

Fr SIGEBERT BUCKLEY 400 YEARS

BENEDICTINE LINK WITH WESTMINSTER

LONDON 21 Nov 1607

THE ENGLISH BENEDICTINE CONGREGATION has a claim to unbroken continuity with the pre-Reformation monks of England, through an old monk named *SIGEBERT BUCKLEY*, one of the Westminster community under Queen Mary (1653-58)

Born about 1517, he survived till 1610, under JAMES I (1603-25), by which time a number of Englishmen had become Benedictines in the monasteries of Italy and Spain. It was through the efforts of the English monks of the Cassinese or Italian Congregation that Fr Buckley preserved monastic continuity in this country.

He did so by 'aggregating' to Westminster and to the old Benedictine body in England two priests, named Sadler and Maihew, whom the Cassinese English monks presented to him for that purpose.

WHAT HAPPENED?

CEREMONIALLY, somewhere in London, *Fr Sigebert Buckley*, aged 89 and the last surviving monk of Westminster, accepted into his community (and by implication into the whole body of English monks) two priests, *Fr ROBERT SADLER* and *Fr EDWARD MAIHEW*, who were already professed monks of the Italian Cassinese Congregation, thus passing on all the essential properties of the old order to the coming new one.

The key person was the Junior, *Br AUGUSTINE BAKER*, recently professed for the Italian monastery at Padua, but not a priest till 1613. He had been one of the ablest young lawyers of his generation, and it was his knowledge that ensured the correctness of the procedure, on which Rome could later build its approval and confirmation.

A point of some weight is that by the decree *Praeclara* brought from Rome in 1555 by the Papal Legate, Cardinal Pole, all claim on the actual buildings and land was released to the lay owners then legally in possession. This was realistic.

BENEDICTINES IN ENGLAND

A GROUP OF MONKS CAME TO ENGLAND with St Augustine in 597, sent by the monk-Pope St Gregory.

That they were Benedictines is rather less than certain, but the Rule of St Benedict was certainly in use then, and quite widely in use across Europe from the time of Charlemagne, and certainly well established in England (possibly in St Bede's time) in the time of SS Dunstan, Oswald and Ethelwold in the tenth century.

The Vikings gave problems, but the Rule of St Benedict was firmly entrenched by the time [King Edward – Saint Edward – refounded Westminster in 1065](#). After the Norman conquest the Benedictine way predominated – there was no competition – until the reforms of Citeaux.

In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council decreed that monasteries should group themselves in national groups, and that the Abbots should meet in General Chapter at fairly frequent intervals. The English were the first to start, meeting in 1218, and then roughly every three years till 1520: up to seventy Abbots and Priors were eligible. Our current General Chapter has met every four years since 1621: it is one of Britain's older institutions.

Henry VIII dissolved all religious houses. Westminster (bigger and more important because it was the place where Kings were crowned) was one of the last to go.

On **16 Jan 1540** the Abbot and twenty-four monks of Westminster signed the Surrender. These were their names, with some details:

NAME	ENTERED	FIRST MASS	SENIOR	DIED
Thomas Elfrede	1493	1498-9	1506-7	1546
<i>Refectorian 1506-9, Coquinarius 1509-10, Ninth Prebendary 17 Dec 1540, Vice-dean 15 Dec 1545, Will proved 12 Nov 1546</i>				
William Ellis,	1501 (19)	1504-5	1516-17	?
<i>Refectorian 1530-34</i>				
John Malvern	1506	1512-13	–	1541
<i>Granator 1523-34, Tenth Prebendary 17 Dec 1540</i>				
Christopher Goodhappes		1506	1510-11	1527-28?
Denis Dalianns	1509-10	1514-15	–	1543 Apr
<i>Oxford 1512-22, BD 4 Jun 1522, Precentor 1528-34, In three nominated for Prior by Convent 6 May 1528, Elemosinarius 1533-36, Prior 1536, Sixth Prebendary 17 Dec 40</i>				
John Laurence	1511-12	1520-21	1528-29	
<i>Oxford 1517-25, Refectorian 1536-37</i>				
JOHN FORSTER	1513-14	1515-16		
<i>Oxford 1532-36 . The fourth name on Feckenham's list is Mr Foster.</i>				
Thomas Essex	1513-14	1515-16	–	1543
<i>Oxford ?-1523-24-? BD 27 May 1522 (Foster, Alum. Oxon.), Custodian of Lady Chapel 1533-34, Eighth Prebendary 17 Dec 1540. Died 1543</i>				
Humphrey Charity	1517-18	1523-24		16 Nov 77
<i>Alias: Perkins. Oxford 1525-38 (continuous?) BD 1 Jul 1535, DD 29 Jul 1538, Abbot's Deputy for Alms 1536-37, Seventh Prebendary 17 Dec 1540, till 1553, Treasurer 1545, Second Prebendary 21 May 1560, Subdean 1561, Stroke ? 1576: he signed Chapter Minutes thereafter only with his mark.</i>				
Thomas Lovewell	1517-18	1523-24		
<i>Oxford 1525-36, Retained as petty Canon to sing in the choir.</i>				
JOHN GODELUKE	1519-20	1523-24		
<i>Oxford 1531-33. Mr Goodlook appears on Feckenham list: he seems likely to be the same monk.</i>				

Armall Hurley/Horley	1523-24	1525-26	
<i>Petty Canon</i>			
William Faith/Harvey	1525-26	1528-29	1544
<i>Eleventh Prebendary 17 Dec 1540</i>			
John Whethamsted	1519-20	1524-25	
<i>Oxford 1527-33, Petty Canon</i>			
Abbot William Boston			Sept 1549
<i>Perhaps family name was Benson, but he came from Boston. At Cambridge 1528-? Custodian of New Work 1532-34, Cellerar 1535-36, Custodian Lady Chapel 1535-36. Abbot by Easter 1533, the first from outside the Community since William Humez 1314. Probably from Peterborough (his account book, Mun. 333133). Dean 17 Dec 1540.</i>			
Robert Barnard	1533-34	1536-37	
<i>First of 20 Students in King's New College at Westminster: three others had been monks.</i>			
William Milton	1535-36		
<i>Granator 1536-37, Custodian Lady Chapel 1536-37</i>			
Simon Underwood	1536-37		
<i>Student under King's New College</i>			
John Lathbury	1536-37		
<i>Student under King's New College, Vicar of Chaddeley, Worcs 1550.</i>			
Richard Morton	1540 ?		
<i>Signed deed in fourth place, after Humphrey Charity: perhaps a senior, but retired.</i>			
<i>Also:</i>			
William Byrd, William Latham, William Huse & John Vernon			
<i>Listed, but did not sign; perhaps absent from the house. Not otherwise known.</i>			
Henry Thacksted			
<i>'One of the monks there', a student in or after 1540 (Mun.6478 f.3): otherwise unknown.</i>			

Note that **JOHN FORSTER** & **JOHN GOODELUKE** apparently reappear in the renewed community sixteen years later.

QUEEN MARY'S WESTMINSTER

This is from the diary of **Henry Machyn**, merchant taylor of London, 1550-53. He liked funerals (because he sold the cloths and hangings for them), but was generally observant.

The xxj day of November [1556...] was the **new abbott of Westmynster putt in, docthur Fecknam**, late dene of Paulles, and xiiij more monkes shorne; and the morrow after the lord abbott with ys coventt whentt a prossessyon after the old fassyon in ther monkes wede, in cowlys of blake say, with ij vergers carryng ij sylver rods in ther handes, and at evyngsong tyme the vergers whent through the cloistur to the abbott; and so whentt into the churche affor the hye altar, and ther my lord knellyd downe and ys coventt, and after ys prayer made was broughtt into the Qwyre with the vergers and so into ys place, and contentt [*at once*] **he begane evyngsong – xxij day of the same monyth**, that was santt Clementt evyn last. *[Spelling a little improved.]*

Not long afterwards their return to Westminster a list was made of the new community (Prior Este died early 1557):

The Names of the Bretheren of Westmonasterie (1556)

Domin[us] Abbas

Mr Este Prior

Mr Edon Cellarer; *former Cistercian from Hailes*

Mr Redborne *Cistercian Abbot of Dore (his servant has a Welsh name, Ap Thomas)*

MR FOSTER thought to be the the same as John Forster listed on the deed of surrender of 1540

MR GOODLOOK considered to be John Gookluck of the same 1540 list

Mr Adthelstane *Glastonbury*

Mr Newte *Glastonbury*

Mr Frewell *Christchurch, Canterbury*

Mr Coventri

Mr Baylii *St Alban's*

Mr Aulton

Mr Philipps Ramsey

Mr Vowell *Sherborne*

Mr Bowcer *Christchurch, Canterbury*

Mr Wooseter

Mr Adthelwolde *perhaps Glastonbury*

Mr Filde *perhaps Ramsey*

Mr Legge

Mr Langdon Christchurch, Canterbury

Mr Cook Twinham, Hants

Mr Stotforde *Evesham (22)*

The names of those that shal be religius and be nowe in comons

Mr Lucie; Mr Bramsgrove; Mr Vlborne; Selbe; Prince; Johnstone; Groundie; Wayte; Anderson; Lovewell; Mr Phagane; George Marshall; Kyngeswoode; Cley. (14)

Soon there were new vocations: the following Westminster monks appear among the men ordained during Mary's reign, with their diocese of origin:

NAME	Minor	Deacon	Priest
William Fakenham <i>London</i>	17 Dec 57		
William Gardyner <i>Winchester</i>	17 Dec 57		4 Jun 58
<i>Robert Sebert</i> * <i>London</i>	17 Dec 57		4 Jun 58
Thomas Ebdon <i>London</i>	3 Apr 57		4 Jun 58
Anthony Athee <i>Canterbury</i>	3 Apr 57		
John Ferne <i>Canterbury</i>	3 Apr 57		
Thomas Brampton <i>Canterbury</i>	13 Mar 57		
John Egres <i>London</i>	13 Mar 57		
Martin Foutenoy <i>London</i>	13 Mar 57		
Robert Grundye <i>Chester</i>	13 Mar 57	3 Apr 57	
Robert Johnson <i>Norwich</i>	13 Mar 57	3 Apr 57	
Thomas Presse <i>London</i>	13 Mar 57		
Edward Prince <i>Bristol</i>	13 Mar 57		
Richard Wayte <i>Coventry</i>	13 Mar 57	3 Apr 57	
Richard Fyther <i>London</i>	13 Mar 57		16 Apr 57
Thomas Clerke <i>Bath & Wells</i>			16 Apr 57
Ralph Hunt <i>Bath & Wells</i>		Mar 58	24 Sep 58
Thomas Mynevewre <i>Hereford</i>		Sep 57	26 Sep 58

* *Sigebert* was his religious name: elsewhere he is called by his surname, *Robert Buckley*.

ELIZABETHAN YEARS

The new government from 1559 suppressed the renewed religious houses almost at once. *Abbot Feckenham*, who had befriended the Queen when in danger under Mary, refused to become her first Archbishop of Canterbury. As the Counter-Reformation spread across Europe, polite house-arrests turned into concentration camps, in which eventually Feckenham and others died, Feckenham in 1584. *Buckley* lasted till 1610 (born about 1517: he could have been a monk as early as 1534, but there is no evidence that he was). Other ex-Westminster monks too remained faithful:

Hugh Philipps (ex-Ramsey) is found signing a document in 1568, and indicted for saying Mass in London in 1576.

John Langdon (ex Canterbury) was arrested in 1561 in Essex and then escaped to Flanders.

'*D. Thomas Cook*, monk, about 70' is recorded in prison in the Marshalsea in 1579.

'*Mr Figge*, priest' – a misreading for *Legge*? – was reported as visiting Lord Copley in France in 1582.

Also: Henry Style is only mentioned in 1570, claiming an annuity granted by the late Abbot at least twelve years before. What happened in between? There are traces of him later at Cambridge, Douay and in Flanders.

NEW MEN FROM A FAR COUNTRY

There were two sources of Benedictine missionaries, because English people began joining **Italian**, and then **Spanish**, monasteries in the same year as the Armada sailed, 1588. Most of them were put off by the regime in the colleges (we would call them seminaries), which were to be found in Flanders, Spain and Rome. There was little help for English Catholics to be had in France or Germany, which had religious wars and divisions of their own, and the Imperial power of the Habsburgs did not favour intervention, especially after Philip, son of the emperor Charles V, married Queen Mary.

Reports of survivors reached Rome. Two monks from Italy, Thomas Preston and Anselm Beech, landed in Yarmouth in late 1603 to look for **Buckley**, and the found him living with the Woodhouse family in Norfolk. Later Beech wrote:

In the year 1603 I entered England, landing at the port of Yarmouth, where also I remained the whole winter. In the house of Mr Francis Woodhouse of Cisson, near Wendlam, I met with the **Rev. D. Sigebert Buckley**, the sole survivor of the ancient monks of Westminster, whom a few months before King James had ordered to be set free from the prison of Fromegham [*sc.* Framlingham Castle]. From that time Dom Thomas [Preston] and I took care of the old man till his happy death, which took place on the 22nd February in the year 1610, and in the 93rd year of his age.

WHAT THEY DID

We have **Buckley's own clear statement:**

At the house of Thomas Lovedean at *Punsholt*, and before me, Dom Maurus, an English priest of the Diocese of Ely and professed monk of the monastery of St George the Great at Venice of the Cassinese [Italian] Congregation, and Notary Apostolic, signed by me and the witnesses named below, Dom Sebert or Sigebert made, signed and sealed this statement on 8 November 1609:

I, Dom Sebert, otherwise Sigebert, priest and monk of the monastery of St. Peter, Westminster, of the Congregation of England of the Order of St. Benedict: lest the rights, privileges, insignia, should perish which were formerly granted by Princes and Pontiffs and which for some years, God so permitting, have been preserved in me the sole survivor of all the English monks: did at London in the year 1607, the 21st day of November, with the consent of their superiors receive and admit as brethren and monks of the said monastery *D. Robert Sadler* of Peterborough and *D. Edward Maihew* of Salisbury, English priests and monks professed of the Cassinese Congregation of St. Justina of Padua: and to them did grant, impart and assign all rights, privileges, ranks, honours, liberties and graces which in times past the monks professed and dwelling in the said monastery did enjoy. [..]

I, Dom Maurus, was present.

I, Anthony Norton, was present.

I, Henry Norton, was present.

Anthony Norton was Thomas Lovedean's brother in law. *Punsholt* was a recusant manor in Hampshire. It is still in use as a house.

BUCKLEY – WHERE IS THE BODY?

Fr Sigebert Buckley died at *Punsholt Manor*, Thomas Loveden's house at the north end of the parish of West Meon. He does not appear in the parish burial register: this confirms Anselm Beech's account:

As his body was not allowed to be laid in consecrated ground (*coemeterio sacro*), we buried him in a certain old chapel or country hermitage, near the house of Mr Norton called *Pontshall* in the county either of Surrey or Sussex. I could wish that his body might be transferred to some more honourable place, for without doubt the good old man was highly deserving, having endured forty years of perpetual persecution for the Catholic faith, ever confined in some prison or other.

Local tradition holds that two black slabs in an otherwise buff stone floor mark the grave. It is supposed that the present house is built on the site of the chapel.

There was a chapel at *Punsholt* as early as 1391. The tradition supposes that the present house (or part of it) was built on the same site, or even out of the chapel.

INNER LIVERS

The inner life was evidently available to be learned under *Feckenham*, though other monks may have contributed. The very mixture of traditions in Marian Westminster may have helped. Feckenham, or *Buckley* himself, could hardly have lived as they did without a real and deep interior life. And that around fifty men should (as it seems) give up much, and risk a good deal, to join or rejoin a monastery is a witness to the values they held.

For *Buckley* to endure as he did suggests a strong interior life. He exhibits, perhaps, some of the qualities (mortification, abstraction of life, quietness) which Augustine Baker's writings later gave as a necessary basis for the life of prayer. Perhaps some likeness of spirit smoothed the arrangements for the link-up: the new monks recognised something in the old, and the old in the new.

CONFERENCE

To mark this fourth centenary, a special [Conference](#) is to be held at Westminster Abbey on 22 November 2007 by kind invitation of the Dean and Chapter. Papers will be read by Barbara Harvey (Oxford), *The Dissolution at Westminster*, and Peter Cramer (Winchester), *Monks in a new world: the context 1600-1657*. This will be followed by Evensong, and a short monastic liturgy at the shrine of [St Edward, founder](#), and in the Chapel of St Benedict, where there is a [Memorial to the Monks](#) of Westminster 1065-1540 & 1556-59 set up in 1968. There will then be a Reception by the Dean and Chapter.

All the monasteries of our Congregation have been invited to send representatives, and there will be a number of other interested persons, including the family in whose house Sigebert Buckley is thought to lie buried. It will be of most interest to the four houses founded within the reign of James I (1603-25), namely [Downside](#) (1606), [Ampleforth](#) (1608), [Douai](#) (1615) and [Stanbrook](#) (1625).

IMAGE CAPTIONS

- 01 EDWARD, KING, FOUNDER, SAINT: FROM A MEDIEVAL WINDOW AT AMPLEFORTH
- 02 KING EDWARD GIVES THE MONKS THEIR CHARTER, 1065
- 03 DUGDALE'S MONASTICON, 1655: A FULL HISTORY OF ALL ENGLISH MONASTERIES, PUBLISHED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PURITAN COMMONWEALTH. THE MAIN AUTHOR WAS IN FACT ROGER DODSWORTH, WHO WAS BAPTISED IN OSWALDKIRK IN 1585
- 04 WEST FRONT 1654
- 05 WEST FRONT 1844
- 06 WEST FRONT 2004
- 07 PLAN VIEW 1654
- 08 WESTMINSTER ABBEY C1800
- 09 FR AUGUSTINE BAKER 1657
- 10 MEDIEVAL TILE FROM WESTMINSTER'S CHAPTER HOUSE
- 11 PUNSHOLT MANOR, HANTS: DATE UNKNOWN
- 12 THOUGHT TO BE SITE OF BUCKLEY'S GRAVE
- 13 PUNSHOLT: AN ANGEL'S VIEW
- 14 PUNSHOLT 2007