

Dom Edmund Ceolfrid Trehearne O. S. B. – ‘Martyr of Charity’

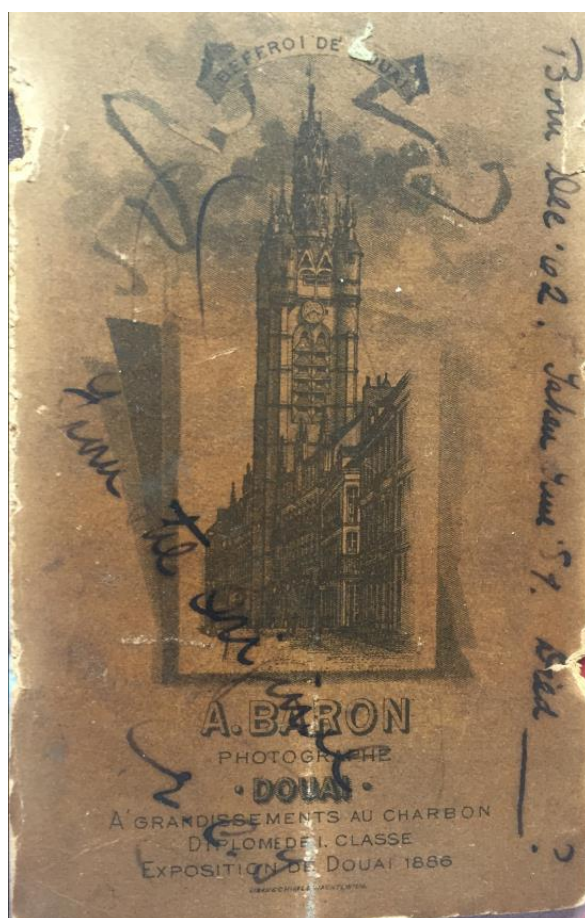
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Dom Edmund Ceolfrid Trehearne O.S.B. (1862-1897)

Some years ago a member of the old Cheltenham Catholic Family of Rotundo gave me a photograph of Father Wilkinson, the Missionary Rector who completed St Gregory's Church, together with one of his Coadjutor or assistant curate, Dom Edmund Ceolfrid Trehearne. I knew that Ceolfrid died young and, since owning the photograph, his short life has intrigued

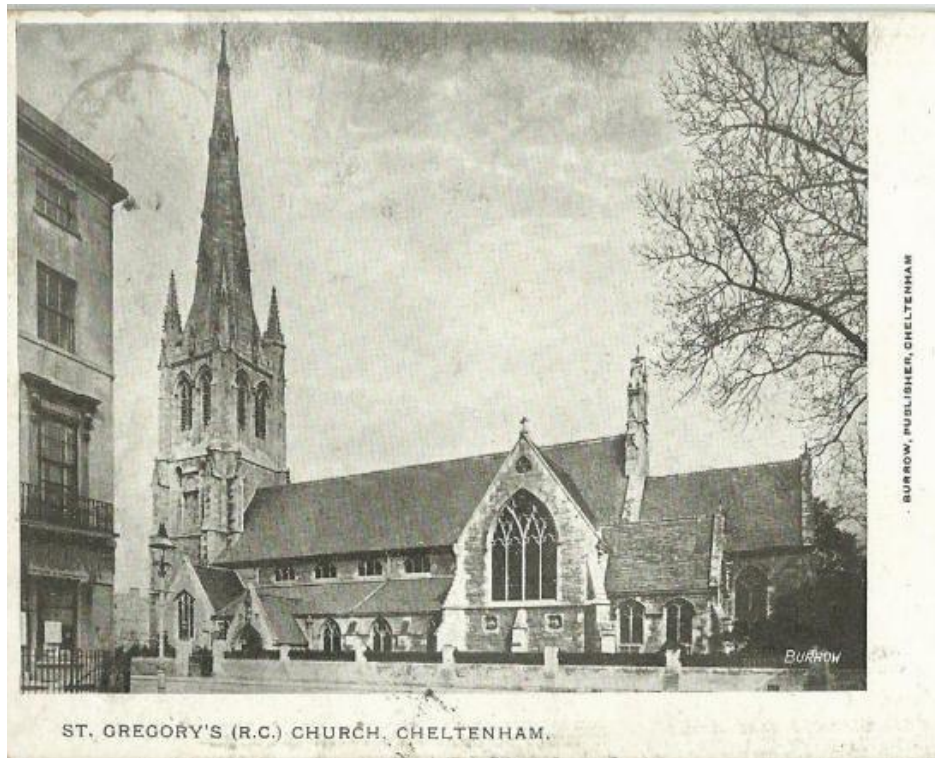
me. When visiting Douai Abbey at Woolhampton I have often admired the fine portrait of him which hangs in the Library.



Reverse of Visiting Card

Edmund Trehearne was born in December 1862 at Isleworth in Middlesex. His father, William, worked as a gardener and was born at Ruthin in Wales. His mother, Mary Ann, was from Ireland. In 1871 Edmund was at home with his family but at the time of the 1881 census he was listed in the return as a student at Fort Augustus Monastery in Scotland. Edmund must have decided to join the English Benedictines and he was clothed with the name Ceolfrid. Saint Ceolfrid or Ceofrith (642-716) was Abbot of Monkswearmouth and Jarrow where he acted as the Warden of the Venerable Bede. He was much involved with Codex Amiatinus and died in Burgundy whilst delivering a copy of the codex to the Pope.

In 1884 Edmund Trehearne was professed as a member of the Benedictine Community of St Edmund, Douai. My photo places Coelfrid at the monastery in Douai in 1889 and, as his name does not appear in the 1891 census for the United Kingdom, it is likely that he was still resident there two years later.



Father Alexander Maurus Wilson, another member of the Community of St Edmund, served for nearly fourteen years as the Coadjutor priest attached to St Gregory's Church in Cheltenham. He was an exceedingly popular figure and, when he celebrated the silver jubilee of his monastic profession in 1894 the Missionary Rector, Father Robert Aloysius Wilkinson, said of him:

'During his thirteen years in Cheltenham he had built up the Convent of St Paul, a convent of no mean dimensions, containing the very gem of a convent chapel; he had enlarged, furnished and improved the schools; he had brought over the community of the Sisters of Nazareth to attend to the poor men and women and distressed orphan children; he had founded a school which had done and was still doing excellent work: and he had founded a school which had done and was still doing excellent work; and he had founded a guild for boys and the young men, and another guild for the girls and young women, the two guilds being of incalculable advantage not only to the young men and to the young women, but also to the clergy who were responsible for their souls.'

Sadly, on 11th January 1895, the industrious and much loved Father Maurus died, having suffered from a long and painful illness. He was buried in the Roman Catholic area of Cheltenham Cemetery. The Gloucester Journal reported:

'The Rev. Father had taken to his bed just a month ago suffering from diabetes, with additional trouble of weak action of the heart, a relict of rheumatical fever from some seven years since.'

His obituary in the Douai Magazine noted that, *'the present generation will remember his kind and happy face ... and will recall with pleasure the many charming songs with which he used to favour us, as well as the grand solos sung in the chapel.'*



Dom Robert Aloysius Wilkinson, Missionary Rector of St Gregory's Cheltenham

With the passing of Father Maurus, the Prior of Douai, Dom Oswald O'Neill, appointed Ceolfrid Trehearne to fill his shoes. St Gregory's was then a large and busy parish and the work load for the curate would have been considerable and the role demanding. During his first year in Cheltenham two new chapels were opened both dedicated to Our Lady of Good Counsel. The first was at Prestbury where a new mission was established and the second was at Nazareth House in Sandford Place. The new chapel was designed by Canon Scoles and Ceolfrid Trehearne assisted at the opening in December 1895.

Quite suddenly, on 3rd March 1897, the young monk died, aged thirty-four-years. At his Requiem at St Gregory's, Father Alphonsus Thomas said of him, *'the most remarkable thing about his life, was, throughout the whole of it, he was always serving somebody else.'* It would seem that he was suffering with Pneumonia and had got up in a raging fever, two days before his death, to take the Blessed Sacrament to a dying person. He was buried with Father Wilson at Cheltenham Cemetery.



Portrait at Douai Abbey by kind permission of the Abbot, the Rt. Rev. Dom Geoffrey Scott O.S.B.

Two years later yet another priest was to die at St Gregory's. Father Patrick Aloysius Leavy was a very elderly Benedictine who returned to Cheltenham to spend his final days in community with Father Wilkinson and Father Trehearne. Like our young 'Martyr of Charity' he spent a number of years during his ministry caring for the sick and it is said that he picked up Cholera but survived, living into his eightieth year.

Together with Father Peter Hartley who died ministering to a sick parishioner in Gloucester fifty years earlier, Ceolfrid Trehearne is remembered as a 'Martyr of Charity'.

Richard Barton (2020)