

A History of the Province of England of the Immaculate Conception - OFM. A short adaptation of notes given by Fr Justin McLoughlin, ofm, at the Franciscan Study centre, Canterbury.

1224 Arrival of Bl. Agnellus & 8 friars

To: Canterbury 1224; London 1224; Oxford 1224; Northants. 1225; Cambridge 1226; Norwich 1226; Worcester 1227.

Wm. Alnwick, Wm. Ockham, Walter Chatton, Roger Conway; Robert Leicester, Wm. Ware, Wm. Nottingham, Wm. Woodford, Alex. Hales, Adam Marsh, Bartholomeus, Roger Bacon, John Pecham, Roger Marston, Duns Scotus, John Wales.

1350

Peak point in History of Province [1,702 friars in 7 Custodies]

1. London: London, Salisbury, Canterbury, Winchelsea, Lewes, Southampton, Winchester, Chichester, Ware.

2. Oxford: Oxford, Reading, Bedford, Stamford, Nottingham, Northampton, Leicester, Grantham, Aylesbury.

3. Bristol: Bristol, Gloucester, Hereford, Camarthen, Cardiff, Bridgwater, Exeter, Dorchester, Bodmin, Plymouth.

4. Cambridge: Cambridge, Norwich, Bury-St. Edmunds, Lynn, Yarmouth, Ipswich, Colchester, Dunwich, Walsingham.

5. Worcester: Worcester, Coventry, Lichfield, Stafford, Preston, Shrewsbury, Chester, Llanfaes, Bridgnorth.

6. York: York, Lincoln, Beverly, Doncaster, Boston, Grimsby, Scarborough.

7 Newcastle: Newcastle, Richmond [Yorks], Hartlepool, Carlisle, Berwick, Roxburgh, Haddington, Dundee, Dumfries.

1517 Observants: Canterbury, Greenwich, Southampton Richmond, Newcastle, Newark.

1534

Number of Friaries 60. no. of Friars 966. [Knowles - Hadcock 1971

p.492]

1534

Suppression of Observants. [Conventuals in 1538]

1533-1559†

Exiled Observants @ Pontoise, Paris. 1555-1559 Greenwich restored under Mary. 1559 Greenwich suppressed under Elizabeth I. 1559 English Observants scattered in Scotland, Pontoise & Low Countries. Among those in Pontoise: Thos. Langton, Jones, Stanny. 1610 Wm. Stanny receives Jn. Gennings, a secular priest. 1618 Gennings opens English Friary Douay: Residences & Chaplaincies: London, Osmotherly, York, Abergavenny, Baddesley, Birmingham, Solihull, Goosnargh, Samlesbury, Lee House, Hexham, West Grinstead, Maryland Mission [USA] 1672

1720.

Alumni of Douay: Henry Heath, Arthur Bel, Jn. Woodcock, Santa Clara Davenport, Walter Colman, Jn. Wall, Francis Levison, Paul Atkinson, Germain Helme, - Martyrs or Confessors for the Faith [with exception of Davenport].

1793†

Douay Suppressed during French Revolution.

1793-1840†

Provincial life and Chapters continued at London, Baddesley, Birmingham, Monmouth, Aston near Stone.

1840-1858†

Under Apostolic Visitor, Bishop Brown OSB.

1858†

Restoration at Sclerder, Cornwall - from Belgium.

1861 Manchester, 1868 Glasgow, 1873 Stratford, 1884 Forest Gate, 1889 Bristol, 1890 Chilworth, 1894 Buckingham, [October 1902 French Foundations incorporated into English Province 1882 Clevedon, 1887 Ascot, 1894 Woodford] 1909 Liverpool, 1924 Sheffield, 1925 Edinburgh, 1930 Nottingham, 1932 Dundee, 1937 Craigmillar, 1938 Cambridge, 1941 Aldridge, 1946 East Bergholt, 1951 Llanidloes, 1962 Stony Stratford, 1969 Osmotherly, 1970 Southampton, 1973 Ipswich, 1974 Canterbury, 1980 Hatch End.

Missionary Outreach:†

Individual friars in China, Palestine, Australia. Established Missions:†

Peru 1912-1920, Bellary, S. India 1928, Ermelo, S. Africa 1949. Restoration of the Province

Preliminary Observations:†

1. The Order was founded in 1209. There were no Provinces until 1217 [Holzapfel, Manuale p. 139].

2. Provinces became necessary with the rapid expansion of the Order. They became Geographical and later Canonical units.

3. First Provincial - Agnellus of Pisa, formerly Custos of Paris arrived at Dover with 8 friars 1224 ["De Adventu fratrum..." Eccleston]

4. It can be established historically that there has never been any period since 1224 when there have not been Franciscans in England, even throughout penal times.

5. From second expulsion from Greenwich in 1560 [12th June] until 27th May 1625 there was no canonical Province, nor could there be since the Catholic Faith was outlawed. Yet there were many friars ministering and in communication with their Superiors.

6. John Jones [1559-1598] martyred at St. Thomas' Waterings South London, 12th July 1598, was in prison along with William Stanny who, in 1601, refers to himself as: "primus a dissolutione Provinciae Anglicanae Commisarius". Jones passed on the seal of the Province to Stanny [Mason "Certamen Seraphicum" Douay 1649].

7. Stanny received John Gennings [brother St. Edmund Gennings] c.1610; who later founded the English friary in Douay. 30th October first English friars took up residence in the new St. Bonaventure friary, Douay.

8. France declared war on England 1st Feb. 1793. English friars given 24 hours to get out. They first went to Tongres [Belgium] for a year. 1794 France invaded Belgium, English friars sailed for England.

9. Douay community had been erected into the Custody of England in 1625, and on 6th August 1629, Minister General [Bernardine a Senis] [i.e. Sena - Portugal] issued the Decree which made it a Province: "Provinciae Angliae, quae ob persecutiones haereticorum defecerat, restituta sit pristino super. honori ac loco... duxerimus Provinciae Angliae... virtute praesentium restituimus".

10. This Province continued for nearly 50 years in spite of the uncertainties of recovering Douay. The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 brought no relief for male religious. "Any Jesuit or Religious Male person arriving in England after 1829 is deemed guilty of a misdemeanour and banished for life". Though this was soon forgotten, it remained the law. With no further supplies from Douay and a great shortage of vocations, the Province was down to 9 friars at the provincial Chapter, Clifton, Bristol - 5th. October 1838.

11. Amidst controversy Leo Edgeworth elected Provincial in 1838; 1840 friars were put under an Apostolic Visitor, Bishop Brown, OSB. 1845 Brown summoned remaining 5 friars to Chapter at Monmouth, with a view to linking with Belgium. In 1849 Bernard Van Loo, Definitor from Belgium met the four surviving friars [Bishop Hendren, Fisher, Millward, O'Farrell] at Franciscan Convent, Taunton. Difficulties arose at Belgian end; General intervened in 1852, but it was not until 1858 that first Belgian friars arrived in Sclerder. They sent friars and educated candidates from England, Ireland, Scotland until 1887 when Custody was erected.

12. 15th August 1887 General [Bernardine a Fortogruaru] issued the Decree for the new Custody. By 1887 the friaries separated were Manchester [1862], Glasgow [1868], Stratford [1873] and Killarney which had been established by the Belgians in 1860. The Decree states that the province of Belgium always had in mind the restoration of the province of England.

13. Erection of Province - 12th February 1891; Killarney was to be the Novitiate; Students were at Forest Gate [some in Belgium].

14. Superiors of Custody 1887: Custos - David Fleming - 36 yrs. Discreets: Polycarp Vervoort - 61 yrs. Francis Verhagen - 55 yrs. Aidan McCarthy - 39 yrs. Restoration of Province 1891: Provincial - David Fleming - 40 yrs. Custos - Polycarp Vervoort 65 yrs. Definitors - Brendan Butti - 50 yrs. Francis Verhagen - 59 yrs. Aidan McCarthy - 43 yrs. Cuthbert Wood - 58 yrs. Polycarp and Francis were former members of Belgian Province. David Fleming was from Killarney; Aidan McCarthy from Manchester; Brendan Butti from Taunton; Cuthbert Wood, a Methodist convert from Hyde, Cheshire. Initials after names were OSF until "Felicitate Quadam" of Leo XIII changed them to OFM.

Footnote:

Periodically, in accounts of the English Franciscans, it is suggested that pre-Reformation Observants disappeared completely at Reformation, and that the revival under John Gennings was a new Province, and that this Province also became extinct, so that the Province today dates back only to 1891. It became fashionable to speak of 1st 2nd and 3rd Provinces. There can be no doubt about the continuity between Jones, Stanny and Gennings. There can be no doubt that it was at the invitation of C19 survivors of the Penal Days Province that the Belgian Province accepted the request to build up the Order in England. There is some difference between "extinct" and "extinguished". Hendren is referred to as "son of the extinct Province". In terms of a Canonical and legal Province this is correct. The Decree speaks of the Province lacking legal existence, but lacking legal existence does not mean no existence. There were Franciscans in England from the 1838 Chapter until the Belgians arrived in 1866. Extinct it may have been but there is insufficient evidence that it was extinguished or suppressed.

Transcribed from Fr. Justin's Notes in the Provincial Archives now at Canterbury