



## COSTOCK CHRONICLE 2017



This year has seen many changes in our life. On Christmas Day oblate Louise, who has been living alongside and managing the guest house for several years, announced that she was getting married and wished to leave after Easter. On the work side her place has been taken by Andrew, who in addition to looking after the guest bookings has become PA to Reverend Mother, thus saving her from several nervous breakdowns when trying to navigate HMRC and other official websites.

Bobbie Tyson, one of our cleaners who has worked for us since 1987, decided to retire because of ill health at the end of March. Sadly, Bobbie died on the 20th October; our thoughts go out to her family: Stewart, Stephen, Caroline and Julie as well as her numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Just before Easter we were basking in the reflected glory of Sr Mary Joseph's brother John Thorpe. He was a recipient of the Royal Maundy Money in recognition of over 70 years of service to Leicester Cathedral and its choirs. After Easter John and Celia came to show us the photographs and the coins. Sr Mary Hannah came over from Korea to be with us for Easter. Our Visitor, Bishop David Hope, came for Holy Week and Easter as in previous years and was assisted by our Warden, the Venerable Gavin Kirk who, on Good Friday, sang the Passion from St John's gospel. As usual we were joined by people from the surrounding parishes for the Holy Saturday Vigil and first Mass of Easter.

The passions and beatitudes featured in our annual retreat which began on Easter Monday and was conducted by Bishop Rowan Williams. Sr Mary Cuthbert came down from Beverley to join us for part of it and we also invited the priests who celebrate for us regularly, other oblates and associates and some local friends to join us. For the next three days we had a masterly exposition of the 'passions' or eight deadly sins: pride, lust, anger,

greed, avarice, envy, sloth, and despair. Bishop Rowan juxtaposed each of these with the appropriate beatitude which is the remedy for the 'passion' or sin. So the antidote to pride is becoming poor in spirit; to sloth or listlessness, mourning; anger is counteracted by meekness, gluttony by a hunger and thirst for justice, avarice by mercy, desire or lust by becoming pure in heart, envy by becoming a peacemaker and despair by suffering for justice.

After the retreat Louise left. We are very grateful to her for all the help she has given us in the past few years and wish her every happiness. Sr Mary Julian left on the second part of her sabbatical on the 29th April. She had already spent two weeks in Kent in March but had returned home for Holy Week and Easter. Now she was off to Northumberland and other places – an account appears later in this Chronicle. We are most grateful to Maggie, Jan, Lynne and Rachel who came for various periods to help out. Without them it is doubtful that the cats would have been fed!



While Sister Mary Julian was away our activities were restricted a bit. Mother Mary Luke wasn't able to attend the General Assembly of the Union of Monastic Superiors which took place at Douai Abbey but joined them on the 7th June when they made a visit to Lambeth Palace where the Archbishop of Canterbury joined us to discuss Religious Life and its place in the Church. We also met members of the Community of St Anselm which is based at Lambeth

and heard from them what had inspired them during their time there. Finally we were given a tour of the Palace before leaving.

On Sister Mary Julian's return to work there were some health problems among the sisters. Nothing serious but necessitating a lot of visits to doctors and hospitals which were time consuming. Thankfully all seems to be well now though there has been a toll on the ability to care for resident guests and we are still being careful not to overload ourselves with too much work. We are sorry if some of you have not been able to visit us as usual.

We have managed to attend some conferences: in July Sr Mary Catherine attended a conference for members of both traditional and new communities at Lee Abbey and Mother Mary Luke attended the conference for the Leaders of Anglican

Communities at Mirfield in October, both of which were very interesting and affirming. Rev'd Mother also attended a one day conference for monks and nuns at West Malling Abbey on the 1st August at which the subject was: "The values that motivate and sustain us and how we can offer these resources to other traditional and new communities and how we might find ways which might 'reach' the present generation". The discussions in small groups were very lively and stimulating. On the 8th August Mother Mary Luke and Sr Mary Julian went to the Benedictines at Mucknell Abbey for the Life profession of Sr Alison and the first profession of Br Aidan. Mother Mary Luke was again at the Abbey for the blessing of Br Thomas as abbot on the 10th November. Mother also attended the SSC Provincial Synod in London on 27th September, preached at the patronal festival for St Luke's Church, Derby on the 18th October and gave an introduction to the Religious Life at a Young Vocations evening In London on the 13th November.

## CATSTOCK CHRONICLE 2017

Honestly, you'd think they would learn by experience, wouldn't you! Two years ago a refugee cat (if you could call her a cat as she had no tail) arrived in the house and tried to make her home here. Well we weren't having that and mounted an aggressive campaign which convinced the staff that there was no future for her here and they would have to get rid of her. Learn their lesson? HUH! This year another upstart thought she could muscle in on our domain and the stupid staff felt sorry for her and ensconced in the staff room. Did they really think they could get away with that? Every morning the two of us sat outside the staff room waiting for her to emerge and proceeded to show her who was boss in this house. Eventually the message got through and Tilly (we called her Silly) departed. Now peace reigns once more though we are on the lookout in case the staff still haven't learned the lesson.

One excellent thing which has happened is the coming of Andrew who always has a packet of Dreamies in his pocket. That's what we call a sensible member of staff. He has a lovely touch when tickling or stroking and hits exactly the right spot to have us squirming in pleasure.

Now the season of peace is coming and we are greatly looking forward to lots



of food and comfortable naps, with perhaps some choir recitals in between to give the staff pleasure. May all of you have a Christmas of joy and peace too.

*Thea and Summa*

(Tilly found an excellent home with a friend of Sr Mary Catherine and is very happy there.)



Avocets

## Sister Mary Julian's Sabbatical

After 25 years with me as Assistant Superior the Community needed some respite care so they sent me away for three months! I cannot express my thanks enough to Mother Mary Luke and the Sisters for allowing me this Sabbatical. It was a most generous offer and I took it up with alacrity. My plan was threefold fold. First some retreat and spiritual refreshment, second, as a lifelong birder, plenty of birdwatching and third to engage in some research into the Community's early history during the time we were a Mission Sisterhood.

It all began in March with two weeks at Dymchurch in Kent. I had a little house right against the sea wall. It had a tiny garden with a hedge, a seat, an apple tree and daffodils in bloom. I could to walk back into the village along the sea wall.

My first research project was to visit to the parish of Saints Peter and Paul Charlton in Dover. I had a wonderful greeting at the main Sunday Mass from the Wardens and my good friend Dave Brewster who had engineered everything for my visit. It was truly wonderful to worship in the place where our Sisters had worked and worshipped between 1877 and 1913. The 'new' church was built in 1888, so they would have watched its construction and been present at the dedication. Many of our Sisters worked in the parish at one time or another but two of them stand out: Sister Emily who was Sister in Charge from 1883 till her death in 1898 and Sr Margaret Agnes who was in charge from 1898 till her death in 1913. Both are buried in Dover Cemetery and both have memorials to them in the church. The Sicilian pavement in the Sanctuary was laid in memory of Sister Emily and there is a commemorative plaque on the wall to say so. Sister Margaret Agnes has the central West window in her memory, commemorated in an integral inscription under the depiction of St Paul Caught up to Paradise.

On the Feast of the Annunciation I drove to St Peter's Folkestone for Our Lady's Mass. St Peter's is the church where the Dover Sisters went for their confessions. The priest, Fr Ridsdale, was the first of those of the Oxford Movement persecuted for ritualism in the Church of England.



Sr Margaret Agnes



Sr Emily

On Sunday I drove to Dover to meet Dave Brewster again and we went to the Cemetery, just up the road from the church. It took us nearly 2 hours but we found Sr Emily. As Dave said 'At the point of giving up, there was Sr Emily in shining white'. We also found Fr Baynham, the Vicar of the time. Sr Emily is indeed buried, as she had requested, at the feet of Fr Baynham.

Sr Margaret Agnes we did not find. There were so many graves where the inscription was unreadable or the stone had fallen or there was no stone, or it was so overgrown we could not get near it. This, despite the fact that this was a very nice, well looked after cemetery. I prayed for all the Sisters at the grave. Dave will continue the search but we had both had enough by the time we found Sr Emily, so Sr Margaret Agnes will wait for another visit.

Most days I spent some early morning time around 6.30am walking or sitting on the deserted beach just over the sea wall. This was a good time of day to see flocks of a small wading bird called sanderling and also turnstones. The former race along the water's edge, skipping out the way as a wave washes towards them.

Sr Mary Joseph's brother Tony lives in Dymchurch and is a birder of great experience. He took me on a trip to RSPB Reserve at Dungeness. We saw water rail, dunlin, wigeon, teal, pintail and many more. There was supposed to be a Ring-necked duck we only *thought* we could see, they are very rare and difficult to tell from tufted ducks at a distance. I returned a couple of days later and found the ring-necked duck. No doubt about it this time with some really close views.



Brighton was reachable from Kent and I visited St Paul's where our Mother Foundress, Elizabeth Neale, worshipped in the 1850's before she went to join Fr Lowder at Wapping. The weather was appalling. Chucking rain and everywhere awash. I got early to St Paul's, a bit wet, but in time for the daily Mass. Fr Robert Norbury was very welcoming and it was wonderful to be able to attend Mass in the church which had nurtured Mother Elizabeth's faith as a young woman.

Fr Robert walked with me to Brunswick Square in the pouring rain and we found the Neale's house. It is very posh indeed.

Five stories plus a basement. Elizabeth had lived there with her mother and her two sisters. Her brother, John Mason Neale, was by that time at Sackville College in East Grinstead.

I made several visits to the Bird Observatory way out on Dungeness Point under the brooding stare of the power station. It is the massive shingle area that is the Western-most edge of the Straits of Dover and is a major migration watchpoint. I gained entrance to a hide looking out to sea where the official 'sea-watchers' for that day were stationed. They were very friendly to a stray penguin. We were watching birds way out at sea flying, migrating, along the horizon. I saw red-throated divers, gannets and a couple of hundred brent geese and was the first to see a party of common scoters (a black duck) zooming along the horizon. They turned out to have three velvet scoters among them which caused some extra interest. There were murmurs of 'well spotted', a bit like a catch at cricket. One of the party fixed his telescope on the beach and showed me an Iceland gull. Wonderful! A great big grubby-looking brute. A new tick for my Life List.

Later I walked out across the inland shingle, covered with clumps of gorse, all in flower, lovely smell. There in the gorse bushes I found two firecrest. Tiny little birds, who had just flown across the Channel. They looked almost like large moths, flickering in the gorse flowers.



After being at home for Holy Week, Easter and the Community Retreat, I set off again on for Alnmouth in Northumberland. Here I had a little ground floor flat in a Victorian house for three weeks, overlooking the sea and the mouth of the Aln. With the Franciscan Friary along the road, where to go for Mass was no problem. It was good to see the brothers, to greet old friends and to meet new. I also met up with a Birding group from East Leake who were staying for a few days. It was lovely to see them and exchange bird news.

The sky was blue and clear, the sun was shining but the temperature was absolutely freezing and remained so for the whole three weeks. A walk along the beach always produced eider, Sandwich terns and turnstones.

Just along the coast there is a massive tern nesting site called Long Nanny with thousands of Arctic terns and the rare little tern. The mile walk through the Links was jumping with stonechats clicking on every post and gorse bush, skylarks shooting up from the ground and meadow pipits perching on fences. Near to the site the sky over the shore was full of terns, screaming and chattering. There are about 2,000 Arctic tern nests and 40/50 of little terns. The latter are the second rarest breeding sea bird in the UK.



I made several pilgrimages to Holy Island. Early on in my time the tides were high in the morning so I arrived on the Island before 7am thus ensuring that there were hardly any tourist visitors until lunch time. Mass at St Mary's church was at 8am and afterwards I sat on the Causeway and watched the waders coming in with the tide. On these mudflats there were more ringed plovers than I have ever seen before, feeding, dashing about and busy pairing up; there must have been hundreds. There were also grey plovers in their smart black and white dinner

suits, knot, turnstones, dunlin, bar-tailed godwits. Up in the Links was a positive infestation of meadow pipits, skylarks and wheatears.

On my final visit to Holy Island, as I climbed the first 'hill' of the Links I could hear the very beautiful sound of the seals 'singing'. The noise of them calling their lament on the wind followed me as I walked on. I found a secluded spot where I ate my lunch, high up on the Links, overlooking the beautiful north beach. The sea was dark blue and a constant stream of brilliant white gannets trickled past, diving as they went. Walking on I



was suddenly confronted by two roe deer in the marram grass. They leapt up and one ran to a high dune but stayed there watching me. I am pretty sure she must have had a fawn down in the marram. I did not go to look but stayed very still and the doe came back a little way. Every time I moved off a little she came back a little. I tiptoed off, as much as you can in walking boots, leaving her in peace. As I reached the land between the dunes and the grassland a splendid peregrine flew over and circled low just above me. He was lit by the sun as he turned and showed all his fanned out feathers of wings and tail and his smart black moustache. He was gone again in seconds. Out on the grassland I walked parallel to the drystone wall where I saw a weasel tearing along the top. His agility and speed on the uneven surface was great to watch. He covered well over 100 yards faster than I could keep up with him.

I took two birding boat trips. One around Coquet Island just off Amble, to see the roseate terns, and the other to the Farne Islands where St Cuthbert ended his days. On Inner Farne the noise was tremendous as was the smell. There were Arctic terns everywhere, close enough to touch and all screaming abuse at us and each other. Further up the island were hundreds of puffins, popping in and out of burrows and eider ducks sitting on eggs. The cliffs were full of nesting kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills and shags and even several bridled guillemots.



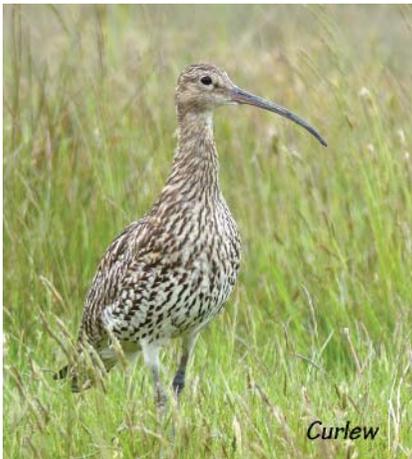
Between 1876 and 1905 we ran the Nurses' Institute in York. This housed around 70 nurses who worked across the city. We also did parish work and ran a scheme for free health care for the poor. The Grey Coat School next door was also in our care. A number of Sisters had worked in York over the years and Sister Rose died whilst she was Sister Superior of the house. On my York trip I went first to the Cemetery where I met the 'Friends of York Cemetery'. They said the grave was very overgrown, full of nettles, bluebells and cow parsley. It was very attractive but away from the paths it looked impenetrable. One of the 'Friends' came with me and after much slashing and clearing made a pathway to Sister's grave. There were three nurses also buried in the same grave. Two had died of typhoid and one of consumption, all in their 20's or early 30's. I said the Office of Sext there and prayed. I walked back into York to Monkgate and found the two buildings that had been the Nurses' Institute and the Grey Coat School next door, now the Health Centre, photographing them for our archive. For lunch and tea I met Sr Linda OHP. She has worked at the Minster for a number of years and it was lovely to be able to visit her at the OHP house. In the afternoon I visited a couple of the churches where we had worked before catching the train back to Alnmouth.



The book says the citrine wagtail is a vagrant usually seen once or twice a year in the UK. That is rare. One was reported one evening about twenty minutes' drive away. I decided to go early next morning. It was very foggy and cold which meant that the wagtail would probably still be there. Three birders with 'scopes and cameras were hiding behind a dry-stone wall. The beautiful female bird was busy feeding and walking briskly in our direction. We just stayed still and she walked right in front of us working away at breakfast as she went. By evening there were upwards of 50 people there and cars lining the roadside but the bird had gone.

My next stop was Sleights on the North York Moors. I had a week to enjoy a cottage belonging to the OHP Sisters at Whitby. It was lovely to be back again. The view overlooking Eskdale is beautiful and the steam train puffed across the valley below almost as soon as I arrived. The weather decided it was summer and was very hot indeed for my stay.

On Sunday I went to Mass at St Martin on the Hill, Scarborough. Fr David Dixon is an Oblate of ours and our Sr Elizabeth Holdsworth lived in the parish from 1882 till her death in 1895. She is buried in Scarborough Cemetery and, yes, I found

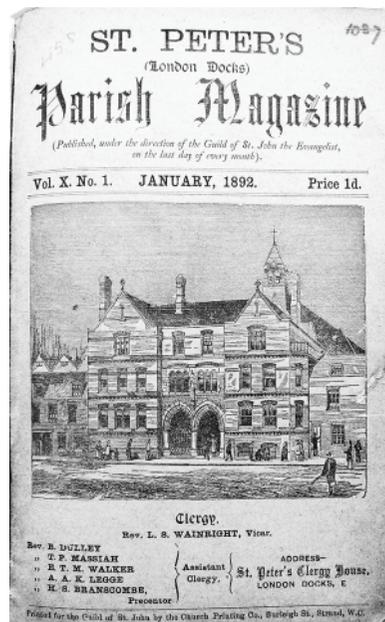


her grave and also the house where she had lived with her nurse. She had some infirmity that needed help to be on hand. I did many walks in the forests, along rivers and the coast. Early mornings and evenings I went up onto the High Moor to see and hear the moorland birds. I rarely saw anyone else. There were red grouse, curlews, snipe, lapwings, skylarks, and the inevitable meadow pipits. It was magnificent, peaceful and silent except for the birds. One morning I drove over to Rosedale Moor before 6am. There were all the usual sounds but as I was sitting on the edge of a plantation I heard

both turtle doves and crossbills. The crossbills were in a family party up in the pine trees, processing pine cones with great rapidity. Another tick for my Life List.

In a swelteringly hot London my main objective was research. From my very comfortable room at St Matthew's House Westminster, I achieved visits to four parishes, two Archives and one cemetery. My daily programme was generally a morning visit, a late lunch, writing up my notes, then Choral Evensong at Westminster Abbey or Vespers at the Cathedral.

There were visits to Christ Church Clapham where we worked from 1908-1918. St Agnes Kennington, 1870-1885. St Saviour's Pimlico, 1891-1921 and of course St Peter's London Docks for our first 75 years. At Clapham I located the Mission House where we had lived, now a guest house, and visited the church. At Kennington the house was long gone and the church is one built in the 1950's to replace the one bombed in WW II. St Saviour's Pimlico still has a brass plate and doorbell on the tower door which says *St Saviour's Sisters*. It was very exciting and a great privilege to be shown round each church by the incumbent and I am very grateful for the time and trouble taken by each one. There is more material on all these parishes in the London Archives and I shall continue my researches.



Obviously the place that commanded the major part of my attention was our beloved St Peter's London Docks. Fr T E Jones was just days away from his retirement when I visited yet he was unstinting with his time in passing on his encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of his parish. I had almost a whole day with him visiting the church, the parish and the school and more of his time when I went to Mass on the Sundays. To return to our deepest roots, worshipping with the people of Wapping, was as ever, a moving experience. Our Sisters, with Fr Lowder watched St Peter's church being built as a magnificent endorsement of the work going on in the parish.



One of my visits coincided with the anniversary of my Profession. As is our custom, I asked Fr Jones for a blessing after Mass. He led me to the sanctuary and in front of the altar, gave me a blessing as I knelt where many of our early Sisters had knelt to make their own Profession. On the altar that day was a superb altar cloth that had been made and embroidered by our Sisters together with the prostitutes from the streets of Wapping on their journey to reform.

I spent a number of days incarcerated in either the London Metropolitan Archive or the Westminster City Archive. As a result I have a great deal of information on Sisters and work in the various parishes, details of which I have been able to bring home. There is much to write up and even more still to research at some other time and there are many places not yet visited. Research will continue incrementally at present but I hope that sometime I will be able to follow up many things only just begun.

Arriving home in July for my last couple weeks I found that there were rare bee-eaters nesting in East Leake Quarry only two miles away. Birding began again.

My time in London began just after the London Bridge terrorist attack and during my second week there was the terrible Grenfell Tower disaster. I am sure these events made us all aware of the desperate need of prayer for the tragic and troubled state of our world.

Thanks are due to so many people. At various points in my Sabbatical I was treated to meals and visits by friends and relatives, including, like Mother Mary Luke last year, dinner at the Athenaeum with our Warden, the Venerable Gavin Kirk who had also bravely and generously lent me his car for the Kent and Northern parts of the Sabbatical.

I also stayed with two lots of family in Dorset involving an exciting trip to South Devon to view a new house and also a most memorable, and magical evening on Canford Heath in the dusk, watching a hobby hunting and listening to the strange, eerie sound of the nightjars; one

*of the birding highlights. Most of all my heartfelt thanks are due to Mother Mary Luke and all my Sisters for allowing me time and space to do all the wonderful things that I mention so briefly above. It was a renewing, enjoyable and most exciting time. Thank you all so much.*

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A Rabbi once asked his students, “how do we know when the night has ended and the day has begun?” Immediately the students answered: “when I can tell the difference between a horse and a cow” or “when I can distinguish between my field and a neighbour’s” and other similar answers. The Rabbi frowned and finally shouted: “No, you don’t understand! You only know how to divide!” The puzzled students asked, “then how do we know when night has ended and the day begun?” With a gentle voice the Rabbi responded: “When you can look into the face of the person beside you and you can see that that person is your brother or sister, when you recognise that person as a friend, then, finally, the night has ended and the day begun.”

This last year has been one in which the divisions seem to grow wider and deeper. The world knows how to divide, how to separate and further split our world into pieces. We need to stop dividing the world and find new ways of uniting it. We do not need to have the right answer but an open, perceptive heart to understand that all people are created in the image of God and everyone is equally loved by him.

Centuries earlier another rabbi sat on a hill before a crowd. He began a prayerful litany, one blessing after another. He proclaimed the blessedness of a poor spirit, a meek and pure heart, a mourning heart, a thirst for justice, mercy and peace, the reward of being persecuted and reviled. If listening to the Beatitudes now we were asked to explain their meaning, I suspect most of us would miss the point. Like the modern rabbi Jesus was trying to teach his followers not *WHAT* to see, but *HOW* to see. Jesus himself is the light who came into the world at Christmas and the eight Beatitudes point the way.

Let us pray this Christmas for a full heart which will enable us to look into the face of the person who is beside us and see Christ in that person; a heart which will allow us to respect other views and the people who hold them even when we disagree; a heart that will bring us together to pray and sing, to celebrate and mourn, to be one strengthened community, a heart which builds bridges, not walls: then and only then will the darkness end and the new light will have begun.