

A SOCIETY UPDATE

by Fr Paul Martin, Director

One of the things the recent death of Her Majesty The Queen has taught us is that nothing in life is permanent. "All things must pass."

The St Barnabas Society has not been exempt from change. Recently, we received the sad news of the death of Father Robin Sanders, who faithfully served the Society as Director from 2001-2014, and also as a Trustee. He was deeply loved and respected, and a source of great kindness to the many who sought his counsel and the Society's support. An obituary will appear at a later date, but I wish to record my personal thanks to Father Robin for the unfailing courtesy he always showed to me. His knowledge and experience of the Society and its affairs was immeasurable. He was always a joy to talk to. May the angels now lead him into Paradise, and may he enjoy the eternal peace and rest God has promised to those who are faithful. Requiescat in Pace. Amen.



Father Robin Sanders 1949-2022



We have said a different kind of "goodbye" (in this case caused by "retirement") to three Board members who have served the Society with distinction – two of them for very many years. The Honourable Mrs Susie Buchan (1988-2022), Deacon Bob Hughes (1995-2022) and Father Gerard Hatton (2014-2022) will be very sadly missed. They have all helped to steer the Society through some very difficult and challenging times, but we have successfully emerged from them and grown stronger and more focused as a result. The Society will mark their retirement early in 2023 but, in the meantime, I would like to say a simple "thank you" on behalf of our Trustees, Officers and Beneficiaries, past and present, for everything they have contributed to the Society and its work during their time of faithful service.

Amidst all the "change and decay" which presently surrounds us, the Society continues its mission to provide pastoral and financial support for Clergy and Religious of other Christian denominations and World Faiths who seek reception into the Catholic Church. In recent months, we have welcomed several new beneficiaries and we have also seen the Prinknash Project (which featured so prominently in our last newsletter) start to gather momentum. It is a matter of priority for us to see the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary settled at Prinknash as soon as possible, and I know that you all share our concern for them. Your response to our financial appeal on their behalf, earlier this year, has been truly astonishing, and the Sisters themselves have been deeply touched by your kindness and generosity. The fundraising will continue until the work at Prinknash has been completed, and the Sisters have been safely installed there. I am confident that, once this has happened, God will fully reveal the plan He has for them and bless them with vocations and the other resources they will need to flourish in their new home.

Please pray for them, for the St Barnabas Society and for the Fernham Trust, as we work together to bring this project to its successful completion.

AN UPDATE ON THE PRINKNASH PROJECT

by *The Right Reverend Dom Cuthbert Brogan OSB*

The French have a great phrase ‘un travail de bénédictin’ - a Benedictine work. Fundamentally it signifies a task undertaken in a precise, unhurried, and meticulously thorough way. Usually the phrase brings to mind a great monastic intellectual project or a wonderful illuminated manuscript of the high Middle Ages, but it may also refer to buildings.

At Prinknash Abbey, part of the abandoned conventual buildings of the 1960s will, in the next years, become home to the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary from Kingstanding. The sisters, you will recall, entered into full communion with the Catholic Church in 2013, a decision which left them homeless and with meagre financial resources. The monks of Prinknash have invited them to live on their historic estate, whose Benedictine roots predate the English Reformation.

The transformation of these buildings will not be cheap but, when one considers the cost of buying and adapting a house suitable for the needs of a dozen nuns it is a project which is financially prudent and forward-looking.

This is very much ‘a Benedictine work’. To date it has involved deliberations within the monastic chapter of the monks of Prinknash and the Prinknash Abbey Trustees. The gracious permission of the Bishop of Clifton has been sought and granted for the nuns to take up residence within his diocese.

Behind the scenes, Dom Michael Vician OSB of Farnborough Abbey has engaged architects and surveyors to examine not only the visible parts of the building but all of its drains and services. The nuns have worked with a lady architect on honing the design and layout of the new monastery. A vast amount of progress has been made and we now are at the point of commencing physical work on the building.

The design will include a chapel, refectory, kitchen, library/ chapter room, work space, cells, parlours and offices. It will be well-insulated and will employ modern technology for heating so that future expenses and overheads are minimised. The project will also include some accommodation for retired priests, to create some regular income.

Recently we met on site for the final approval of the plans before works commence. It is an exciting moment, but also a nervous one, especially given the economic climate. But our trust is in the Lord, and we are confident that he will inspire



Brother Michael with the plans for the building

many to be generous in donating towards and participating in this important and imaginative ‘Benedictine work’.

As we monks and nuns pray when we take our vows ‘May God who has begun this good work, bring it to completion!’



Father Paul Martin, Director, meets with Brother Michael and the subcontractors

THE
ST BARNABAS
SOCIETY

The Director, Chairman and Board of Trustees of the St Barnabas Society invite you to a
Solemn Pontifical Mass at the
Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory,
Warwick Street, London W1B 5LZ
To Anticipate the Feast of St Barnabas, Apostle
Friday 9th June 2023 at 7:00pm

The Principal Celebrant and Homilist will be
The Right Reverend Abbot Hugh Allan O.Praem
Priests are welcome to concelebrate. Please bring an alb and red stole.

RSVP: office@stbarnabassociety.org.uk

by Roland Hayes, KC*HS, KSG, Chairman

If you have visited the Society's headquarters at any time, you might have seen a fine portrait of a gentleman from the middle of the last century and perhaps wondered who this gentleman was and what, if anything, he had to do with the St Barnabas Society.

A pedantic answer to the last question could be 'nothing at all' as, when he was involved, the Society was called the Converts' Aid Society. In fact, Frederick Walter Chambers, the subject of that portrait, played a huge role in the history of the Converts' Aid Society and, it could be argued, was the most influential person in the development of the Society after Pope Leo XIII.

After its foundation in October 1896, it became clear that the Society would be needed for a very long time and that its mission would inevitably need to be expanded. But it was not until 25 years later, in 1921, that a full time Secretary was appointed, F.W. (Freddie) Chambers, a former Anglican clergyman, who was to hold the position for forty-five years until his death in 1967.

As a fellow Knight of Saint Gregory the Great, Knight of the Holy Sepulchre and member of the Catenian Association, I feel a broad connection with Freddie Chambers. And, as the current chair of the Trustees of the Society, I am immensely grateful to him for what he achieved.

Born in 1880, educated at Clare College Cambridge, he was ordained into the Church of England in 1907. He was received into the Catholic Church in 1919 and became the Secretary of the Society in 1921. In a profile piece in the Catena Magazine, the monthly magazine of the Catenian Association, from July 1960, he was described as a man 'blessed with the charm and persuasiveness that win friends; and

both have been used to good purpose in extending the activities of the Converts' Aid Society.'

Chambers was appointed a Knight of St Gregory in 1929 and was promoted to Knight Commander of the Order in 1946. He was later invested into the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem as one of the very first group in England in the crypt of Westminster Cathedral on October 1955 by Cardinal Griffin.

His obituary in the Catena Magazine in November 1967 reported, 'What the Converts' Aid Society owes to Freddie Chambers will never be fully known. To countless men and women throughout the country he was a friend and counsellor and at his home in Twickenham he and his wife kept more or less open house to anyone who chose to drop in.' It concludes 'On his last visit to Rome he had the joy of witnessing the ordination of four former Anglican priests by HH Pope Paul VI' (in January 1967.)

A fellow Catenian, R B Cunningham wrote: 'We, who had the privilege of social contact with this good and lovable man, can only offer our humble tribute. In our Circle the memory of his charm of manner and friendly understanding will be held in respect and admiration.'

His wife, Pat, who was born in 1906, took on the role of Secretary after Freddie's death, and served the Society for a further 19 years until she retired in 1986. Pat was also invested as a Dame of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre at the second investiture in England and Wales, which was led by Bishop Cowderoy in English Martyrs, Streatham, in 1958; and promoted to DCHS in 1975. She died in November 1994, and they are buried together in Teddington Cemetery, Shacklegate Lane, in London.



Freddie Chambers

For an amazing 65 years, this remarkable couple developed the Converts' Aid Society from 'a moribund state, its finances precarious and its future uncertain' to the vibrant, financially secure Society we have today, warmly providing pastoral and financial help to former clergy and religious of other Christian denominations and other world faiths, who have been led by faith and conscience into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

*[I am immensely grateful to John Barrie KCSG for the extracts from the Catena magazine which have informed this piece, and to Aaron Kiely KC*HS for information from the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem archives.]*



Freddie Chambers grave