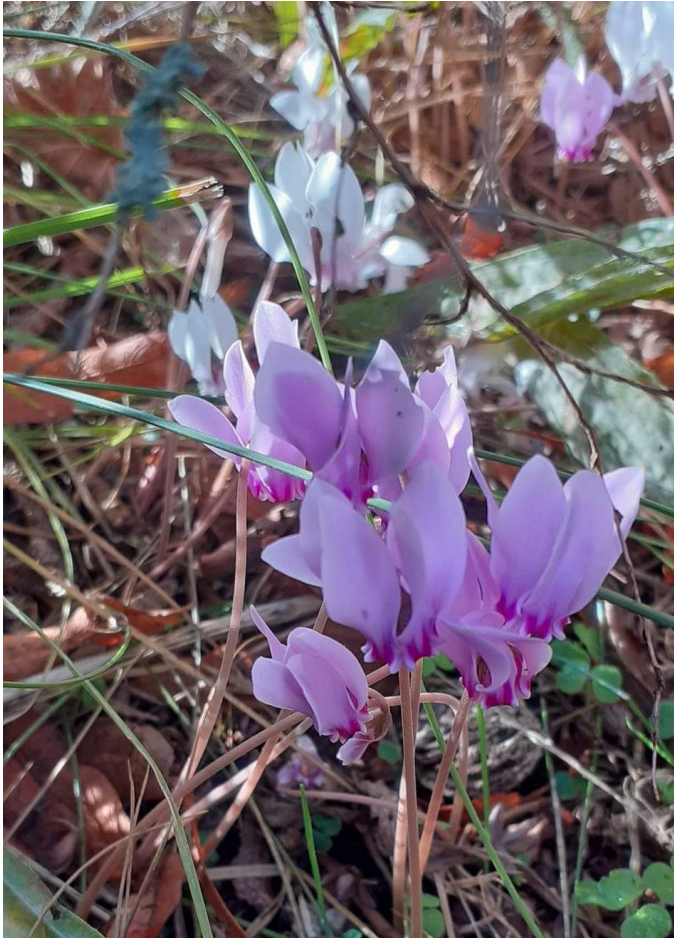




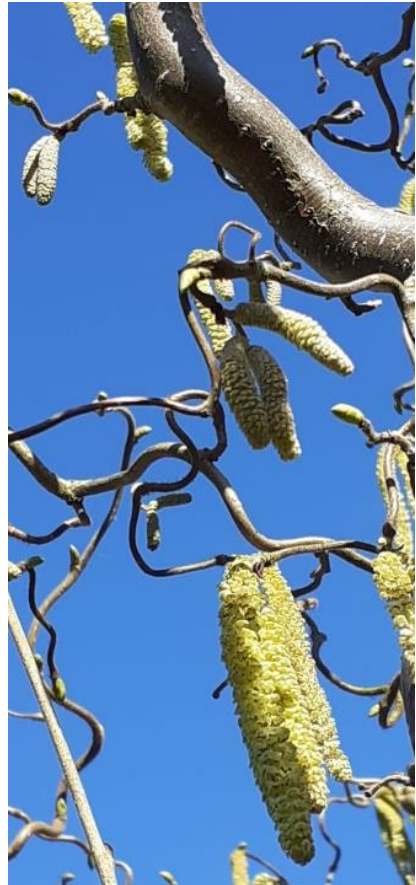
All Saints Newsletter 2022



Dear friends,

This comes with greetings and a sincere welcome to another All Saints'tide. On one level, life has gone on moderately "normally"; on another, we are constantly being reminded that there is no such thing. It was a joyful thing, as we went through the latter part of last year, to be able to look forward to, say, All Saints and Christmas, and to know that this time it would be possible to share the festivals and the ambience in a way that we had not been able to when pandemic regulations held sway. There are inevitable gaps in the tapestry. We are reminded of the losses and bereavements that became part of life everywhere and on every level. Looking at NEXT year's catkins on the hazel trees in the Bungay garden, - we are reminded, too, of the new life to which we always (well, nearly always) "press bravely forward" in the words of a strapline which adorns the Convent passage now beautifully cared for by Emmaus Norfolk and Waveney.

It has been lovely to have our postulant Jackie and our now-Novice Sister Jess staying in the aforementioned Bungay house at various times during the year, enabling them to get a taste of the life as lived in one CAH house at any rate. They could also experience some of the Community Days (the first Wednesday of each month) wherein



we think of something to do and/or somewhere to go that is out of routine and which enables just a bit more community corporateness to exist and even to flourish.

It felt like the end of an era when CAH sold the last of the cars we had had locally. (Sister Pamela still needs one for Mull; otherwise there are good public transport links between us) The last person driving (!) was Sister Rachel; she can walk everywhere or take a bus from where she lives in Norwich. As she pointed out, it did feel rather unkind to the environment, and a waste of fuel and money, to take the vehicle out for a run just for the sake of keeping it in good condition! So far she, and we in Bungay have survived well, and there are some good, reputable car hire firms around, which had a bearing on our eventual decision. We are blessed in Bungay with an adequate bus service for our needs, and are able to get trains fairly easily too, strike action permitting. There is a lot for which to be grateful.

Shortly after All Saints'tide it always feels faintly surprising to come face to face with Advent, or with Christmas if you have anything to do with the retail sector which leapfrogs neatly over the preceding "purple" season and reminds you of all that is going to need to be done at Christmas. Evenings were suddenly long and dark once October had ended; and presumably there were very few daylight hours up on Mull! Christmas trees began to appear here, there and everywhere, and No. 23 broke with tradition when we found we couldn't dig the Bungay one up. There were none left on sale, and we ended up with a biggish artificial one purchased rather hurriedly in a local charity shop. (The parable of the Wise Virgins and the injunction to "be ready" are both big themes over the Advent season. We had begun very well.)

Just as the Christmas season ended, we were able joyfully to clothe Jess as a Novice on the feast of Candlemas, whereby she shared a festival with Sister Elizabeth, who was celebrating her profession anniversary. Pray for us all as we continue to live out our calling in what sometimes still feels a very new and strange way...considering that we spent upwards of 160 years as a standard-issue, under-one-roof community with a fair few branch houses.



Those of us in Bungay continue to be involved in the worship of the Parish; and it has been so good to have our Rector, Josh Bailey, among those who have presided at a Eucharist in our little chapel. One of the things he was very keen on was ensuring that prayer and worship were a strong thread in the life of the parish. So it is that we join them on a Monday morning for Morning Prayer; and Friday is earmarked on the parish timetable as being the day Morning Prayer happens for everyone in the Bungay house. It hasn't had many takers to date, as 7.30 a.m. is a bit awkward. Either you're getting ready for work, or you are still a bit sleepy!

We had a very different Lent this year from the "locked-down" one we had last year - it was lovely for all of us to be involved with whatever liturgies, etc., were going on in our patches. Here, the Easter Triduum worship was mostly in the house. We were now allowed visitors again, after the universal "purdah" of last year; so our local CAH-ers were able to join us for the pared-down-but-joyful Vigil Ceremonies as performed at 23 Trinity Street, and to join us for a little light refreshment

afterwards. WhatsApp (*however did we manage without it??*) kept us in touch with the Sisters in Norwich and Bunessan. Jackie was with us over the Triduum, so on Easter Monday we received her as a Postulant” Then there were two!” - even if one had become a Novice!

Life post-Easter Octave slowly got back to normal in Bungay. We resumed hosting a local Supervision group for some of our fellow spiritual directors, and the Norwich Diocesan Network began meeting in person again (although we are in the neighbouring diocese, it continues to be easier on the practical level to team up with Norwich. NO reflection on our friends in what is now our home diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich!) The parish’s “Share and Care” meetings (food, prayer and fellowship) resumed, and Sister Elizabeth is again there as a CAH “presence”. It was really lovely to host the group in this house a few weeks prior to this letter appearing.

We have been able to be represented at both the Leaders’ and the Novice Guardians’ Conferences this year – with, respectively, the Community of St.Mary the Virgin at Wantage (Sr Elizabeth) and the Society of the Sacred Cross, Ty Mawr, at Lydart, Monmouthshire (Sr Sheila). At the latter, it was very good indeed to catch up, and have a chat with, Mary Stoddart who is an alongsider with that Community, having previously spent a substantial period of time with them. And it is always a joy to re-connect with our fellow-Religious up and down the country! (None of is a stranger to silence – it’s a cherished part of our way of life and a huge gift – but it takes a gang of Religious to really get the nattering under way....)

There is a piece of sad news, of which many of you will have already heard. FATHER BRIAN LEE, OGS, was for years a loved and valued member of the All Hallows fellowship, bringing with him more than a

dash of Religious Life through his membership of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd. We all treasured the regular occasions earlier in our time here, when he was able to come and celebrate a Saturday Eucharist and share coffee and chat afterwards (and possibly do a bit of shopping into the bargain). But he was getting frailer almost by the minute as time went on; and it was almost with a sense of relief and release on his account that we learned of his death earlier this year.

He had wanted his funeral and burial to be at Ditchingham; so we (Oblate Lynda and Sr. Sheila) had the “sober joy” (to quote an old Easter Office Hymn) of preparing for it, once again in our beloved All Hallows Convent chapel. It was so good to have Father David Spicer with us again, officiating at the Requiem, farewell and burial, and Father Nicholas Gandy, the OGS Superior, sharing in the service and giving us a very apt homily. So it was that friends old and new shared the worship; and Emmaus Norfolk and Waveney, having been approached to do the catering, did so with generosity, warmth of heart and lots of expertise and delicious refreshments (in that space at the back of the chapel that lends itself to such things.) Our resident Oblate, Lynda Crook, who has continued to be an exemplary and generous sacristan/caretaker there, did a wonderful job “stage-managing” this



service (and it was great to be able to provide, at her request, a bit of experienced back-up and to share a bit of the load). A holy, joyful send off, and we hope Father B. approved...

It feels like only yesterday that those of us who were able were on retreat/holiday at St.Hilda's Priory, sharing in the warm, welcoming care of the Order of the Holy Paraclete. It was a precious time of silent space, walks (for some) sea-gazing (for others) and above all, shared worship with the Community of sisters in their new



Priory. Those unable to be with us were held in our prayers, and it felt as if the whole of CAH were indeed there. Since the retreat, time seems to have whizzed by.

CAH have a very strong link with St. Julian's parish, Norwich, partly through having worked there, partly through still owning the property on Rouen Road and leasing it to the Julian Partnership of which Sister Rachel is one of the Trustees. Consequently, it was a joy to return to the refurbished centre and house for a service of thanksgiving and rededication led by the Bishop of Norwich, Bishop Graham Usher, to meet friends old and new and to feel that this latest quiet evolution has really conserved the best of the old, building on the work of Sister Pamela and others in CAH, and enabled new growth and ideas. All held in our prayers....and this scribe is already planning a visit.

We recently received the news that the Christian Conference Trust are having to withdraw from running Belsey Bridge Centre. This was hard on the heels of information about WITH, who have come to the regretful conclusion that it will no longer be possible to continue operating. We are so grateful to both groups and their leaders and trustees for the “is-ness” and life that they have brought to the site - nothing is ever wasted. We appreciate, too, the trust they have placed in us to be responsible, supportive “landlords”! We pray for all concerned, spiritually, emotionally, practically - as we do, too, for wisdom as to the best use of this patch of CAH territory. There are ideas and possible contenders for the future use of the site already in the pipeline, so it is another space to be watched.


With the situation in Ukraine seemingly not getting any better at the time of writing, and with the need for accommodation for refugees coming to the UK we wondered if an obvious use might be to press our buildings into service in this way - but, one has to be realistic. Easy access is needed to all the support needed in terms of welfare payment, community involvement and fitting into the locality at every level - and it’s only when you try to sort something like this out from a comparatively isolated situation like that at Ditchingham that you realise that it needs more than a roof over the head!

One big national “event” - in fact, international in its impact - was the death of Queen Elizabeth II at Balmoral. It seemed only days since Bungay, and elsewhere, had been celebrating her Platinum Jubilee in fine style, and it was very difficult to take it on board one Thursday afternoon when we were told that, firstly, she was not all that well, then that her personal physician was attending her - and then, that she had “left us”. Whether or not you are into the Monarchy as an institution, she was part of the landscape for us all and a magnificent

example on so many fronts and for so long. We knew she couldn't go on for ever; possibly we all felt as if the world would come to an end before she did. Probably she was more conscious than anyone that this was not so. After a lifetime of so much pomp, pageantry and publicity, one could say she now gave us the slip beautifully - and the funeral was a deeply moving work of art on the part of all who took part in it, not least, but not only, the music, on parade and in the Abbey. We give thanks for her life and her Christian witness, even as we hold King Charles in our prayers, as we do the whole of the royal establishment. May they be a force and influence for all that is good and holy, here and elsewhere in the world.

It would be possible to fill the whole letter with more ramblings - but there is plenty more to read, learn and reflect about. *Happy All Saints'tide from all of us to all of you! And go well into Advent, Christmas and 2023*

With our love and our prayers
THE SISTERS OF ALL HALLOWS



This year's **Advent Quiet Day** will be held
at Bungay **Saturday 26th November 2022**

10am - 4pm

£12

Remembering Father Brian OGS

I was back in the Convent Chapel last week; realising how much I had gained from that space, but also that I had let it go and moved on to the next phase of my life. But I wasn't there for me; our former assistant Chaplain, Fr Brian, had died, and it was totally fitting to be back at the Convent for his funeral.



He came to be with us the same year as I joined the Community, so is an essential part of my memories of our time there. His multi-coloured bobble hat sermon went down in Community lore (although, to be honest, I can remember neither the story nor the point of the sermon, but I think some of the others can); he regularly gave us 'homework' at the end of his sermons, one being to read the prologue of St John's Gospel every day over Christmastide, probably one of the best ways for it to sink in. He would join us for Community

gatherings, regularly on Sundays, and on Profession anniversaries, and various celebratory events.

I worked closest with him when I took over helping at the Nursing Home Eucharist, which he habitually celebrated. I most remember his patience with the people there, his willingness to spend time enabling them to take Communion, attempting to wake them if they'd fallen asleep, or giving instructions if someone seemed confused. He even arranged for a retired priest, then resident at the Home, to celebrate

Communion a couple of times, with a few of us there. He would arrive after me, together with whichever of the older Sisters was joining us at the time. Sr Winifred Mary, who gave the Chalice long after she was in extreme pain; Sr Daphne, who would often push the wheelchair of someone much older than her; Sr Jean, who had an amazing gift for just coming alongside people as one of them. Then Communion would take place, with a couple of hymns, and we would all receive Communion sitting down, as the residents had to. Numbers fluctuated somewhat, but there was always a regular gathering, sometimes with family members, and afterwards Fr Brian would go and visit those who were unable to come, before joining the rest of us with a cup of coffee. Back at the Convent, he would normally join the Sisters for Morning and Evening Prayer, and would arrive early to pray. He spent many hours in the Chapel, both in prayer and at worship, so it was lovely that his funeral was able to take place there.

There was a small but decent gathering of people there, including at least one person from his last parish, and some of his Community (the Oratory of the Good Shepherd), one of whom preached, and a splash of Community friends, as well as others from his various connections. For me, it was particularly appropriate that we had 2 hymns by George Herbert, as one of the former residents of the Nursing Home had at one point been a member of George Herbert's former parish. Just a minor, but significant, memory that I was probably the only one aware of. The service sheet didn't include the dates of the composers of the hymns, which reminded me that Fr Brian, who was also an accountant, would use them to work out how old the composer had been when he died (those that had died, of course). Thankfully, lack of dates meant I didn't feel I had to honour his memory by doing likewise...

At the end of the service, we followed the procession out of chapel, and made our way down to the Community cemetery, where his burial took place. I have never seen the cemetery as dry as it is at the moment... Then, after a pause during which the Sisters decided everyone was waiting for us to move first, we gradually made our way back to Chapel, where Emmaus were waiting at the back with drinks and cake... I can heartily recommend the chocolate banana cake, and it's always a joy to have scones. But primarily, it wasn't about the cake, but about spending time with those we knew and those we didn't, to honour Fr Brian's memory, and connect with each other. It was good to see some Community friends there, including some I hadn't seen for a while, and to connect with some of those I hadn't met before.

Funerals are a chance to say goodbye, to honour the person who has gone, to grieve a loved one. For the funeral of a Christian, it is a time to honour and give thanks to the God whom they loved and served (and Fr Brian did love and serve his God), and hopefully to deepen our own journeys with our God, as we reflect on the life of one who has gone before us. As it says at the beginning of Hebrews 12, we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, urging and inspiring us to follow our Lord, to take our faith deeper, and to continue on the path God calls us. None of us do this perfectly – Fr Brian would have been the first to say he wasn't perfect – but with encouragement from our fellow Christians, both past and present, we can focus ever more deeply on our God.

There are many people who have inspired and helped me on my journey, Fr Brian being but one. My mother would daily sit and read the bible with us when we were small; many Sunday school teachers, and youth group leaders, some of whom I don't even remember; the clergy person that I first spoke to about a possible vocation – and of course my Sisters in Community, irritating as some of them are and

irritating as no doubt they found me. Then there are those who literally had gone before me, before I was even thought of ... Ss Peter and Paul, on whose day I took my first vows in the Community. Both inspiring figures, both devoted to their Lord, both vulnerable and falling. It's such a relief to know that Peter, the rock on whom Christ built his Church, made so many mistakes it kind of encourages me when I do the same. There was M. Teresa, whose devotion to Christ in the poorest of the poor no doubt inspired many; Clare of Assisi, whose contemplative vision tied with a strength that led her to put Jesus before her family's expectations. There are others, and it might be worth pondering who is in your special 'cloud of witnesses'. But above and beyond all those, there is Jesus, on whom we can fix our eyes, and follow with our lives; who, however much we fall, is always ready to help us get up and continue following; whose love for us will never fail; and whose love will transform our lives, if only we can have the courage and faith to believe in it.

Sister Rachel

Sister Margaret's River Trip

Holmwood is very good at arranging trips for us and one I recall well because I enjoyed it so much.

We started from here at about 10.30 am and went by a special bus, that had spaces for wheelchairs, to Beccles. The boat was especially adapted for disabled passengers and had a toilet for the disabled on board. We went down the river towards Wroxham and as we went we saw houses on the banks and fields and flowers and horses.

On the river we passed swans and other boats whose passengers waved to us. One of the boats looked like a small wherry with one sail darkish brown and the other tan. We passed two paddle boarders. I thought it seemed too precarious, just standing on a board, but they seemed happy enough.

Holmwood had provided a picnic lunch for us and the staff who came with us had brought a variety of soft drinks for us and offered them to us regularly throughout the journey. I sat by a lady who slept through the day and when asked how she had enjoyed it said it was boring. We arrived back at Holmwood in time for our evening meal, having had a really lovely day.

So, what has been happening with All Hallows House, Norwich?? Fr Richard Stanton tells us...

The rejuvenated All Hallows House on Rouen Road is once again open to provide hospitality for pilgrims to the Julian Shrine and visitors to the city of Norwich. Together with the adjacent Julian Centre, the House is now under the care of the Julian of Norwich Partnership, a 'charitable incorporated organisation' which brings together the Diocese of Norwich, the Friends of Julian of Norwich, the Parish of Timberhill, Norwich Cathedral and CAH . Sr Rachel and Fr Brian Faulkner represent CAH on the Partnership's board of trustees.

Despite frustrating delays imposed by the pandemic and trading complexities related to Brexit, All Hallows House has received an extensive upgrade including a new roof, new windows, electrical rewiring, new heating, new flooring, adaptations for the needs of

disabled guests, modification of rooms, the creation of a flat for a Resident Steward, new sanitation and other improvements. Much of this work was funded by CAH, with a grant for interior decoration and furnishing being received from the Friends of Julian of Norwich. Josiah English moved to Rouen Road from Birmingham with his wife Jo Lee in January to begin a three year contract as Resident Steward, also generously funded by CAH as part of its commitment to the Julian Partnership, enabling this new project to develop good foundations for the future.



With the refurbishment work complete, AHH opened to guests on Monday 1 August and we were hugely encouraged by the number of visitors who came to stay in the first few weeks – thoughts of a ‘gentle start’ being rapidly abandoned! Feedback from guests has been very positive, Josiah and Jo Lee having quickly established themselves as efficient, friendly and helpful presences, together with Eilonwy, their Welsh corgi who continues the CAH canine tradition, and a flock of quails and doves.



On Friday 17 September the first Mass since February 2018 was celebrated in the House Chapel, and on Saturday 1 October the Bishop of Norwich came to formally re-open the House. After Mass in St Julian's Church, the congregation moved up the hill, the Bishop blessed the rooms with holy water and we prayed that AHH will continue to be a place of Christian hospitality, service and community life at the Julian Shrine. We were thrilled that Sr Elizabeth, Sr Rachel and Sr Sheila were all able to be present on that day, along with others who have given generously of their time

and creativity in the work of renewal.

The clear vision for 'the house on Rouen Road' is that we should continue to build on the wonderful and evolving work carried out by CAH in this part of the city for 140 years, since Sisters first came to St Julian's in the 1880s. I regularly meet people who speak warmly and fondly of the CAH witness here and its impact on their lives, and I hope that friends and associates of CAH will always consider All Hallows House their home in the city. Come and stay! Bookings can be made at www.allhallowsnorwich.co.uk – and watch this space for more developments soon!

A message from Sister Edith Margaret at All Hallows Nursing Home

The most important thing for me and for several other people here in All Hallows Care Home is that we have our Chapel service back again. Revd. Reg Kirkpatrick usually comes now on a Wednesday or Thursday

morning to celebrate a Eucharist for us at 10.30. After the service we all have coffee and biscuits together. Sr Sheila and Ray Smith, one of our Oblates, often join us and one of them will give us the wine.

Sr Elizabeth comes to visit me on Monday afternoons and gives me Communion then too. So now I have the Sacrament twice a week. I really did miss it during the lockdowns.



2023 Quiet Days at Trinity Street dates for your diary

Lent Quiet day Saturday 1st April 2023

Advent Quiet Day Saturday 2nd December 2023

We continue to provide quiet space for people to prepare and reflect at these important times in the Church's year. These quiet days run from 10am until 4.30pm and cost **£12**.

You will need to bring a **packed lunch** when attending, but cakes and refreshments will be provided by the Community.

Places are limited to 12, please phone the Bungay office to book.

Intercessions

PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY, WITH THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT HITHERTO.....

SUNDAY – All our Fellow-Religious; those living in new monastic and in other intentional Christian communities, especially those with some tie to CAH

MONDAY – Isle of Mull; Sr. Pamela at Roan Cottage Bunessan, with a varied ministry including hospitality; and the churches she is linked with on Iona and Mull.

Norwich; Sr Rachel living in Norwich and exercising a ministry of prayer and presence in the City.

TUESDAY – Bungay, Suffolk; Sr. Margaret at Holmwood Residential Home; Sisters Violet and Edith Margaret at All Hallows Care Home with Nursing; Sisters Elizabeth and Sheila living at 23 Trinity Street with room for two guests and those visiting during the day.

All the local church and parish communities with which we have links.

Doncaster: Sister Jess (N).

Sheffield: Jackie our Postulant.

WEDNESDAY – CAH Trustees and our other financial & legal advisors. None of this stage of CAH's journey would be possible without their help. Give thanks for ongoing support from them and from our staff, and pray for them.

Julian Partnership Trustees; responsible for the care of the Julian Shrine & Centre, and All Hallows House; providing accommodation for the pilgrims to the site.

THURSDAY – Pray for the organisations on the Ditchingham site: the Day Nursery and Emmaus Norfolk and Waveney.

FRIDAY – For those providing care which was previously the responsibility of All Hallows Healthcare Trust; for Norse at the All Hallows Care Home, for Oakleaf at the Hospital, for Empanda at Day Care. Pray for prisons and chaplaincies local to CAH's various hubs.

SATURDAY – Pray for our Associates, Oblates and Contact members, and for all connected to us through prayer and friendship. For all the new contacts being forged now.

News from Sister Pamela

I am writing this as the nation is in mourning for her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. There has been wonderful coverage on the television and of course for so many it brings back memories. I remember the 1998 Lambeth Conference and going to the Buckingham Palace garden party. Some of us were privileged to be in the Royal tent for tea (where I was surprised to see men were given larger cups than the women!) When the Queen began circulating I overheard her say when asked what she would like: "O, I'd love a cup of tea..."

My year has been more about folk dropping in for a cup of tea rather than staying. I did have quite a full calendar but unfortunately there has been more cancelations for many varied reasons, than there has



visits. As most of you will know Mattie departed this life in December. After waiting until the new year and searching endless rescue sites (all of which asked to do a home visit – *I live on Mull!*) I have adopted Willow who has just has her fifth birthday. She is a Norfolk Terrier and has been used for breeding, having had three litters of puppies. She has now been spayed and has discovered she can now be a puppy herself. She is too small to jump on furniture and visitors have found her quite endearing.

Whitby was a high point of the year catching up with the Sisters and enjoying the hospitality of OHP, but also the warmer weather which has been sadly lacking up here in the north. The weather does continue to be unpredictable and we've been told that the last two months had more rain than the same period last year Yesterday we had glorious sun and today horrendous winds and rain with ferries cancelled. Living on the edge one is much more aware of the seasons and being part of rhythms and fragility of life. Like clothes wearing out so does one's body and the very fibres of our being become frayed. Paul speaks about our outward body failing but our inward body being renewed. I've always loved the story which Bede tells of the sparrow flying through the barn (like our lives). Talking of flying, the swallows didn't hang around this year and the skeins of geese have been in evidence flying north.

My apple trees still show no sign of flowers or fruit, but I have been given a large bag of Bramley from Anglesey – delicious! Memories of Sister Evelyn, Sister Barbara Clare and others sitting in the convent kitchen peeling apples - Something we were always blessed with in abundance.

It is good to hear about All Hallows Norwich. In the year 2000, I renovated both house and garden, painting all the rooms and making curtains etc. Now after another makeover and house is once again in action for the 21st century.

Nothing stays the same and it is said, "change is here to stay" and if we want to make God laugh, tell him your plans. When I began writing this some time ago I never dreamt that I'd be saying that Willow is no longer. As some of you will know we were just returning from a short walk up the road and although Willow was on a short lead close to me,

we were clipped by a car which failed to stop. Willow was killed instantly. I picked her up and the next car coming the other way stopped abruptly and three young women jumped out. They'd just finished their Veterinary training in Edinburgh and confirmed she wasn't just concussed but had died. They carried her into the house for me. She was a gift for such a short time - not able to climb up, she'd put up her paws and was like a comic little teddy bear. Very endearing and missed by all the locals who have been incredibly kind and supportive. I'm still in shock. Trying to get back to normality isn't easy, especially when the weather deteriorated and ferries were cancelled. This resulted in my taking the service for the Church of Scotland in Bunessan on Sunday.

On a lighter note, I stood in and did a morning at our Charity shop which I found enjoyable. Yesterday the House of Prayer on Iona celebrated 25years and a celebratory Mass was held in the Abbey with the RC bishop presiding, followed by a scrumptious meal in the village hall.



So battered by wind and rain and fraying at the edges we press on. As Teilhard deChardin wrote, "God you are painfully parting the fibres of my being in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my substance and bear me away within Yourself." As we know star differs from star and patterns traced are all different, yet God holds and enfolds us all in his love and will never let us go.....

Our annual retreat at Whitby '22

Sister Elizabeth

Sometime soon the great countdown of shopping days before Christmas will start. Here in CAH we have our own countdowns, the weeks of Advent before Christmas and those of Lent before Easter and then comes the countdown before Whitby. We reserve the 10 days in our diaries before the year begins and then everything after Easter is thought of as happening 'before Whitby' or 'after Whitby'. What makes it so significant?



With a day for travelling at either end, the 8 days at Whitby are a time when the active members of the Community come together for our Annual General Chapter, Retreat and Holiday. For the last 2 years we have spent this time with the Sisters of the Order of the Holy Paraclete in the Guest Accommodation of their

new Priory. They make us feel very welcome and do everything they can to ensure this time is special for us. Back home in Bungay two of our Associates, Mervyn and Jill Richards, stay in 23 Trinity St and house-sit for us, having a bit of a holiday themselves.

On Monday August 15th Mervyn drove us to Norwich where we transferred our luggage to the hired car Sr Rachel was driving and set

off on the long journey to Yorkshire. We arrived around 5 o'clock and our Sr Pamela was there to meet us. The OHP Sisters were in a meeting but Sr Pamela had been briefed about our rooms and had the keys. Jackie, our Postulant, had arrived from Sheffield slightly before us and came out to greet us, but sadly our Novice, Jess, wasn't able to be with us this year.

We soon settled in and then joined the Sisters for their Evening Office and then supper and were glad to find Compline was at 7.45! During the next 6 days we joined the OHP Sisters for their Offices, Eucharists and most meals. On the first morning we had our Chapter Meeting and managed to deal with the usual Community business by lunchtime. That freed us to go into retreat on Tuesday afternoon until after the Eucharist on Sunday morning. The OHP Sisters then invited us to join them for coffee in their Community Room. After lunch our holiday time began.

The weather was kind to us and the sea is within walking distance from the Priory so it acted as a kind of magnet during the retreat and on Sunday afternoon. On Monday we visited two Garden Centres, one nearby and the other close to where we used to stay at Sleights. In that beautiful setting we had lunch, sitting under a shade in the garden.

On Tuesday, as parking is at a premium in the town itself, we caught a Park & Ride bus into Whitby. After investigating the charity shops for bargains we had our traditional fish and chip lunch. Rather than brave the crowds and the 199 steps up to the Abbey we boarded the Whitby Tour Bus and enjoyed an informative and amusing journey and saw much that we would have missed if we'd gone on foot. We got off the bus at the Abbey and as we had been round it before we spent some time in St Mary's church close by. As a holiday treat we had '99' ice

creams before catching the next Tour Bus to complete the trip. Srs Sheila and Elizabeth then walked back to the Priory and the others caught the Park & Ride bus to the car park where we had left our car and thence to the Priory.

On Wednesday morning we set off in a light rain and had not gone far before we came across a big DIVERSION sign! We eventually found our way to the road we wanted and thereafter had a good journey south. Sr Elizabeth phoned Mervyn to say we were about to leave Swaffham and he arrived at Sr Rachel's home at exactly the same time as we did. After a quick transfer of luggage from the hire car to his, Mervyn soon had us back in Bungay. We waved our house-sitters off, and rejoiced that though it had been a good time away it was even better to be safely home again.



Reflections from Sr Rachel

Things change. While looking through 19th century newspapers for announcements of births/marriages/deaths that might give me some more information on our past Sisters and their background, I was struck by the birth announcements: none of them mentioned the mother's name, only the father's. It's a case of 'the lady/wife of X, of a daughter/son'. The woman seems to have no agency, no existence of her own, apart from her husband. I realised, with gratitude, that however much in life is still unfair, some elements have improved. Mostly, today, a birth announcement will (where appropriate) mention both parents' names. Nowadays, nobody (I hope) sees a woman as a mere adjunct of her father or husband.

It makes me wonder how easy it was for our earlier Sisters to join the Community, whether any had to fight for it, or whether most of them came from a background that encouraged it. That some did, I know: many were clergy daughters, and some had birth sisters who were also Sisters of Mercy. Indeed, a few had birth Sisters in CAH: Mother Mary Rose, and her sister Alice, who later left; Sr Amy and Sr Bertha, although Sr Bertha died quite young; and, many, many decades later, Sr Florence and Sr Winifred Mary. Sr Florence joined long before her sister, who cared for her mother before she followed her vocation. When I joined the Community, both Sisters were at Ditchingham, although Sr Winifred Mary was still visiting at Blundeston Prison, which she would continue until her failing eyesight meant she had to give up driving.

Both small in stature, Sr Florence had adapted readily to life at the Convent, having spent most of her time in CAH in Norwich as a parish Sister. Yet back at Ditchingham, she took on the job of pantry Sister, organising setting of tables and clearing up afterwards, often with a

Novice and one or two older Sisters to help. A necessary task, but very much a back seat one – but the place where I knew her best. They both spent much time in the room known as ‘Quietness’ - for reasons best known to the Community, the room where the television was, I believe that before the advent of TV, it had been a room for Sisters to write letters etc, although I’ve often wondered if it was the Lay Sisters room, before we abolished the distinction between Lay and Choir Sisters.

Much has changed since Sr Florence and Sr Winifred Mary both died, in 2002 and 2009 respectively, the most obvious being our dispersal in 2018. But some things remain similar: we still wear habits, (although the habit has changed in style); we are still a Community, and our focus on prayer and work has not altered; and I am resident in Norwich, although because I chose to be rather than because we had to have a Sister in the city. However, it has been good to be rooted both in the Community’s presence in Norwich, dating back to our earliest years, and my own family’s connections with the city, which go back at least as far. Walking around the city, I can recognise places where we have worked, and parishes where we have had a presence.

I worship at the Cathedral, where we also have connections, dating back to our foundress. M. Lavinia was close to the Hansell family, who lived in the Close, and wrote regularly to Lucy Hansell; and Sr Alice Louisa grew up living in the Lower Close, as regular readers of my Blog will know.

So life moves on, but my life has settled into a pattern, which I imagine will stay settled for some time. I volunteer as a Cathedral Welcomer twice a week, worshipping there regularly, and I write a weekly Blog, which can be found on our website. In between, I take regular prayer walks around the City, as well as keeping various computer tasks up to

date. Lockdown having reduced the number of Cathedral Stewards, I am one of a number of people who have been trained to join those who remain.

Alongside this, I am researching the history of our Sisters, many of whom are little but names, although unfortunately a few seem destined to remain so. Nevertheless, I am finding fascinating information about many of them, bringing to life those who served in the past. It also emphasises what has changed in the Community, and what has not. Our faith has not changed, even if the practice and theology of it has; our work has changed, but the fact of bringing God's love to those who need it still remains; each of us, however imperfectly, struggles to follow God's way; above and beyond all, God and the love God brings remains steadfast, even as it changes with each passing day.





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