him there.

Fr David gave us a grand tour of his ancient and fascinating church of St Mary de Castro, and of other places of historical interest in the city – not least the Roman remains. It was another glorious day bringing history into the present once again.

Lastly, and by no means least, we had a delightful day out in the company of our staff from the convent, a hilarious time being had by all. Terry Bailey had put us in touch with the Peter Le Marchant Trust who organise boat trips on inland water ways, catering especially for disabled & elderly folk. Thus, on September 19th we all met up at the canal in Loughborough, clambered on board 'Symphony' and glided tranquilly down the canal and the River Soar.

Time stood still, it was idyllic. The weather was again kind as we glided slowly along past the tree-lined banks and the pastureland where cattle and horses meandered down to drink. Ducks & geese floated ahead of us undeterred, herons stood statue-like on the banks nonchalantly. Then there were the splendid houses at Barrow with gardens down to the river, vying with each other for originality.



We admired the workmanship of the locks and the skill of those manoeuvring us through. Once more we were living with history, the development of travel through the years – river, road, and the hidden railway running nearby. The boom of constant traffic overhead as we passed under road bridges now and then brought us into the here and now with a vengeance. Passing folks on boats waived cheerily, amazed to see a bevy of nuns on a jaunt.

Thanks are due this time to our gallant convent helpers who provided a delicious picnic lunch for us all. Bravo! All agreed that it had been a truly unique & enjoyable day. Deo Gratias!



The best use for Crockford that Thea has found.

CATSTOCK CHRONICLE Last year's Chronicle ended with the intrusion into our space of an alien female whom our staff called Charlie. We are pleased to announce that the light was seen and one day last December this alien (we forbear to give her the dignity of calling her a cat as she had no tail) disappeared. Once again we reign supreme in the household. There is still some way to go before we are totally satisfied with the staff who have a distressing tendency to believe they are in charge of the food supplies. On several occasions we have bypassed their arrangements and obtained what we consider adequate for our health and well-being. A particular fruitful source is day visitors who bring packed lunches. To us any bag means food so we sneak in the front hall unobserved as visitors arrive, we slink around their feet till they put their bags on the floor, we investigate the bags, identify a packet containing food, extract it from the bag and open it with speed, food bag, tinfoil and all. Surprisingly this action has not always met with unadulterated approval by staff or visitors. We thought they would commend us for our resourcefulness. Occasionally a member of staff omits to close the door of our larder after feeding us leaving us access to the boxes of food pouches. It is simple to claw them to the floor and bite open. Several times we have thus managed to eke out our meagre diet with an extra pouch or two. The only snag is feeling very bloated afterwards but that soon goes. Soon it will be Christmas and we are looking forward to all the extra titbits which fall from the sisters' table. May you all have plenty of what you need this Christmas.

Charlie has been adopted by a retired priest; the father-in-law of one of our oblates. She has fallen on her paws and is very happy being the sole cat in the establishment and from what we hear already has her staff well trained.

THE NEWS THIS YEAR has seldom been uplifting: the plight of the refugees, the fear of terrorist activity, the effects of austerity measures on the least well off in the land, anxiety about global warming and its effects worldwide, the disclosure of immorality, fraud and other serious allegations against many people in high positions of authority, let alone the troubles afflicting the Anglican Church and its ministers, all combine to produce a climate of cynicism. We feel powerless to affect any change. But if the season of Christmas teaches us one thing it is that God himself became powerless, coming into the world as a baby, dependant on others for his well-being. The infancy stories in St Luke prefigure his message throughout the rest of his gospel. With his emphasis on those who are poor, marginalised, powerless, outcast, despised or neglected, he is saying: see Jesus here, uncover me here; not only the 'deserving poor' but also in outright sinners. Who are our equivalents of the Samaritan and the man he cared for, the Pharisees, Pontius Pilate, Zaccheus, the widow of Nain, the prodigal son and his brother, the leper? Some of these people we may instinctively abhor but they are also children of God so we must pray for them and give them our help as well as compassion. If the prayer of a righteous man or woman effects much, should we not give ourselves to prayer for the needs of the world and all its people, including those which fill us with horror?

“The Christian faith makes sense only if we have a firm belief in the resurrection. If there is no resurrection - life is not worth it. Live it up and die - a natural conclusion to any denial of the resurrection, be it Sadducean or secular! Resurrection means endless hope, but no resurrection means a hopeless end - and hopelessness breeds dissipation.” (*Paul through Mediterranean Eyes* by Kenneth Bailey)

*We wish you and all whom you love a very Happy Christmas
and joy and hope in the New year.*