



THE WALDENSIAN REVIEW



No. 126

Summer 2015

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From the Editor

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Thank you once again for your interest, support and prayers.

First of all I'll go straight to the question that most of you will ask seeing the **Pope** on the front cover! Why and who is the person next to him? The picture was taken during an historic visit to the Waldensian church of Turin and the friend he is exchanging a joke with is, as some of you will know, the Moderator **Eugenio Bernardini**. As you will see in the following pages, 2015 has already been an eventful year.

As usual there is bad news and good news: over the Easter period came the sudden and totally unexpected death of **Peter Meadows**, a long-standing member of the Committee of the WCM. Much less unexpected was the passing in July of Pastor **Franco Giampiccoli**, who was nearly 81 and had been ill for some time. He had been among other things Director of Agape, Editor of the weekly *Eco delle Valli Valdesi - Luce* (now *Riforma*) and Moderator. During his visit to Britain in this capacity the WCM organised a memorable reception for him at Methodist Central Hall. Both will be greatly missed by us all.

Life goes on, though, and I am glad to say that **Marco Casci** has now finished his year at Westminster College in Cambridge – to which we contributed – and he is 'resting' earning some money making pizzas in a friend's restaurant in Palermo. Afterwards in September he will follow the same course in Genova that **Noemi Falla** attended last year, preparing for Chaplaincy in hospitals. Meanwhile Noemi has passed all her remaining exams and spent a few months in Wisconsin as assistant to the minister **John Hobbins**, who was her pastor in Scicli in Sicily when she was a little girl. She is now writing her thesis about Jesus, his family and his attitude towards 'family'. Please keep both in your prayers.

The website has begun to attract interest and is being used – as it should be! – also for buying books and calendars and for donations. Remember to consult it from time to time for updates and contacts: **www.waldensian.org.uk**

Unbelievable but TRUE: at last **Prescot Stephens'** book *The Waldensian Story* has been reprinted and will be soon available at a very special price on the website and at our events!

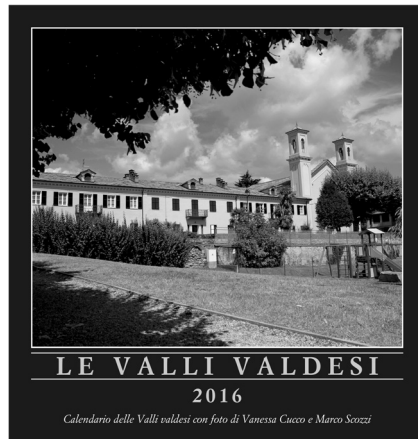
We are having a new format **Waldensian Awareness Day** in Cambridge on **19 September** from 10.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St Andrew's Hall in St Andrew's Road, Chesterton where we hope to see as many of you as possible!

Please continue to support our work for the Waldensian Church and its Mission in Italy **with your prayers and financial help.**

God bless you all
ESN, Editor

*Cover: Pope Francis with Moderator Eugenio Bernardini.
(Photo: P. Romeo/Riforma.)*

WALDENSIAN CALENDARS 2016



This year the calendar is back to its traditional format with photographs of the Waldensian Valleys, Bible verses in 5 different languages and reverse pages on the project *Churches Together*.

Price still **£10.50 p&p included** (two **£18.50**). You can order and pay for them online (www.waldensian.org.uk) or send a cheque (payable to Waldensian Church Mission) to **Milvia Walker**, 19 Forest Approach, Woodford Green, IG8 9BW

WALDENSIAN DAY 2015 CAMBRIDGE

Saturday 19 September
10.30 a.m.–3 p.m.

St Andrew's Hall, St Andrews Road, Chesterton CB4 1DH
DO COME and be surprised!

Great news fresh from the heartland of the Waldensian Valleys and books, films, music, a raffle, Italian food and drink (and as usual the now widely renowned *BISCOTTI di DEBORA* and the Waldensian *Gianduiotti Caffarel* chocolates).

Learn all about the visit of **Pope Francis** to the Waldensian church in Turin and find the newly reprinted *The Waldensian Story* (with new pictures and introduction!) by Prescott Stephens.

ABOVE ALL make it a memorable day with your presence!

Pope Francis asks the Waldensians for Forgiveness in the Name of the Catholic Church

On 15 December 1853, while the first Protestant church of Italy outside the Alpine 'ghetto' was inaugurated in Turin, the bells of all the other (obviously Roman Catholic) churches were tolling as if for a funeral. Don Bosco (now a saint), though he did a great deal of social work, especially among deprived boys, was a sworn enemy of the Waldensians and never ceased opposing them in every possible way.

It was in that very church, itself a great achievement of General Beckwith, who through our Committee raised the money for its construction, that on 22 June this year Pope Francis, on the behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, begged the Waldensians for forgiveness for the 'un-Christian, even inhuman way' they were treated over the centuries. The Moderator Eugenio Bernardini welcomed his words on the behalf of the Waldensian Church and underlined that Ecumenism is a work in progress and that the only way forward is recognising and accepting each other's differences in 'reconciled diversity'. With them were Oscar Oudri, Moderator of the Waldensian Church of Rio de La Plata, whom Francis knew from his South American days, and who had flown to Turin for the occasion, the minister of the church, pastor Paolo Ribet, the President of the Consistory, Sergio Velluto, and deacon Alessandra Trotta, President of the OPCEMI (the Outreach of the Methodist Church, which since 1979 is combined with the Waldensian Church). The Pope said that we



are all one in Jesus Christ and was given a reprint of the historic first French Bible for the translation of which the poor Waldensians paid a considerable sum, just after joining the Reformation in 1532. On receiving it the Pope kissed the 'heretic' Bible that, in times when his Church would not tolerate the reading or the preaching in vernacular, had caused so much suffering and persecution.

Both the youth choir and the adult choir sang beautifully, the Pope and the Moderator embraced each other, and the atmosphere was joyful and moving.

From the beginning of his papacy Francis has made a point of making contacts with the other Christian Churches; this despite Italy being a country with very little religious diversity. He had already met pastor Bernardini in Rome and had also visited a Pentecostal church in Naples. When it was announced that he would visit Turin to see the Shroud and to celebrate the 200th

anniversary of don Bosco's birth, the Waldensian Church took the opportunity to invite him and he promptly accepted with enthusiasm.

The Shroud, being a relic, has little meaning for most Protestants and even for many Roman Catholics. However, the real ecumenical miracle is that today the Salesians, don Bosco's own Order, are good friends with the Waldensians and they even share some publishing projects, such as materials for Sunday schools and Bible books for children. No more funeral bells tolling then:

along with the Mayor of Turin the Waldensian church was packed with RC prelates, priests, nuns and a mixed congregation of the faithful!

Photographs by P. Romeo / Riforma. For more photos, film and full report on the memorable day, do come to our **WALDENSIAN CAMBRIDGE DAY!**

Erica Scropo



News from Anna Marmion

Anna is a lovely girl with a beautiful smile and a fantastic voice whom I used to see quite regularly in the parish church next door. Her family is not religious and she became a believer and a churchgoer after joining one of the choirs of St Andrew's church where the mother of a close school friend is a priest.

She is now studying Modern Languages at Durham University and last year she asked me to find her voluntary work within my Church in Italy, thus combining her desire to help and serve with the need to improve her spoken Italian. She is therefore in Torre until the end of August doing a bit of everything and particularly enjoying working in the guesthouse *Foresteria Valdese*. In her free time she has helped the youngsters in *precatechismo* (Confirmation class) and she has joined the church choir, having opportunities to perform solo. At present she is preparing a piano and voice concert.



ESN

News from Marco Casci

Another academic year has ended ... but last year, for me, was not a usual one. Spending my fifth academic year in Cambridge meant having the great possibility to widen my horizons. This was a gift from all the people, churches and groups who helped me financially to be a resident of Westminster College. Being part not only of the Cambridge Theological Federation – which includes Reformed, Methodist, Anglicans, Orthodox and Catholics – but also of the ‘lay’ Faculty of Divinity has been a unique period of time during which I was able to share in the knowledge and understanding of different theological perspectives.



I discovered with enthusiasm all the many different gifts of the various Christian traditions and the ways in which many young people find their space in the universal Church.

Joining, once a month, in Federation worship, enabled me to participate in differing ways to praise our Father in a different environment from the academic one. Having a tutor – the Professor of Systematic and Church History John Paul Bradbury – to talk to has been crucial to me and enabled me to rationalize all those new experiences and to have an ‘internal perspective’ on the English Christian world.

The congregation I attended was the URC St Columba, led by Revd Nigel Uden. Thanks to him, I improved my knowledge of the Reformed tradition in England.

Last but not least I would like to mention the kindness and care that the Westminster College staff, colleagues, sabbatical ministers and professors showed me. All of them have contributed to make me feel welcome and at home.

This was my fifth and final academic year. After completing my thesis a new adventure awaits me: full time ministry.

I am sure that all the things I had the privilege to learn, first during my pastoral semester serving in the Nairn community with the minister Steven Manders and then the academic experience in Cambridge, will be a treasure that I will be called to share with the world we are all called to serve. May our Father bless all and each one of you.

Marco Emanuele Casci

Return to Torre Pellice

It was 19 years since my first visit to the Valleys, when I went to work in Agape and first encountered the Waldensian Church. It was 12 years since I had gone with a youth group from the UK and met the young minister from the URC who would become my husband and it was about 8 years since our last visit

to Torre when we went with our then 10-month-old son. Now in 2015 we were going back to Italy for a visit with our 8-year-old son and 7-year-old daughter; would it have changed much?

We had both stayed in the Foresteria Valdese before, but always in Casa Beckwith; this time we were to be in the 'grown-up' part. The welcome was, as always, warm and friendly. We had explained to the children that we would eat our evening meals there and that it was not like a hotel, you had to eat what you were given. We ate well and the children tasted food that they had not seen before. Having unpacked we went for a walk, and having joked that we might bump into someone we knew, we promptly bumped into an old friend and had a chat with him.

Our son was mesmerized by the mountains on our approach and said that he wanted to climb to the top of one before we returned home. Our daughter was delighted simply by the fresh air and the space that she had.

We had arranged to meet up with an old friend who we had both known before we had met each other, Silvia Gardiol, who now runs her father's farm, growing everything from blueberries to peppers. (She also gives tours in Italian, French and English of the valleys and the interesting and historical sights and sites. It was on one of these 'walks' that we first held hands in an attempt to not fall down the scree.) We went for a walk with her and her small son, in pushchair, to a height of 1400 m. a The views were stunning! Our son was delighted. Having discovered that Silvia spoke English, the children chatted non-stop to her, in that excited way that children do, and they were elated when Silvia told them that we were going back to her house to have dinner with her and her family. We had a great evening reminiscing on the past and looking to the future.

It was lovely to take the children to Chanforan and then head down the path (where we found some large jars of honey, one of which we bought, to the delight of the children, and have brought home with us) and go to the the church in the cave – they could not believe how light it was inside. We went to the end of the valley going to Bobbio Pellice and looking at the Waldensian church there, we



played in the river that runs through it, the children skimming stones. We went into the main church in Torre; the children noticed that it was simple, like our home church. The Collegio dei Barbi in Angrogna caught their imaginations, looking in the rooms and seeing how the people lived and studied. Another afternoon we went to the Waldensian museum and were pleased to discover that they now had a choice of languages on headphones that we could listen to at our own pace – our daughter is obviously a faster listener than our son. It was interesting for them to hear the history of the Valleys and the Waldensians explained to them, and it raised lots of questions about why people do not tolerate each other and why people have to live their lives in secret. To lighten the mood we went in search of ice-cream and found a new *gelateria* that had artisan ice-cream; we sat outside feeling very content in the sunshine.

The weather was beautiful for the whole of our stay and we spent time just being together, sitting on the terrace outside the rooms in the sunshine under clear blue skies. It was an ideal way to introduce the children to Italy.

Sue Thomason

Revisiting the Waldensian Valleys, 13 years on

Our first visit to the Waldensian valleys was in 2002; we were fresh from university, keen to do some voluntary work, and we were in Torre Pellice to attend an Italian language and Waldensian culture crash course, prior to spending a year at La Noce children's centre in Sicily. Little did we dream then that we would be returning 13 years later, this time fluent in Italian, members of the Waldensian committee and accompanied by our baby son!

It was the arrival of our son Zachariah, and the resulting opportunity of time away from work offered by maternity leave, which gave us the idea to spend a month in Italy – and where better than renewing our acquaintance with the Waldensian heartland?

During our month-long stay we enjoyed sampling everyday life in Torre Pellice – plenty of *cappuccini* under shady porticoes, shopping at the Friday market and pleasant walks around town with the baby in the pram. But perhaps of most interest was revisiting sites of Waldensian importance and seeing them with fresh eyes. The mysterious atmosphere of the Gheisa d'la Tana, the natural cave in Val d'Angrogna where Waldensian congregations may have met in secret, the beautiful surroundings of the College of the Barba in Pra del Torno where mediaeval itinerant preachers were trained. Being there in person we could see how the defensible position of the Angrogna valley helped the community there to resist so many attacks – an advantage not available to other Waldensian communities across Italy, who were subsequently wiped out. History was vividly brought to life in this striking location.

Our visit was not just about history though – we were pleasantly surprised by the lively services of worship we attended, and the vibrant feel in these historic communities. We attended an Ascension Day service, held in the

open air in the centre of Luserna Alta, with some great preaching by Bruno Gabrielli (who had been our pastor at La Noce 13 years ago), and rousing singing from local choirs, accompanied by the brass band of the Val Pellice. Another service in the main Tempio of Torre Pellice included some wonderful drama and singing from the Scuole Domenicali (Sunday schools) of the valleys, and for Pentecost we took communion in the open air, forming a huge circle on the lawn outside the church – followed, naturally, by an exceptional four-course lunch in the Foresteria!



We also had the pleasure of renewing our acquaintance with Nicoletta Favout, who had been our guide 13 years ago in first introducing us to Waldensian culture, and is now still working at the Cultural Centre. Our son Zac enjoyed meeting her little girl Matilde – the next generation in the long history of the Waldensian faith has arrived!

Rachel and Alastair Morris

Louisa Boyce, benefactress to the Waldensians and founder of Casa Valdese of Vallecrosia (Part 2)

In 1862, when Louisa was 40, the Rev Richard Drought Graves and his wife arrived from Suffolk, he being newly appointed as Curate in Mitcham. Finally Louisa started to interest herself in life again – encouraged by this couple, she started to take part in Church activities, especially visiting the poor. She founded a very successful Bible Study group whom she later visited when back in England from Italy and who raised money for the work she was doing in Italy. Later in life Louisa described her early life thus:

‘I loved the Lord. Educated in the Holy Doctrine by my pious parents, I reached the age of reason believing myself to be a true Christian. As a bride I transferred all my affection, tenderness and love on my life’s companion. I lived only for him and around me there was never anyone else but him. But within a short time my husband was stolen from me in death. God had given him to me and had immediately taken him back. And then I began to think and recognized that the Lord had had compassion on me, that matched in my affections, I had failed in my love for Him and for those around me. So I solemnly consecrated myself to spend the rest of my life doing the Lord’s work.’

However, in about 1865 the vicar Richard Graves fell ill and his doctors suggested a period of convalescence in the Italian Riviera. Louisa decided to

accompany the couple, perhaps to help them out linguistically. There being as yet no easy train links between London and the Ligurian coast, the long journey was undertaken by stagecoach. The penultimate stop was in Bordighera, where they stayed at Hotel d'Angleterre. This establishment was managed by the Swiss James Lozeron and his English wife. While his wife showed the ladies to their rooms, Rev. Graves talked with Lozeron, whom Louisa was later to describe as 'that truly zealous and devoted Christian', and was amazed to hear that in the area there was a small group of evangelical believers. Many such groups had grown up throughout Italy around the work of itinerant pedlars of Bibles and other Protestant literature called *colporteurs* or evangelists. The visitors attended a meeting in the home of the Mayor of Vallecrosia the following Sunday.

Returning to their hotel, Rev. Graves, enthused by what he had experienced, tried to convince Mrs Boyce to think seriously about supporting the group. He found the fact that Louisa spoke good Italian more than a mere coincidence and tried to convince her that she was more than qualified to take care of the group. Louisa was more cautious. She was in Bordighera by chance and the thought of staying in Italy, abandoning the life and lifestyle she had in England, was not an easy step to take and at this stage she did not know about the English community in Bordighera. Later she was to write 'I was not convinced, but Mr Graves threw himself to his knees and prayed with fervour that we may be guided, that God would clearly show us His will'. It seems that they did not have to wait long for an answer – James Lozeron proposed that he would put up half the amount needed to pay for a Colporteur if Mrs Boyce would supply the other half. Louisa accepted this suggestion with joy. As there were many children, a Waldensian named Pons from the valleys came to Bordighera to act as a schoolmaster and on 15 January 1866 a school was opened. Here the children were not only to be taught their lessons and given religious instruction, but they were to be taught manual skills which would prepare them for their future work. Mrs Boyce wrote about Pons in a letter to Dr Ribet (the Pastor in Pisa) but also asked his advice about getting a *colporteur* for the area as well. Happy that she had achieved something of value, in the spring of 1866 she then left for England, following her friends. It is doubtful that at this point Louisa had the intention of returning to Italy.

Bordighera at the time hosted a large and active English community. From the mid nineteenth century until just after World War One there was a flourishing English 'colony' and Bordighera had become considered an ideal place to spend time, especially during the winter months. Although there were many other colonies along the coast such as at Alassio and San Remo, Bordighera was generally considered more refined (and was certainly quieter than San Remo). They brought with them an Anglican Church, a theatre (Victoria Hall), a weekly newspaper, banks, shops and of course a Tennis Club, many of which, including the magnificent Library, still survive today. Queen Victoria visited in 1890 and by the time she died in 1901, there were more English living in Bordighera than Italians. The British tried not just to impose themselves on the locals and when

the Anglican Church was opened, Mrs Rosa Fanshawe, who had provided a great deal of the money for the building, decided that a proportion of the offerings each week be given to alleviate the poverty of the area.

However, her return to England must have been brief, as by the summer of 1866 Mrs Boyce was back in Liguria and staying in San Remo: letters she writes are from Hotel Victoria. Still interested in what she had experienced in Liguria, she had obviously been keeping in touch with Lozeron and quite probably also met other Italian Protestants. It is evident that she was not only concerned about the school, but also about the small group of believers, and keen to do all she could to support them.

Lozeron had met Professor Frederick Tholuck, the eminent evangelical theologian from Halle, travelling with his wife and a young theological student, by whom Lozeron was impressed and who, when his studies in Halle were finished, 'would make up his mind to come to help forward the work in Italy'. Louisa wrote to ask Ribet at Lozeron's request – could the young man concerned come to Florence to learn Italian and what would the expenses be? This student was Paolo Benemann from Halle, who later in March 1867 arrived in Bordighera as the first of 18 pastors of Vallecrosia.

Despite Lozeron's impatience, Benemann had sensibly spent time in Florence to learn Italian where he arrived on 1 October 1866, supported financially by Mrs Boyce – although they had not yet met. Lozeron was so anxious for him to come as soon as possible that he not only offered to provide accommodation for Benemann, but also an annual wage of 1500 lire. Despite the fact that Pons was advanced in years and not at all well, in 1867 the school was flourishing and was relocated in a house rented from the Biancheri family in Piani di Vallecrosia, which obviously also doubled as a chapel as over the door were the words 'Cappella Evangelica' and the Bible verse John 14.6. There was a religious instruction class on a Sunday morning and then Benemann and a group of believers would leave to walk to Vallecrosia, where a service was held in a private house, causing much curiosity and also often hostility, later returning to Piani di Vallecrosia for another service at 2 p.m. By 1868 the number of believers had risen from 12 to 20.

Mrs Boyce was obviously pleased with Benemann's appointment and in a letter to Revel (1st President of Committee for Evangelization) she is 'anxious to let [him] know how much I am pleased with Mons Benemann' having heard him preach and teach the Bible to the children, This was a remarkable achievement given that, although his Italian was by now excellent, he still had great problems understanding the local dialect. Benemann himself also wrote to Revel at about the same time that the children were beginning to love the word of God and especially liked singing hymns.

However, Mrs Boyce was very aware that Benemann needed assistance in this work and mentioned this to Jean Revel; especially someone with experience to inspect and to advise on the school.

The regular and very successful Sunday School continued. Benemann's hard work went on outside Vallecrosia too; there were also groups of believers

in San Remo, Oneglia and Pietrabrugna. However, things at the school began to become problematic at this stage, and this began to affect the church as well. The problems seem to have arisen because Benemann was a foreigner, and some people would not take communion from him because he was not a Waldensian Minister. Pons' ill-health forced him to return to the valleys and a teacher named Martin Astegiani took his place. The latter was an ex-Waldensian and a member of the Plimutista Movement (possibly the Plymouth Brethren) and later wanted to take over the leading of the church as well. Mrs Boyce did not like the idea of this at all. Not long after his arrival, the Prefect of the area, under pressure from the Bishop of Ventimiglia, ordered the school to be closed because Astegiani had no teaching qualifications and official permission to run the school could not be given to Benemann as he was a foreigner. While Astegiani was away in Pinerolo taking exams, the Tavola Valdese sent Paolo Charbonnier to keep the school going. Astegiani returned and looked after the school while Benemann was away in Prussia. In Benemann's absence, Astegiani managed to turn some of the congregation against their minister, and on his return in March 1869 Astegiani left to form a group at Borghetto di Bordighera, taking six or seven people with him – which was a disaster for a little congregation totalling about 20 people.



Louisa obviously suffered because of the situation in Bordighera. She wrote to Revel of 'a great deal of trouble and anxiety at present ... the matter which I have so much at heart that I could not rest satisfied without myself writing a few lines on the subject ... in confidence as to a friend ... that every day that he remains with us is doing an injury to the school and the work in general'. She then mentioned the 'opposition school close by' which had been established by the Jesuits in 1868, hence the urgency for a good replacement for Astegiani. In the same letter she continued: 'The work here is still in its infancy and requiring great care and watchfulness. These are enemies eagerly looking out for any mistake or failure on our part'. The Jesuits had indeed opened a school in the same area, and Benemann tells Revel that the Bishop had started a war against them.

The hatred instilled by the Jesuits led to several attempts to intimidate those involved in the work of the school: stones were often thrown at the window shutters. Ironically, this situation contributed to the little school developing into an orphanage, which helped immensely in the work of evangelization in the area and seems to have been something Mrs Boyce had looked forward to from the beginning. Benemann quotes Mrs Boyce in his Memoirs as having said, 'We need to see the closure of the school as a sign to begin something that

will bless the whole of Italy: an orphanage for abandoned evangelical children – who otherwise would be taken back into the arms of the Roman Church’.

Returning from a spell in England, where more than likely she had spent time collecting funds for the work, on 17 February 1870 Mrs Boyce spent £27,835 purchasing a building and surrounding land adjoining the Mayor’s property. Two years later she added to this by buying two more plots of land. Having spent well over £38,000, Louisa was then to go on to pay for the reconstruction work on the building which transformed it into a dormitory and workshops where the children would be taught shoemaking, carpentry and tailoring. Benemann’s memoirs suggest that the funds for all this work were increased by Mrs Boyce’s decision to sell some of her father’s medals.

(... to be continued: full version available online)

Nicky Raddon

Peter Meadows 1958–2015

Peter was co-opted in the Committee of the WCM in the early 1990s, soon after being appointed Assistant Librarian at Cambridge University Library in the department of Rare Books and Manuscripts. Since then he has shown the Waldensian medieval manuscripts to dozens of scholars, visitors, friends of the Waldensians and the Waldensian Church with kindness and keenness. He was a man of many interests: apart from manuscripts and books he was passionate about church architecture, had a great gift for music, collected antique furniture, loved his garden and could bake excellent cakes.

It is an interesting coincidence that his study as an undergraduate of the work of the architect Ignatius Bonomi, of Italian origins, brought him to the discovery of Bonomi’s friend and patron Canon Gilly and, consequently, of the Waldensian world and Church of which later he became a friend and supporter. I remember receiving his letters hand written in beautiful calligraphy and being surprised on meeting him later, since I was expecting an elderly gentleman and not a young man in his early twenties. He was part of our team for nearly 25 years, being Chair for a while, went to the Synod at Torre Pellice as representative of the WCM and was once a speaker at the yearly Conference of the *Società di Studi Valdesi*.

A man of deep faith, he had a dry sense of humour and an unassuming somewhat diffident way of showing his affection.

We shall miss you, Peter!



ESN

Peter Meadows – a brief personal recollection

In September 1989 I went to Oxford to write a book on Emile Durkheim, the late nineteenth century French sociologist. The only place I could find to stay was 2, Canterbury Road, a recently established ecumenical residence, under the directorship of Canon Donald Allchin, alas now deceased. I had known him on and off for several years. In the course of a very early conversation I told Donald that I thought I was the only person in England who had an interest in the Vaudois of the southern French Alps. He challenged the idea from a somewhat indirect angle, for in the room very close to mine there was a young scholar who had a strong interest in the Waldensians located on the other side of the Alps, in the Valleys South of Turin with their headquarter in Torre Pellice. The Vaudois –Waldensians in English, Valdesi in Italian- originated from a Middle Age religious movement from the area of Lyons and suffered heavy persecution at the hands of the Roman Catholic Church. They joined the Protestant churches of their countries at the time of the Reformation. The Vaudois of France were only relieved from persecution with the coming of the French Revolution and the Waldensians in Savoy were emancipated in mid-nineteenth century. Fame came to the Vaudois on account of their totally isolated village, Dormillouse, of some 900 inhabitants, who never succumbed to the Roman Church, even though they were forced to build a RC church there.*

Peter's interest in the Waldensians arose by reason of his greater interest in his academic study of architecture of the early nineteenth century. One such architect was Ignatius Bonomi who designed the original drawings, later modified, for the Waldensian churches built in Torre Pellice, Turin and Genoa, through the work of Canon W S Gilly and General Beckwith of the Waldensian Church Missions. My own interest in the Vaudois in contrast to Peter's, was in work I was undertaking in a sociological approach to persecution. I found it remarkable that he and I should have adjoining rooms and sharing an interest in subjects so little known in the British Isles.

Our interchange of ideas did not last long. Peter was, at the time of meeting, librarian at Pusey House. As a strongly minded Protestant within the Anglican Church, he found the atmosphere of Pusey House far from his liking. When we met he was in the course of applying to the library of the University of Cambridge where he was to become archivist, and later archivist of Ely Cathedral. His days in Cambridge seemed to be those of fulfilment and contentment, not least by being in the choir of Great St. Mary's and acting as lay reader. From what I knew of him he appeared to be a quiet, reserved person, as fond of cycling as he was of his work. That he died on Good Friday is not without its significance.

Bill Pickering

*W.S.F. Pickering, 1995. *What the British found when they discovered the French Vaudois in the nineteenth century*, available from our website.

Madelene Gibby 1915–2013

We attended her memorial service in the church where she had worshipped for so long and enjoyed listening to delightful anecdotes by members of the congregation, about her, including her love of hats. She had a huge collection of all sizes and shapes, one for every occasion and, thinking about it, the few times I met her I seem to remember she was wearing a bonnet ...

The best thing I can do to celebrate her long life – being a member of the WCM seems to encourage longevity! – is to reprint this article from 1994 by Prescot Stephens, who knew her well.

Madelene Gibby – a profile

It was a day of mist, rain and wind when I went to see Madelene Gibby in her flat. The high windows looked out over the urban coast-line of St Leonards and to a turbulent sea beyond. Behind the rain-splashed windows there was an ordered calm, for Madelene is that sort of person.

I happened to know that she was ‘approaching’ eighty; but there was nothing elderly about her manner, her speech or her appearance. I reminded myself that in her working life she had been nurse-receptionist/secretary to a busy railway doctor in Brighton. Her job demanded a crisp business-like approach combined with a concern for people. And I believe it was those very qualities which had made her such a successful fund-raiser for the Waldensian cause. We are blessed with many kind and generous friends, but over the years Madelene has probably done more for the cause than anyone in the country. She has not given just money; she has given herself.

But how did she hear about the Waldensian Church in the first place? In 1953 the Rector at St Leonards was Canon C.C. Griffiths. He had organised what was then termed a ‘drawing-room meeting’ for the Waldenses at which Captain Stephens spoke. Madelene’s interest was aroused; and afterwards when the Canon put a *Light in Darkness* (now become *The Waldensian Review*) into her hands and told her that he was going to the Waldensian Valleys that year with Captain Stephens and that she ought to go too, she made up her mind that she would. She persuaded the railway doctor to go as well.

That first visit was a life-enhancing experience. The beauty of the mountains impressed her. The living conditions of the peasants aroused her concern. Captain Stephens’ presence gave the whole party entry to the humblest homes. ‘They greeted him with such joy,’ she says. ‘He always took the lead, looking so saintly,’ she says wistfully, ‘and only called us to order when he had something important to explain.’

She brought out black-and-white photos and reminisced about her experiences. Mules were the only means of transport up some of the valleys at that time. She related how she clung in desperation to her mule when the animal

tackled gradients so steep that she felt she was falling off; and how on the way to Susa the hired car 'sat down like an old hen' and refused to move. After that first visit she returned year after year, and then began to extend her interest to Waldensian work in Sicily which she visited three times. She saw at first hand the little hard-pressed Waldensian communities such as Riesi where Salvatore Carcò was the pastor.

At St Leonards, at a very early stage, she had begun scattering Waldensian farthing boxes (now penny boxes) among her friends. Her powers of persuasion must have been considerable for soon the PCC were increasing their contributions to the WCM. Every year for many years Madelene would arrive at our annual meetings in a large coach filled with her sea-side friends.

Madelene refers in her quiet way to 'my Waldensian coffee mornings' as if they were just a matter of making coffee and smiling sweetly. Far from it. She set herself a goal, and reached it by methodical and cost-effective means. As soon as one year's coffee morning was over, she began preparing for the following year's by going round other churches' sales of work, buying up jumble, knickknacks, white elephants – anything that could be stored and re-sold. In the weeks before the sale, tins and packets from food shopping would be laid aside. As soon as Seville oranges came on the market in January she would set to work making great quantities of marmalade. As the year progressed the stock of goods in her flat grew larger and larger. When space in cupboards became tight, the goods would be laid on a spare bed; when the bed was needed for a guest, they would then be moved to the floor, to a window-sill, to a dressing-table. 'It's no good thinking your home is your castle,' she says.

As the day of her sale approached, her friends would be urged to a spasm of cake-making, or persuaded to extract items from their cupboards and attics to stock the stalls. The sale opened at 10 a.m. in the vestibule of the church. With her team of motivated helpers, nearly all goods were gone from the stalls by 12. These sales have recently been earning £500 to £600; and in addition donations were handed to her and there was a contribution from the PCC. It is all methodically recorded year by year in an account book.

When Madelene went to Italy she caught a vision. She has been guided to interpret the vision in an intensely practical way. More than that, she succeeded in passing on something of her own inspiration to her friends. As well as doing major share of the work, she has been a motivator, an energiser and an inspirer of others. After more than forty years and nearly an octogenarian, she is entitled to retire.

God bless you richly, Madelene; and thank you for your many years of endeavour for your friends in Italy. You will be a hard example to follow!

Prescot Stephens

Government gives to Waldenses

Too good to be true? No! For every donation which you make to the Waldensian Church Missions, the Government will add a further 25%, providing you are a tax-payer.

Since 5 April 2000 the new Gift Aid scheme has replaced Deeds of Covenant and the process is much simpler. This applies to all donations of any size or frequency. Thus a gift of only £1 made once will be increased by 25% as will a monthly donation of £100.

All that is required is for the donor to complete a simple declaration in the form given below and to forward this to the Treasurer whose address is on the inside of the back page. Once this form has been completed it covers all future donations by the same person. Unlike Deeds of Covenant, you are not committed to regular giving for a number of years.

Some of you have already completed such a form, but for those who have not, I would urge you to consider seriously this opportunity for the Waldensian Church Missions to benefit from the Government's generosity, but more importantly, to enable our giving to our friends in Italy to be increased.



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The Waldensian Church

It is the native Protestant Church of Italy whose origins pre-date the Reformation. It arose from an evangelical movement founded in the twelfth century by Waldo, a rich merchant from Lyon, who was to inspire St Francis: he gave all away to the poor and started preaching the Gospel in the vernacular, which caused conflict with the Papacy. Travelling in pairs the Waldensian itinerant preachers, having learnt the Scriptures by heart, set off to found underground communities from Sicily to Russia. The ensuing persecution by the Inquisition drove them into their mountain fastness in the Alpine Valleys of northwest Italy, where they remain in what are still called the Waldensian Valleys. At their Synod in 1532 they voted to join the Genevan Reformation, a decision that brought even more persecution upon this exposed outpost of Protestantism. Their sufferings were recorded in Milton's famous sonnet 'On The Late Massacre in Piedmont'. Their survival down to the present has been a remarkable testament of faith.

The Waldensian community was emancipated in 1848, but did not reach full freedom until 1984. Since the Italian unification in 1860 they have established churches throughout Italy and, following emigration, in the USA, Argentina and Uruguay. In 1979 the Italian Methodist Church combined with them and they hold a common annual Synod, which is the controlling authority of the Church and takes place in Torre Pellice. The Churches of Rio de la Plata have their own Synod, Board and Moderator.

The 60 parishes have founded 120 outreach activities ranging from schools, hospitals, children's and old people's homes, radio stations, and ecumenical community centres, often catering for the needs of the most deprived and mafia-ridden parts of Italy, especially the disadvantaged South and the new immigrant communities.

The Waldensian Church has a theological college in Rome, a publishing house, Claudiana, and a weekly paper, *Riforma*.

The English Committee of the Waldensian Church Missions

This was founded in 1825 as a support group for the Waldensian Church in Italy. Since 1979 its finances, together with those of the Vaudois Pastors Fund, have been administered by Trustees under the terms of the Scheme drawn up by the Charity Commission and dated 18 January that year.

The Committee seek to arouse interest and financial support in England and Wales for the Waldensian Church. Twice yearly we publish a *Waldensian Review* and occasionally other literature. We also arrange meetings for Waldensian pastors visiting this country and support students of Theology who want to spend the compulsory 'year abroad' studying in this country.

There are similar Waldensian support groups in Scotland, Ireland, USA and in various European countries.

The English Committee in aid of the Waldensian Church Missions

Established 1825

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London EC1Y 1AU.

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The Scottish Waldensian Missions Aid Society

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The Irish Committee in aid of the Waldensian Church Missions

Chairman: The Rev. Robert Dunlop, The Manse, Brannocktown, Co. Kildare,
Republic of Ireland.

Convenor: The Rev. J.S.B. Drennan BD, 92 North Circular Road, Belfast BT14
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Treasurer: Mr Derek Seymour, 'Tanglewood', Pottery Road, Dun Laoghaire,
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The Waldensian Review is sent twice a year to those who are interested in the
Waldensian church in Italy, its history and present-day work and witness.

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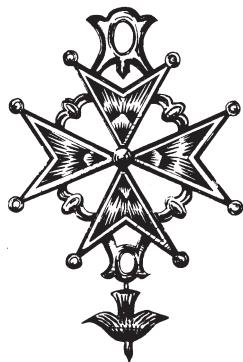
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