

# The Colwich Chronicle

*Special Edition : Advent 2001*

**St. Mary's Abbey Colwich Stafford ST18 0UF**

**Tel: 01 889 881282 Fax: 01 889 881173 e-mail:colwich@classicfm.net**

## **350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

From First Vespers of All Saints there was a candle in the window, to mark the real Christian Halloween, and the start of celebrations to mark the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the community.

It was about All Saints 1651 that three members of the English Benedictines from Cambrai arrived in Paris, driven by poverty to seek support for a new foundation. This small beginning became the Monastery of Our Lady of Good Hope, the community now at St. Mary's Abbey, Colwich, Stafford.

The high point of the celebrations was on 7<sup>th</sup> November, when the Most Rev. Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Birmingham, was Chief Concelebrant at the Mass of Thanksgiving at Colwich.



Also celebrating were the present and retired Abbot Presidents of the English Benedictine Congregation, with some twenty other priests. Among the many guests were nuns of Stanbrook Abbey (originally at Cambrai), more Benedictines

from Curzon Park Chester and Cistercians from Whitland. The Anglican Bishop of Litchfield and the vicar of Colwich were also present. About a hundred people enjoyed a buffet after Mass, allowed inside the enclosure for this special occasion.

## **The History**

The English Benedictine Abbey of Our Lady of Consolation was founded in 1623 at Cambrai in the Spanish-ruled Netherlands. At that time, persecution made it impossible for women to become nuns in England, so they went into exile. In 1651, because of the poverty of the community, three of them were sent to Paris to seek benefactors.

The distance from Cambrai to Paris is just over 100 miles. Dame Clementia Cary, her sister Dame Mary, Sister Scholastica Hodson, with Father Serenus Cressy, probably took several days on the journey, by public transport and wearing secular dress.

They reached Paris about 1st November, the Feast of All Saints, and stayed with the English Augustinian nuns.

Dame Clementia, who had been at the English court as a young woman, was able, through the exiled Queen Henrietta Maria, to obtain enough financial support to begin the community. She got permission to rent a house, and four more choir nuns and another lay sister were sent from Cambrai in February 1652.

Dame Bridget More, a direct descendant of the martyr Saint Thomas More, was then elected the first Prioress.

**visit our website:**

**[www.colwichabbey.org.uk](http://www.colwichabbey.org.uk)**

## Welcome

In March we welcomed Sister Sheila Kearney, a Visitation Sister, to try our life, and on 29<sup>th</sup> September she was clothed in the Benedictine habit.

Two new oblates made their oblation on the day before Pentecost, Brother Basil Rowell and Sister Joan Goodall.

## Goodbyes

After Easter we said goodbye to Kate Leycester and we wish her well on the next stage of her journey.

Kit Morrissey, our tenant at Abbey House, went to live with her daughter in August. We thank her for all her help and friendship for over twenty years.

## Deaths

**Dame Cecilia** Although she was ill, she celebrated her Golden Jubilee in July 2000, renewing her vows at Mass in a strong, clear voice. Just before her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday, she had an operation for cancer. She spent the last months of her life in the Monastic Infirmary, and died on 28<sup>th</sup> January during Sunday Mass.

On Good Friday **Sister Mary Benedict** died after a few days in St Giles Hospice Litchfield. Coming from the Augustinians, She only made her Benedictine Profession in 1999. A year before, she had an operation for cancer. She endeared herself to the community and made friends locally in her all too short stay with us.

We also lost a great friend in **Father Walter Jôret**, who had an operation in Holy Week, and died on 7<sup>th</sup> May.

We had Holy Mass and the Office of the Dead for the **victims of the terrorist attacks** in America on 11<sup>th</sup> September.

May they all rest in peace!

## Animals

On 20<sup>th</sup> January Peterkin had a stroke at breakfast. We called the vet who gave him an injection and he died very quietly. He was adopted by Mother Abbess Edith Street from the RSPCA in 1984 when a year old, and therefore he was about eighteen when he died. He became something of an Institution, especially with the old and sick nuns, and will be much missed.



The fox finally got the goose, and in September Mr Hine's last three cows went to an animal sanctuary: the end of "the farm".

## Summer Time

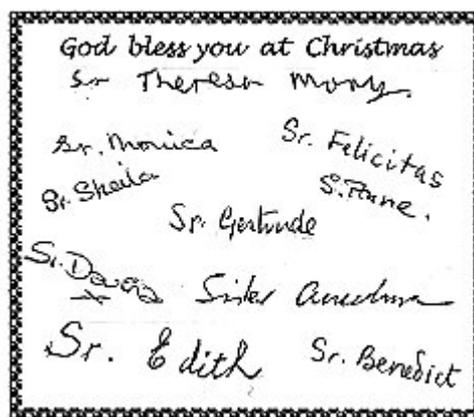
Lots of Sisters came to make their retreats, but for the month of August we became international! There were Sister Lucie and Sister Gabriela, Franciscan Sisters from the Czech Republic, here to improve their English, and Sister Ditrica, a Tanzanian Benedictine studying in Rome, who came to work on her thesis.

## Baptism

On 9<sup>th</sup> September Our parish priest, Father Michael Doyle, baptised George Francis Brown in the Abbey Church.

## Youth 2000 Retreat

Here on 1st December: Youth 2000 Day of Prayer.



## The Colwich Chronicle

*was produced regularly from 1931 to 1950 in typed sheets, and sent to other religious communities. In 1970 and 1971 it appeared in booklet form with an illustrated cover, then in 1972 it was back to a duplicated double page, and then no more! This Advent 2001 number is a Special Edition . . .*