

## Olympic Games and Blackberries

*This made our summer, didn't it: watching the Paris Games at the beginning of August, picking blackberries in the second half of August? The Games were good, but the blackberries really exceptional.*

We (that is to say mainly you, for monks have no time for watching TV programmes) have seen great performances by men and women gifted with so much talent, dedication, hard work and perseverance. We have identified with them – individually and nationally – as if they somehow represented our best selves. Athletes stretch their muscles and energies thus revealing possibilities for us all – at least as desires or dreams. Like them, we can achieve more than we usually do. They exemplify this ‘more’ latent in all of us. They make it real, and it becomes their gift to us, their contribution towards our common seeking what it is to be fully human. That all this happens at an international level where (nearly) all countries are involved points towards the common humanity which we share despite and beyond all divisions and conflicts. I do not believe these Games are just amusements for the people – some modernised version of the Roman circuses! They can give us a lesson in humanity, if we wish to take it.

It is just the same with blackberries. Mary Case, of the Isle of Wight Beekeepers, who kindly gave one of the talks during our early July events, announced that they would be abundant

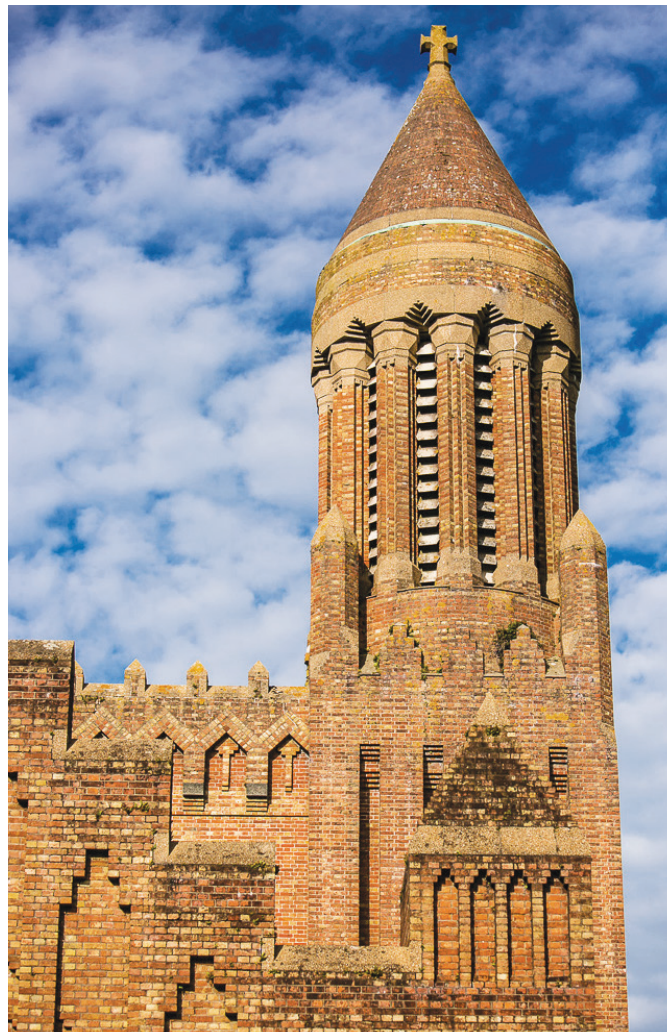
this year. She was right. Blackberries are one of the simple joys of life in the countryside. In all kinds of weather you can go out, stretch out your hand and pick one. There are more on the bushes than you can put in your little box. Think of the highest ones or of those impossible to reach because of layers of brambles. Even the odd sting or the sudden burning of an unnoticed nettle add to the fun. Picking and

tasting seasonal fruit give very simple but powerful joys. These are not to be despised. They, too, have their lesson, not of pushing our boundaries always further as the Games do in the domain of sport, but of welcoming the gifts at hand in ordinary life, especially the humbler ones, those little blessings hidden everywhere, even among the brambles.

That we can do more, that we are given so much: these are precious reminders when we might otherwise feel overwhelmed by so many challenges at all sorts of levels. These are the good lessons of this summer, good holiday lessons. Because the ‘more’ and the ‘gifts’ have one and the same origin: the bounty of our Father in Heaven. Without Him, we can do nothing, let alone achieve rare summits of performance. From Him come all that we are given, beginning with our own selves, and then all the great and small gifts that make life possible and enjoyable.

Yes, definitely, Olympic Games and blackberries speak of the Father. And maybe it is exactly what holidays are for: to reconnect with our Father, to receive His gifts, and to give thanks to Him. Not a bad programme!

Abbot Xavier



Picture: Marie-Line Burguiere

# Three Fundraising Initiatives by Members of The Friends of Quarr by Cheryl Fontana

## Fr Abbot at The Travellers Club in Pall Mall

It was a privilege to attend a talk given by Fr Abbot in London at The Travellers Club in Pall Mall on Wednesday 19th June. The Travellers Club, established in 1819, was once described as “the quintessential English gentleman’s club” and the original concept was conceived by Lord Castlereagh with the intention of creating a meeting space where gentlemen who travelled abroad could meet and entertain distinguished foreign visitors. The rules from 1819 specifically excluded anyone who had not “travelled out of the British Islands to a distance of at least 500 miles from London in a direct line.”

The talk was generously hosted by

Guillaume and Muriel Danis, Friends of Quarr who live in London. Their aim was to provide an event where Fr Xavier could speak about what it means to live a contemplative life and also introduce the audience to Quarr Abbey. Many of those present came from the French community in London but there were also representatives from various London parishes and those who are already great advocates of Quarr. Fr Xavier was also supported by several Friends of Quarr, who had travelled from the Island to London especially for the occasion. The talk was very well received and as a result, generous donations totalling £50,000 towards the guest house renovations were made, thus allowing for a peaceful completion of the works.



## A New Organ for Quarr

The digital organ adjacent to the choir stalls no longer functions and is beyond economic repair, so two resourceful Friends of Quarr have found a suitable replacement for it. Philip Fowke and Clive Dixon have not only located a Chester pipe organ built in the 1980s by Hill, Norman and Beard, but they have also arranged for it to be refurbished by Andrew Cooper who restored the Cavaillé-Coll organ. Furthermore, they were able to raise half of the funds necessary to complete the project.

An additional sum of £3,000 is now needed in order to bring the organ to Quarr Abbey before Christmas and to fund minor repairs to the Cavaillé-

Coll organ. Other members of The Friends and members of the public have generously responded to an appeal for help and to date, we are only about £1,000 short of the total. A link is available on the Abbey website at: <https://quarrabbey.org/> which enables further donations to be made and we are optimistic about achieving the final amount of money very soon.

As Philip and Clive say, “Quarr has a wonderful tradition of enhancing the beauty of the liturgy through its plainsong and the acquisition of this chamber organ could make a real contribution to the continuance of this legacy for future generations.”



## Suor Angelica - Puccini at Quarr Abbey

The production of Suor Angelica took place on the last weekend in June and was the culmination of a two year project for Voices of the Isle of Wight, a singing school run by Linda Filby-Borrett. Linda has been connected to the Abbey for the last 25 years giving individual singing lessons to the monks and creating Quarr Carols with her pupils and the brothers each Christmas. She is also a committed member of the Friends of Quarr.

The cast of Suor Angelica was supported and directed by her professional friends: James Longford (Steinway Pianist) as musical director and Belinda Williams (professional opera singer) as director. This amazing team made the opera possible and past pupils Kirsten Barker as Angelica and Sally O'Brien as the Princess were both outstanding in their roles. Both Kirsten and Sally have been regular singers at the Abbey in past years.

Linda would like to thank all the friends and public who supported the performances and who helped to raise a considerable amount of money for the Abbey.

# FR. Finbar: An Obituary

*On Wednesday, June 12 we heard the sad news of the death of Father Finbar Kealy. Fr. Finbar was known and loved by many on the Island as Prior-Administrator of Quarr Abbey from 2008 until 2013. But he was also Abbot of Douai Abbey in Berkshire from 1990 until 1998, and even Cathedral Prior of Canterbury for many years. The latter title is an honorary one given to retired Abbots in the English Benedictine Congregation, commemorating medieval offices lost at the Reformation.*

Fr. Finbar came to Quarr following the resignation of Abbot Cuthbert Johnson in 2008. He was appointed Prior-Administrator by the Abbot of Solesmes, the Right Reverend Philippe Dupont when it became clear that Quarr was unable to elect an Abbot of its own. His appointment was for three years but was extended by two years before his return to Douai in 2013.

Initially, I wondered whether Fr. Finbar was strong enough for his appointed role. He was so gentle and self-effacing. But this disguised great strength of character. He was well able to make decisions and stand by them; a mark of any true leader.

And Fr. Finbar did provide good leadership. First and foremost he established the unity and peace of the community, and led the daily round of Offices in choir; he was a man of peace and prayer.

He also saw the need of being ready to receive vocations. He therefore sent me as novicemaster to Rome for the three month long Monastic Formators Programme in 2009. This was a tremendous experience, meeting monastics from around the world and receiving instruction from many of the world's foremost monastic teachers.

Fr. Finbar wanted Quarr to reach out to the local community and associates across the country. He therefore started the Quarr Abbey Newsletter which is still published three times a year. He also initiated the Friends of Quarr, an organization now headed



by Fishbourne resident, Dr. Dominic Fontana. In addition he worked closely with the Parish Council and its chairman, Chris Reed.

One of the major headaches of any monastic superior is securing the monastery's finances. Fr. Finbar appointed a financial director, Jeremy Fletcher, and asked him to devise a new business plan. This led to the enlargement of the Tea-shop, the introduction of a Farm-shop, an Art Gallery and to a successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid and the construction of a Visitors Centre and Monastery Shop. Fr. Finbar changed the appearance of Quarr.

Writing this Obituary I realize how much Fr. Finbar achieved in five years. But we do not mourn the loss of an achiever; we lament the passing of a kind and holy man, who loved the brethren, who loved all he met, who rarely lacked a smile, and whose gentle humour so often brought a smile to others. May he rest in peace.

*Br. Duncan Smith*



Painting by Sarah Talbot



## Chronicle

*June 4 saw the monastery largely empty. All the monks who had known Abbot Finbar Kealy as Prior Administrator at Quarr together with Fr. Abbot made the pilgrimage to Douai Abbey in Berkshire to pay their last respects at his funeral Mass.*

*The journey was surprisingly short. Once we had crossed the Solent the taxi took scarcely an hour to cover the ground. We were warmly welcomed and had plenty of time to pray beside the coffin placed in the nave of the Abbey Church before Mass commenced at 11.30.*

The Abbot of Douai, Paul Gunter, was chief celebrant, while the sanctuary was filled with Abbots and religious, and the nave with a good crowd of the faithful.

Abbot Paul's homily made clear to all the multi-faceted abilities of Fr. Finbar and the many parts he had to play in a long life, but above all he recalled the humble and kindly spirit which made him loved of so many.

After Mass we processed to the Cemetery where the coffin was interred and we made our farewells, sprinkling the grave with Holy Water. May he rest in peace until the great day of the resurrection!

July 1-2 When a very large marquee was erected about the Platinum Jubilee tree of Queen Elizabeth II it was a clear sign that the second season of Quarr Abbey Summer Talks had arrived. The prime slot this year fell to our friend Erik Varden, Bishop of Trondheim in Norway. On the first evening he gave a short talk at a charity dinner and auction, but his main address was reserved for the following day. Its subject was Literature and Salvation- whether there was a connection between the two. It was a dazzling firework display of erudition.

Primo Levi, John Keats and Fyodor Dostoyevsky were among the featured stars, but they were accompanied by a host of lesser known, and some, quite frankly, unknown, turns. Bishop Erik argued persuasively that Literature provided a saving word in some of the most extreme situations of the twentieth century, as well as in some of the most banal. Lively questioning followed the talk and the assurance that it would be published soon. Highly recommended! Look out for it!

Monseigneur Robert Le Gall, Archbishop Emeritus of Toulouse and member of our community followed, and an excerpt from his talk appears elsewhere in this issue. But for the rest, alas! I can only offer a very cursory account of the riches. We received eloquent testimony to the place of catechesis in today's church, fine historical analyses of the origins of English monasticism and of the crusading movement, an informative account of the challenges facing the Catholic Church as it tries to keep its buildings in good repair, the challenges of bee-keeping and the role of the Island Hospice in providing end of life care. The latter especially led to much, and at times, emotional interaction. It all amounted to a most

varied and stimulating banquet of words and ideas.

Puccini's "Sister Angelica", a one act opera, is not often performed. But Linda Filby-Borrett, James Longford and Belinda Williams together with Voices of the Isle of Wight put on an English Language performance at Quarr on the weekend of June 29-30. Kirsten Barker sang her heart out in the title role while Sally O'Brien was the stern Princess, Sister Angelica's aunt.

The story of a young woman bearing a child out of wedlock, atoning for her sin in a convent, despairing at the news of her son's death, and then dying at her own hand, challenges different times in different ways. Italy at the beginning of the twentieth century ensured that Puccini respected the moral authority of the Catholic Church. Sister Angelica repents of her suicide after swallowing the poison and a consoling vision of the Mother of God reconciles us to the tragic ending. But all the singers, so splendidly supported by James Longford at the piano raised the story to a mesmeric narrative of human weakness and love, shot through with divine compassion and forgiveness.



Pictures: Marie-Line Burguiere

Unforgettable!

July 6-7 Fr Abbot first met the Benedictine Primate, Abbot Gregory Polan many years ago. He was moved by testimony of his prayerful support of Quarr. It was therefore with real gratitude that we received news of his impending visit to our monastery. It would be the first visit of an Abbot Primate since that of Abbot Victor Dammertz in 1990.

Abbot Gregory arrived on the Saturday evening and we were able to welcome him briefly after supper. On the Sunday he presided at the Conventual Mass and preached on the unexpected encounters with Christ which can occur round every street corner in Rome, or indeed anywhere. In the afternoon he visited our Sisters at St. Cecilia's and celebrated Vespers with them. He returned to Quarr in time for a buffet supper with us, during which there was opportunity to learn about his work as Primate, his plans for imminent retirement, and the pastoral programmes run by his monastery in the U.S.A. May the Lord bless him and his ministry in the years ahead!

July 25-27 marked the occasion of our annual organ festival. This is an opportunity to showcase our 1912 Mutin-Cavaille Coll organ especially since its recent renovation. This year we decided to spread the concerts over three days from Thursday to Saturday rather than over the weekend, believing that Sunday is not the best day for attracting audiences.

The festival opened with a concert given by Vegar Sandholt, organist at St. Olav's cathedral in Oslo, Norway.

He provided us with a fascinating introduction to Scandinavian music, playing work by composers, largely unknown in England. We heard the spectacular prologue to the Job Suite by the Norwegian Egil Hovland: crashing glissandos of notes made one feel the shock of Job's world shattering. In another mood entirely, an Interlude by the same composer suggested the ripples on the surface of a Fjord, light dancing, sparkling on gently moving water.

Michael Stevenson, a teacher at Trinity Laban College, London and Musical Director at St. Margaret's Church, Putney, followed. Work by Pierne, Guilmant and Franck dominated a largely French programme. Pierne's "Trois Pieces pour L'orgue" is always a favourite and Saint-Saens "Swan" beguiled in Guilmant's Organ arrangement.

The series was concluded by Jonathan Delbridge, Concert Pianist and Organist and Accompanist. His especial interest in English music gave us the gentle and courtly beauty of Byrd's "Pavan", the drama of David Blackwell's "Triumphal March on Lux Eoi" and the sober sophistication of Samuel Wesley's "Choral Song and Fugue" There was something for everyone.

The Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord is the anniversary of Fr. Abbot's abbatial blessing. It is now also the anniversary of the commencement of Br. John's canonical novitiate. After Vespers the whole community, together with our three interns processed from the Church to the

Chapter House, where Br. John first prostrated before Fr. Abbot, and according to the Rite begged for the Mercy of God and fellowship with the community. Having professed his reliance upon the grace of God to fulfil the Rule with all its obligations it was the turn of Fr. Abbot and all the brethren to express our commitment to him, our new brother. In the Rite of the Mandatum, the Washing of the feet, which the Lord instituted on Maundy Thursday in Holy Week, we undertake to serve our brother after the pattern left us by Jesus. The Fathers of the Church teach us that this is a mystery, a means of grace and of life. May Br. John and all of us, rejoice in that gift in the year ahead!

Fr. Gregory has been corresponding for a number of years with a Chilean lady, Veronica Griffin Barros, who has been working on a comprehensive monograph on the life and work of the Chilean monastic artist, Pedro Subercaseaux. Dom Pedro was a monk of Quarr, who in the 1930s was sent as part of the founding community of a Chilean monastery. Trained as an artist before he entered Quarr he produced paintings throughout his life. Examples at Quarr include the Refectory Crucifix and many altarpieces in the Crypt. This August, Veronica and her husband paid a long desired first visit to the first monastic home of her subject. She presented the Community with copies of her now completed work. It was a fine day and we enjoyed a glass of sherry together on the terrace while sharing stories of Dom Pedro and his long and much varied life.

*Br. Duncan Smith*

# Works in the Guest House

*Guests “are never lacking in a monastery”, St Benedict famously said (Rule, ch. 53). Guests are not just visitors passing by. They stay for one or a few nights. They are given a room in the south wing of the monastery. During their stay, they generally attend part or all of the services. They share meals with the monks – men in the monks’ refectory, women in an adjacent room. They can meet with the guest master or another monk for spiritual guidance. If they wish, they may give a donation towards the upkeep of the monastery.*

The original guest house facilities (the so-called ‘old guest house’) were extended in 2004 by taking over the south-west wing of the abbey (still called the ‘new guest-house’). Although maintenance works have been done regularly over the years, the need was felt recently for more important works.

A flat roof was leaking, damaging the ceiling of one room to the point that it could no longer be used. Lintels had cracks and needed replacing. Some of the brickwork was in need of repointing to avoid further water penetration. Windows and doors needed repair and repainting. On the inside, the toilets needed complete refurbishment. We wanted to create a new ensuite room from already two connected rooms. Sound proofing of the parlours and of other areas was also a much called for improvement. The aim was not to extend our capacity, but rather to maintain the building and improve the comfort of our guests.

Whilst the roof work was entrusted to an external company, all the rest of the work was done in house by our team of carpenters Sam Crockford and Kelly Szawiel assisted by a few of the monks. The costs, amounting to £118,000 to date, were covered by donations coming from 1. Monasteries of the Solesmes Congregation 2. The Fondation des Monastères – a French Charity established to support Catholic monasteries 3. Private donors 4. A concert and a few events at the Abbey or outside.

We are very grateful for the generous support we have received and from which our guests will directly benefit. A little completion ceremony will be held on Saturday 12th October, anniversary of the Dedication of our Abbey Church (1912). We shall give thanks to God and ask Him to bless all involved, especially workers and donors, and all the guests who will stay at Quarr in the future.

Abbot Xavier



# Luminous Darkness

*Darkness is not always a negative thing. Negative theology declares what God is not before being able, from his Word, to advance something about him. “No one has ever seen God,” writes Saint John in the prologue to his Gospel; the only Son, who is God, who is in the bosom of the Father, it is he who has made him known” (Jn 1:18).*

From the Hebrews' experience of the luminous cloud on their way to the Promised Land, the most diverse mystics have shown the necessity of passing through the Dark Cloud, according to the title of one of the works of Saint John of the Cross. The English have The Cloud of Unknowing; a shadow hides the mystery of God. Did he not protect Moses with his hand in this way at Horeb, before letting him see his back?

“Moses said, “Please let me behold your glory. The Lord said: I will pass before you in all my splendour, and I will proclaim before you my name which is: The Lord. I am gracious to whomever I will, I show my tenderness to whomever I will.” He said again: “You are not able to see my face, because a human being cannot see me and stay alive.” Finally the Lord said: “Here is a place near me, you will stand on the rock; When my glory passes by, I will put you in the hollow of the rock and I will shelter you with my hand until I have passed. Then I will withdraw my hand, and you will see my back, but no one can see my face” (Ex 33, 18-23).

Here we perceive the great delicacy of God who, in our current state of “viators” (pilgrims), wants to prevent us from being dazzled and burned by the intense beauty of light and love that is Glory. It was the same at the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem:

“When the priests came out of the sanctuary, the cloud filled the house of the Lord, and because of it the priests had to interrupt the divine service: the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord! Then Solomon cried out: The Lord declares that He dwells in the dark cloud. And now I have built you, Lord, a magnificent house, a place where you will dwell forever” (1 Kings 8:10-13).

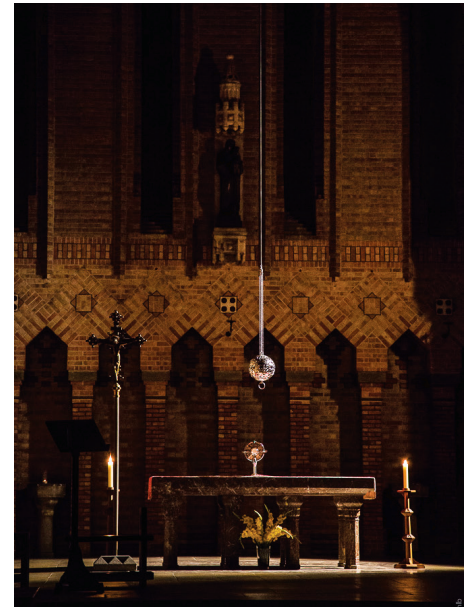
And when on Mount Tabor Jesus

showed something of His Glory to Peter, James and John, His favored Apostles, it is written: “The appearance of His face became different, and His garment became dazzling white” (Luke 9:29). The Law and the prophets, in the person of Moses and Elijah, who had announced this light to come, are included in this Glory, which is only manifested for a moment. Indeed, Peter barely had time to stammer something when “a cloud came and overshadowed them; they were seized with fear when they entered it” (34). Thus our lives constantly move from light to darkness, from the joyful certainty of faith to the painful questioning of doubt. What follows shows us that the Lord remains with us in this darkness: “A voice came out of the cloud: “This is my Son, the one I have chosen: listen to him!” And while the voice was heard, there was only Jesus, alone” (35-36). Even in the heart of the night, the Father speaks to us of his Son, and his Son is at our side, and in our depths this song of the Psalmist sounds:

*“I said: The darkness oppresses me!  
but the night becomes light around me.  
Even darkness is not darkness for you,  
and night is light as day!”*  
(Ps 138, 11-12).

These words are taken up at the beginning of the Easter Vigil, when the deacon sings the Exsultet, a magnificent chant which takes up and amplifies the tone of the preface, and which expresses the Paschal Mystery in a lyrical and profound way. It is a song to the night, punctuated by the return of these words: This is the night”. Note this passage:

*“This is the night when Christ,  
breaking the bonds of death,  
rose victorious from hell.*



*O blessed fault (O felix culpa)  
who earned us the same Redeemer!  
This is the night of which it is written:  
The night will shine like the day;  
even the night is light for my joy”*

We recognize Psalm 138, and the Easter night is the great exemplar of what the divine artist knows how so well to do, making even our faults contribute to the accomplishment of his plan of salvation. From the depths of night and darkness, he brings out so much more powerfully, by contrast, the light of his almighty mercy. We enter our churches, after the blessing of the Paschal candle, with candles unlit; little by little the faithful light their candles at this wax column, to bear witness to the fact that light is diffused in the very heart of the night. Thus the heart of the liturgical year is the most beautiful manifestation of this play of shadow and light which concerns us. Truly, as Saint John writes in the prologue to his Gospel, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness could not prevent its increase” (1:5).

*Monseigneur Robert Le Gall*

# Study of Sweet Peas at Quarr Abbey Bookshop

(after Wallace Stevens)

Positioned on a shelf next to an array of rosaries,  
they are an antidote to the starkness  
of the white stone wall.

\*

Their slender green stalks are crammed  
into a glass jar filled nearly to the brim  
with water.

\*

The sweet pea flowers bestow a flounce of colour.  
Hues of baby pink, purple,  
a more solemn maroon.

\*

Each ruffled papilionaceous petal  
is attached like wings  
to a green calyx star.

\*

Stragglers lean out beyond the rim into the room  
as if wishing  
to peruse the titles of the holy books.

\*

Lathyrus odoratus.

Their scent is a mix of honey and fresh mown grass  
with notes of amber, sandalwood and musk.

\*

The sweet peas are neither liturgy nor prayer,  
saints or sinners.

They are cut flowers in a jar.

\*

Soon their petals will fall and settle  
on the shelf or floor.

This stillness is an illusion.

*Maggie Sawkins*