

# THE WALDENSIAN REVIEW



**No. 138**

**Summer 2021**

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## From the Editor

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Thank you very much for your continuing interest and support with enquiries, purchases, donations and prayers! PLEASE keep looking at our website [www.waldensian.org.uk](http://www.waldensian.org.uk) for updates and new items. We are also on Facebook: *The Waldensian Church Missions*.

In January we had our first ever online AWAYDAY: report further on.

**Synod 2021** will take place in Torre Pellice 22–27 August in a slimmed down version, with no foreign delegates, online streaming, but with an ordination, **Gabriele Bertin**, whom I've known since he was 2(!).

*Congratulations* to Rev. **Peter Ciaccio** for being a member of the Ecumenical Jury at Cannes Film Festival 2021!

**Giovanni Bernardini** has completed his MA in Theology in Rome and will be supply minister at Milan Methodist Church for one month.

Meanwhile we now have a student of Theology training in the UK! Read all about **Kassim Conteh** further on.

*I anticipate to our affectionate readers that the Winter issue is going to be a full size one, since we have plenty of stories, photos, documents to share!*



*Peter Ciaccio*

*Introducing Committee members:* **Eugenio Biagini**

I first met Eugenio Biagini ages ago, having organised a talk on the Waldensians by Rev Professor Emidio Campi in Cambridge. We had several friends in common—including Professor **Giorgio Spini**, and became friends immediately. When he married the lovely Almut Hintze we found that also with her we had friends in common! Small world!

Eugenio Biagini is a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College and Professor of Modern and Contemporary History in the University of Cambridge. His teaching and research has focused on the history of liberalism and democracy, with particular reference to Britain, Ireland and Italy since 1848. He is the General Editor of the *Bloomsbury Cultural History of Democracy* (2021) and is currently writing a monograph on the Protestant and the Jewish minorities in southern Ireland. Though he has been in this country for over 40 years (with breaks in both Newcastle upon Tyne and Princeton, NJ), he still retains a connection with the Waldensian Church of Lucca, where he preaches from time to time. He is married to Almut Hintze, also an academic, originally from Heidelberg and the United Church of Baden, a specialist on Zoroastrianism and a Professor at SOAS (London). They have a son, William, and live in the village of Histon, on the northern periphery of Cambridge.



*Eugenio Biagini*

*Cover photo: Calendar 2022, July, photo by Vincenzo Morglia of Henri Peyrot, very likely in Val d'Angrogna.*

## WALDENSIAN AWAYDAY 2021 (God willing, IN PERSON!)

**SATURDAY 16 OCTOBER**

at Christ Church, **BARNET**, St Albans Road, EN5 4LA

10.30 a.m.–1 p.m., tea and coffee available

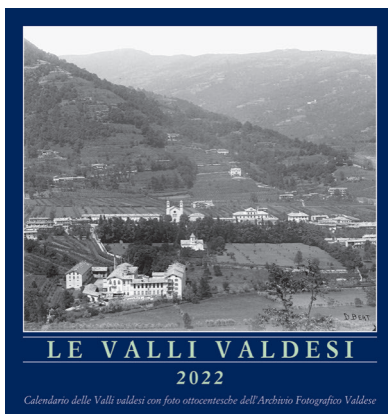
DO COME and meet new and old friends and listen to:

**Kassim Conteh**, Italian student of Theology at Queen's Foundation, Birmingham; Rev. **Richard Grocott**, Methodist Church and WCM representative at Synod 2021; Rev. **Tim Macquiban**, Minister of Ponte Sant'Angelo Church in Rome 2014–19, Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office and a member of the Waldensian Synod.

## WALDENSIAN CALENDARS 2022

Black and white vintage stunning pictures from the Waldensian Archive. Bible verses also in English. Available from October. Please order online at [www.waldensian.org.uk](http://www.waldensian.org.uk) or send a cheque for £18 (payable to Waldensian Church Mission) to **Erica Newbury, 85 St Andrew's Road, Cambridge CB4 1DH**.

Higher price due to increased postage. ORDER **two** for **£30!** One for you, one for a friend! )



## Virtual Awayday 23 January 2021

On 23 January over 68 people took part in our first ever virtual away day. People gathered from across the globe, some getting up during the night, and some postponing their lunch to be there for the whole event. We had people come to their first ever Waldensian Awayday, and others who had gathered on many occasions before. The day was put together by the trustees, with Erica Scropo-Newbury introducing the speakers, Alastair Morris and Rev. Mike Thomason making the technology work, and Dr Ian Nimmo-Smith chairing the day.

We had six excellent speakers, each talking for a short time and then answering some questions from the audience. The **Moderator Alessandra Trotta** spoke about what the Waldensian Church had been doing during the pandemic supporting the community; The **Reverend and Right Honourable The Lord Griffiths**, our **Patron**, spoke of his new role in the Council of Europe; Rev. Dr **Tim Macquiban** talked of meeting Pope Francis whilst being the Minister of the Methodist Church in Rome; Rev. **Claudio Pasquet**, twice the guest of the Waldensian Mission, remembered his tours as a visiting pastor; Rev. **Peter Ciaccio** spoke of his nine years as a minister in Palermo, and the joy of succeeding in having a street named after Pastor Pietro Valdo Panascia; and Dr **Sara Rivoira** explained the future projects of the Archives of Tavola Valdese.

If you missed the day, you can catch up via the website and join over 60 people who watched the day on YouTube or listened to the podcast.

It was a great day, but nothing beats meeting in person and we are hoping to run a day in the autumn, with the plan to make it available on the website after the event.

*Mike Thomason*

## Some news from the Italian Churches

Lockdown after lockdown, danger levels up and down and up again ..., mask-free, compulsory mask-wearing, singing, no singing: also in Italy, as everywhere else, the churches have been struggling with presence, no presence, online meetings, streaming Catechism teaching, Sunday School, Sunday worship, Committees and much much more!

What is reassuring is that the restrictions and the pressures seem to have made people understand the importance of human contact, of Church attendance in person and of personal involvement. Everything everyone used to take for granted is now valued as a special gift, which is also a good way to lead everyone to thankfulness for whatever we used to think we were entitled to, and which is not so.

In this context the Confirmations—which in the Waldensian Valleys take place on Palm Sunday—are a great collective achievement and a further reason to be grateful to everyone who has played a part, but above all to God. The preparation lasts for four years of weekly sessions studying both the Old and the New Testament, plus analysis and discussions on various modern topics and issues.

It is with great joy, therefore, that I share these happy photographs by **Pietro Romeo** from *Riforma* of Confirmations in various parts of the Waldensian Valleys, including one in Rome.

*ESN*



*Confirmations at Villar Pellice ...*



*... at Pinerolo ...*



*... and at Piazza Cavour, Rome.*

## Kassim Conteh

*Tim Macquiban writes:* It was a real pleasure to have Kassim as the student on placement for a year at Ponte Sant'Angelo Methodist Church Rome when he was pursuing his theological studies across the river at the Facoltà.

He made a very good impression with us in his preaching and leading of worship as well as relating to the younger people of our congregation there. We saw much promise and encouraged him in his studies, especially in his being often the sole Methodist at the Facoltà. We are so glad that he is here in Britain for a year and can share his gifts and insights with us and engage in the learning at an ecumenical community with a strong Methodist component.

*From our Italian student at Queen's Foundation:* Hello everyone, my name is Kassim and I am 30 years old. My country of origin is **Sierra Leone**, but I have been living in Italy since I was 7 years old. I was born in a Methodist family, my grandmother was a reverend and my mother is a local preacher. I have been a member of the **Methodist Church of Milan** since the early 2000s, practically since we discovered the existence of a Methodist Church in Italy.

In Italy, and specifically in the Milan area, I completed my schooling (with a diploma in electrical engineering and automation) and then graduated in theology at the **Waldensian Faculty of Theology** in Rome.

While waiting for a new destination to complete my formation, I had the opportunity to undergo a pastoral experience at the Waldensian church of **San Germano Chisone** (January–September 2020). This allowed me to get to know the Waldensian reality in greater depth. I spent the first part of this experience observing and participating in the activities of the local community. I took part in catechism and Sunday school meetings, visited the old people in the residential care home in the town (first with and then without the pastor), attended and contributed to worship, took part in the Church council meetings, played an active part in the feast of 17 February (giving a speech to the Waldensians present in the small neighbouring town of Porte) and even had a little experience with the local church choir. Unfortunately the arrival of Covid-19 changed our schedule, causing limitation and sometimes even interrupting some activities. The positive side, however, is that this misfortune has allowed the Church to renew the way it proposes the Gospel. For worship we started filming our services (then uploaded on YouTube and made available to the community for Sundays) and for catechism we used one of the platforms available for group video calls. My contribution was more to help the pastor technologically with the meetings (actively participating in the speeches) and to prepare videos for the children in Sunday school. In one of the videos we prepared, we asked the children to write words of hope, which we then made available to the whole community (if interested, you can find the content on the **YouTube** page 'San Germano Chisone Chiesa Valdese'). Towards the end of the experience I also had the pleasure of visiting the **Waldensian Museum**,



*Kassim Conteh preaching at San Germano  
Chisone.*

the historical and photographic archives of the Waldensian Cultural Centre in Torre Pellice and seeing some of the historical places of Waldensian history in Val d'Angrognà.

Once the experience in the Valleys was over, and I knew where my new destination would be—**The Queen's Foundation** (Birmingham)—the next task was to obtain a certificate to prove my language skills for the new venture.

Once I obtained the IELTS certificate, my interaction with the new reality took place at the beginning of January. Although it was virtual, because I was still in Italy, experiencing the atmosphere of a new Faculty was almost as pleasant as being there

in person. I started by taking a course (Gender Studies) and doing a personal research paper on a field of Methodism of my choice. The real surprise of this course, which I have noticed to be a feature of all the courses I have attended so far, is the availability of hours of group work / confrontation with material sent by the lecturer regarding the topic dealt with that particular day. I found this very stimulating and enriching because it allowed us to reflect together and understand other points of view on issues that perhaps we hadn't thought enough about. In terms of research, with the assistance of a lecturer, I concentrated on studying the role of rationalism within the Methodist movement (specifically the viewpoint of the movement's founder John Wesley).

As soon as I got my visa, just before the start of the summer term, in order not to risk being red-listed and paying for a hotel quarantine, I took the first (or almost) plane I could to the UK.

I arrived in Birmingham on 24 April. The reception was excellent. Even though I was isolated in a wing of the building dedicated to students—Frances Young House (FYH)—the students living there always looked after me, providing me with everything I needed (food and meals from the canteen).

The new term also started online. This allowed me to be present in the classes, without suffering too many complications from the isolation due to Covid-19 normative. Two courses were offered to me: Black Theology and Research Methods. I must say that both were interesting. The first one helped me to reflect on my own being (as I am dark-skinned) and on the reality in

which we find ourselves, and the second one helped me to refine and orient myself on what will be the final dissertation of my Master's course.

As far as my fellow students are concerned, due to Covid, many students are not present where the college is. The ones I interact with the most are the ones in my residence (FYH). In this place we have two Methodist students and their partners in the two flats (they count as two different households). In my household, we have two Anglican students, one from the Manchester area, one from London and five Methodist students from Nottingham, Dudley, Leicester and one who has moved around as a Minister child. There are huge age differences, too, but this doesn't seem to be a problem. Living in such a varied environment is a great pleasure for me because it helps me to understand how varied the Call can be and also helps me to refine my English with the different shades of English accents.

As far as my impressions of England and the city of Birmingham are concerned, I can say that I am adapting quite well to the new reality. As soon as I arrived, what struck me most was the weather: particularly the speed with which it changes and the frequency with which it rains (almost every day). During quarantine, I had the pleasure of seeing sun, clouds, snow, sun, rain and clouds in the space of six hours. Another thing that struck me was the taste of the food: different from how I remembered it! Being of Sierra Leonean origin, I have travelled a lot in my life, and I have often had to get used to the realities I encountered ... but I never imagined finding identical products as in Italy but with a different taste. There are also other peculiarities that I could list (such as 'See you later', which is a greeting and does not mean that you are going to see later or 'You're ok?' which simply means hello and not an interest on how you are really doing). The thing that did worry me a bit, though, was the left-hand drive. For a while I found it hard to adapt to the left driving. I was a bit afraid to walk on my own as, without meaning to, my instinct was to look on the wrong side of the road while trying to cross (and Birmingham is not known for careful driving).

On the other hand, though, what I have found really beautiful is the multi-ethnicity of the area I am in. Walking around I never felt out of context (apart from when I had to deal with the English of the British in Birmingham, which is not easy at all to understand!). Many times I had to point out that I am not English, and even when I said I was Italian, no one ever asked me my origins. The impression I have is that the climate, at least in the public sphere, is more inclusive (or at least tries to respect the other person for who they are or feel they are). This is very encouraging! Supermarkets also reflect this in my opinion ... I am a spicy and mango lover, and you cannot imagine the joy of finding all kinds of spices and mangoes (fruit, dried fruit, juice, soda ... is there more?). I am well aware that I still have a lot to discover ... and I am looking forward to being (positively) surprised by the new reality I find myself in.

THANKS very much to the Waldensian Church Mission for supporting me!



## Panascia Street, Palermo

Protestants in Italy are quite used to being generally non-interesting people. The fact that some historians (such as **Giorgio Spini** whose textbook for sixth-formers was widely used around Italy), politicians (such as **Gianni De Michelis** and **Valdo Spini**), artists (**Paolo Paschetto** and **Filippo Scroppo**), film directors (**Luigi Comencini** and his daughters Cristina and Francesca), and even coffee manufacturers like **Illy** are Protestants, is considered less than a private matter, more of a weird accident.

So, when 'LutherMania' struck Europe in 2017, for the fifth centenary of the publication of **Martin Luther's** *Ninety-five Theses*, Italian Protestants were quite surprised by becoming interesting people, even for a short time. All of a sudden, some Italian City Councils felt the urge to dedicate a square (Rome), a garden (Florence) or a park (Bergamo) to Martin Luther.

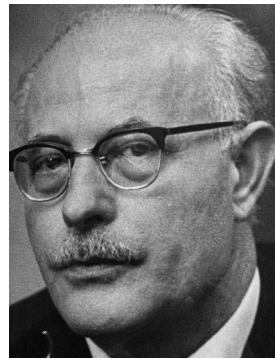
While I was pastor of the Waldensian Church in Palermo, Mayor **Leoluca Orlando** told me that he would like to dedicate a street to Martin Luther. I told him: 'Thank you, but no, thank you'.

The mayor became interested in my refusal: 'Why not?'

'Well, I would not like the city of Palermo just to be nice to us, even if I love that the city of Palermo is nice to us. I would rather prefer the city of Palermo to acknowledge the contribution of Protestants in Palermo, by dedicating a street to Rev **Pietro Valdo Panascia**, a man who struggled for the common good.'

'Actually, Via Pietro Valdo Panascia sounds more appropriate in Palermo than Via Martin Lutero', Mayor Orlando said.

Who was **Pietro Valdo Panascia**? Born in Reggio Calabria in 1910, after being ordained in 1937 he served the Waldensian Churches of Genoa Sampierdarena, Campobasso, Messina and Reggio Calabria. In 1956 he became pastor of the Church of Palermo, in Via dello Spezio, leading the largest Waldensian congregation in southern Italy. In 1961, Rev. Panascia had the Synod acknowledging Palermo to be an 'Autonomous Church' (like the Churches in the Valleys, with the right to elect its pastor), for the centenary of its establishment. In 1963, Rev. Panascia was the first Christian leader in Italy to condemn the Mafia, as seven people (four carabinieri, two soldiers, one policeman) were killed by a car-bomb in Ciaculli, in the outskirts of Palermo on 30 June. This led to a raw confrontation with then R.C. Archbishop Cardinal **Ernesto Ruffini**, a Mafia denier. Paul VI had just been elected pope on 21 June, and his Secretary of State asked the Archbishop why he did not say anything about Mafia. 'It is not "Mafia", it is just some criminal gangs. Mafia is an invention of Waldensians and *Il Gattopardo* [The



*Pietro Valdo Panascia.*

Leopard], in order to defame Sicily and Sicilians', was the Archbishop's reply to the Vatican. *Il Gattopardo* is a novel by **Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa**, posthumously published in 1958, depicting a decadent Palermo where a failing aristocracy leaves power to Mafia; from this novel, in March 1963 **Luchino Visconti** released a celebrated movie that won the Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival.

What an involuntary compliment by Cardinal Ruffini to Waldensians, being associated to Visconti's masterpiece with Burt Lancaster, Alain Delon and Claudia Cardinale!

Rev. Panascia's ministry in Palermo continued. In 1968 a strong earthquake hit the Belice Valley, a few kilometres southwest of Palermo, killing at least 400 people and leaving more than 100,000 homeless: Rev. Panascia organised relief for the victims, by building '**Villaggio Speranza**' ['Hope Village'], made of 20 prefab homes. In the early 1970s he established his most important and lasting contribution for the common good in Palermo: the Centro Diaconale-Istituto Valdese '**La Noce**'. Rev. Panascia retired (if possible!) in 1980 and died in 2007.

Mayor Orlando knew perfectly well who Rev. Panascia was, without me explaining anything. Many people in Palermo know who Rev. Panascia was. In a recurring conversation I would have in Palermo with the most diverse people, I would say: 'Hello, I am the pastor of the Waldensian Church', with the response: 'So you are like Panascia?'

Mayor Orlando told me that it would be easy to organise a Via Pietro Valdo Panascia in a newly built suburb. Again, I refused. 'Mayor, Rev. Panascia deserves a street where he lived and worked. I wish Via dello Spezio, the street where the Church is, to be named after him.' 'That will be difficult, as names in the Historical Centre are listed, and we can change a street name only with the permission of the Soprintendenza', which is the Government office taking care of cultural heritage, with the mission of replying 'No' to any request!

"'Difficult'" means we should try, shouldn't we, Mayor Orlando?'

As anybody with common sense would have predicted, the Soprintendenza said 'No'.

'Why not?', I enquired.

"'Via dello Spezio'" is a very ancient toponym. If you asked for another street, but "'Via dello Spezio'" cannot be changed.'

'Another street ... like which one?'

'Mmm ... like ... for example, the one where Via dello Spezio ends. "Via Isidoro La Lumia" is a newer toponym, it is a longer street, and we may change a bit of it. As an example, I mean ...'

'Like the bit parallel to the Church façade? As an example, I mean ...'

'As an example ...'

So, we changed the request. Mayor Orlando and the City Council accepted our request. The Soprintendenza said 'Yes'. The end of a four-year procedure!

The Inauguration was set for May 2020. Covid-19 came and it was postponed. My time in Palermo was nearly over, as I was due to move to Trieste in July.

'Don't worry, I promise you that you will not leave Palermo without Via Pietro Valdo Panascia inaugurated', Mayor Orlando said. The promise of a politician, I thought, overwhelmed by sadness for knowing that I would have not been able to say goodbye to Palermo as I wished.

I was wrong, very wrong.

My farewell service in Palermo was on 5 July 2020. I then received a communication from the Mayor's office: 'Via Pietro Valdo Panascia will be inaugurated after your farewell service on 5 July, at 12.30'.

The street was closed to traffic, due to the 'eternal' road works we Italians are used to: this meant that around the Waldensian church there was a very large and unexpected space, that allowed us to celebrate complying with Covid rules. Archbishop Corrado Lorence came to say goodbye, and to attend the street inauguration: so much has changed in ecumenism since Rev. Panascia's and Cardinal Ruffini's times! All of our friends were there: Catholics, Lutherans, Adventists, Jews and Muslims. The Committee for Ecumenical Prayer Vigil against Homophobia were there. The partners of 'La Noce' were there. Rev. Panascia's relatives were there. Ah, I was the pastor of the Waldensian Church, but I am actually a Methodist!

Via Pietro Valdo Panascia? It was difficult, but worth trying. It was not the victory of the Waldensians, but of an entire welcoming city that allowed the pastor of a minority congregation to contribute to the common good.



*Peter Ciaccio in Palermo, holding the Via Pietro Valdo Panascia street sign.*

*Peter Ciaccio*

## Looking back over 30 years

On 18 March 2021 it was 30 years since I arrived in Torre Pellice to work for a year as a volunteer for the Waldensian Church. That 'year' ended up being 2½ years and I still spend most of my holidays there. I have also been a trustee of Waldensian Church Missions since September 1993. In lockdown I have been



*A Choir trip to Novara with some of my now closest friends. Giulia is in the centre.*

a lovely ex-missionary to Algeria at my Church (**Christ Church Barnet**) told me she felt sure God would use my ability to speak Italian, followed by time spent as an au pair and student in Venice, I had felt what I can only describe as a calling to do something for the church in Italy. Having studied History at Warwick University, I had heard of the Waldensian heresy but had no idea that the movement still existed. My calls to missionary societies I had come across (I was the Youth Rep on my Church's Missionary Committee) had drawn a blank, so I decided to talk to my vicar, Rev. **Michael McGowan**. He listened to my thoughts in silence, prayed with me and told me he would get back to me. The next evening he called me. After our meeting he had gone to an ecumenical meeting and sitting next to him was a representative of the Waldensian Church who gave him Erica Newbury's details. I was amazed and phoned Erica, who was leaving for Italy the next day. She called me on her return and said that there were lots of possibilities, but one of the most urgent was someone to work in the **Library** of the **Waldensian Cultural Centre**. When I replied, 'Great, I'm a Librarian!', she was as excited as I was. A few weeks later, in November 1990, I went to visit Torre Pellice and four months later with the full backing of my Church and with a representative on the Missionary Committee, I arrived to start my 'year' there.

I so enjoyed my work in the Library in the Cultural Centre and being part of the Waldensian Church in Torre. I also did some English teaching in the **Waldensian College**, the local secondary school. Very early on **Giulia D'Ursi** invited me to a Sunday afternoon ladies' meeting; she soon became a great friend. Within a few months I was in the Church Choir, helping with Pre-catechism classes (12–14-year-olds)—encouraged by my neighbour **Massimo Long**, the Youth Pastor for the Pellice Valley and the Assistant Pastor in Torre

reminiscing a lot about my time in Italy, a period which has enriched my life so much and without which I believe I would be a very different person.

Over the years I have often been asked, 'Why did you volunteer in Italy?' By 1991 I had finished my Library training and had been working for three years as a Children's Librarian in my local Public Library, a job I absolutely loved. Since about the age of 19, when **Marion Shaw**,

Pellice, **Claudio Pasquet** (Giulia's husband). I soon made other friends, including a lovely, but rather eccentric, English ex-missionary, **Diana Beerbohm**, with whom I played a weekly game of Scrabble (or two) in English—using an Italian set with far too many vowels and no J,K,W,X or Y!

The time flew by and so when it came to the end of my year, I just couldn't leave and it was decided I would stay on. After a brief trip home to see family and friends, my Church family and friends in Barnet agreed to support me for another year in conjunction with the AEV, the Protestant Volunteer Association in Italy.

I returned and picked up where I had left off, working in the Library (cataloguing one of the biggest and finest collections of Bibles in Europe), helping **Gabriella Balesio** in the Waldensian Archives, translating guides to the various Waldensian museums, interpreting at Synod, accompanying English-speaking groups round the museums and historical sites.

I also carried on attending Church services, Bible Studies and singing with the Church Choir, including some tours, helping with the Pre-catechism classes. In the summer of 1993 I joined the leadership team of a series of summer camps for young people at **Bagnau**, high up in the Waldensian Valleys—something I loved so much I continued to be involved with for another four years after my return to England. A number of the young people from these camps are still friends—including **Sara Rivoira**, one of our speakers at the Zoom Awayday held in January.

Sadly, you can't be a volunteer forever and despite being offered a grant to study at the Waldensian Faculty of Theology, I came home to continue being a Librarian and was invited to join the **English Committee** of the **WCM** as a trustee. My years on the Committee have seen many Pastor Tours, some of whom have also visited my church, many very interesting speakers at Awaydays, an amazing event in 2005 at **Methodist Central Hall** to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the **Piedmontese Easter**, when the Waldensians were slaughtered causing Oliver Cromwell to intervene to their aid, and this year a very successful first, an Online Awayday via Zoom.

There are so many highlights of my 30-year association with the Waldensian Church over and beyond the amazing 2½ years I actually spent in Torre Pellice. Four choir tours of the Valleys by my British Christian Choir, **Adoramus**, which included many concerts in the churches of the Valleys and one in the beautiful medieval abbey at **Staffarda**. Being a delegate at Synod (more than once!). Having articles published in the Waldensian newspaper, *Riforma* (and of course the *Waldensian Review*!). Being part of many 17 February and 15 August celebrations. One friend's daughter recently commented, 'You are more Waldensian than we are!' Being the guest at several confirmation services, weddings and, more recently and sadly, funerals. Enjoying hosting friends visiting London—one Pastor and family camped in my garden! Several friends have come to improve their English and now their children are coming to do work experience with me. Seeing one of my Waldensian friends marry a friend from



*With Milvia Walker on 17 February 1993.*

choir following one of the tours mentioned above was a real highlight, followed a few years later when I became their son's godmother in a service in Luserna San Giovanni. I have discovered a deep appreciation of the mountains surrounding Torre and love spending time walking with friends. I have really benefited from the experience in so many ways that I can't recommend a year (!) out in Italy enough!

To end, some thank yous.

Thank you to the late **Marion Shaw** and Rev. **Michael McGowan** for having listened to me (and to the still unknown Waldensian 'angel' Michael met—if it was you please let me know!). Also to **David Parry** and the late **John Alford** (Chairman and my Rep on the Missionary Committee) for their encouragement and for overseeing my support.

Thank you to my colleagues and the members of the **Waldensian Church in Torre Pellice** for their welcome and unending hospitality.

Thank you to my many Italian friends of all ages, you have invited me into your homes, made me feel part of your families, gently corrected my initially faltering Italian (so later a market-stall holder would ask me where I learned my English!) and you have become life-long friends. To **Richard and Milvia Walker**, who have always been there for me.

Thank you to a whole host of Waldensian Pastors from whom I have learned so much, too many to list individually except for **Bruno Rostagno**, **Claudio Pasquet** and more recently **Marcello Salvaggio** and **Stefano D'Amore**.

**But above all thank you to God who made it all possible and who we all serve and trust.**

P.S. Having written this article, I was sent a photocopy of three letters which were recently found in the offices of the Waldensian Cultural Centre in Torre Pellice. They are letters to the then Director, Pastor **Giorgio Tourn**, two from me introducing myself and informing him when I would arrive. The third is from **Erica Scropo Newbury** and includes this description of me: 'She is perhaps a bit shy and will need encouragement but she is also very capable.' Thanks Erica!

*Nicky Raddon*

## Book review

*The Waldensian Trunk*, by Dario Castagno (2020). ISBN: 979-8684858963. Available from Amazon in Kindle format or paperback (224 pp.)

A little less than a year ago, on our way to Italy via France, just after Laon I received an intriguing message on my mobile phone from someone I didn't know, but who didn't sound like an impostor! A few minutes later I was reading this fascinating book and by the time, hours later, we arrived at our second destination (Macon) I had finished it!

**Dario Castagno** lives in the countryside in Tuscany, near Siena. Apart from writing and producing his own wine and olive oil, he takes small groups of tourists, mainly Americans, around his favourite spots in the Chianti area.

The Covid lockdown breaks his routine and to keep sane he starts cleaning and tidying up the farmhouse where he lives with his beloved English Setter. In the process he suddenly remembers that he has never opened the old trunk inherited from his grandmother and where he had placed the television set the day he moved. Having now all the possible time to check if there is anything interesting inside, he opens and ...

Like a genie ... the trunk is a revelation! Not just for its amazing content of old photographs, letters, documents but for what it tells Dario about his family, their origins, and his belonging to some very prominent members of the Waldensian Church and community, such as Pastor **Jean-Pierre Meille**, among other things right hand of **General Beckwith**. And who in turn were descendants from the Waldensians who for nearly 850 years fought for their right to witness and preach the true Gospel, were bitterly persecuted for many centuries as heretics and discriminated against until recent times.

Dario Castagno has sewn together the results of his research in the archive of the **Waldensian Church in Florence** and in the General Waldensian Archive of Torre Pellice with family snippets and some Waldensian history—starting from the Middle Ages!—in a very pleasant and readable way.

*Erica Scropo*



**WALDENSIAN CHURCH MISSIONS, VAUDOIS PASTORS FUND  
& CANON ARMSTRONG BEQUEST - SUMMARY ACCOUNTS  
YEAR ENDED 31/12/2020**

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2019</b>		<b>2020</b>
Individual Donations	1828.00		2095.26
Tax Refund	360.00		372.50
Legacies	4000.00		
	6188.00		2467.76
Vaudois Clergy Trust	1539.98		
Publications	969.99		814.09
Dividend & Interest	4597.67		3629.40
	<u>7107.64</u>		<u>4443.49</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13295.64</b>		<b>6911.25</b>
 <b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
<b>Payments to Italy</b>			
Hymnal Project	1000.00		
Student			3160.00
	1000.00		3160.00
Review	421.00		471.99
Deputation			
Sec/Post/Stationery	2308.84		2348.28
Publications	660.40		
Sundries	30.00		163.04
	<u>3420.24</u>		<u>2983.31</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4420.24</b>		<b>6143.31</b>
 <b>NET INCOME</b>	 <b>8875.40</b>		 <b>767.94</b>
Opening Bank Balance	18769.38		27644.78
Income	13295.64		6911.25
Expenditure	<u>-4420.24</u>		<u>-6143.31</u>
Closing Bank Balance	27644.78		28412.82

**NOTES**

Income Vaudois Clergy Trust - £1590 received 14/1/21  
Expenditure Publications - Invoice for calendars 582 Euros recd 1/21



## 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.



### WALDENSIAN CHURCH MISSIONS

Registered Charity No. 277255

#### GIFT AID DECLARATION

To: **Waldensian Church Missions, 5 Woodgate Close, Woodgate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO20 3TA**

I (title) . . . . . (name) . . . . .

(address) . . . . .

. . . . .

Postcode . . . . . Tel. no. . . . .

would like all donations I make to Waldensian Church Missions from the date of this declaration to be treated as Gift Aid donations. I understand I must be paying income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the amount being reclaimed by the Missions. I understand that I can cancel this Gift Aid declaration at any time.

Signature of donor . . . . . Date . . . . .

## 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 12th 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

*Patron:* The Lord The Rev. Leslie Griffiths  
26 Stroud Road, Croydon, London SE25 5DR  
email lesliejohngriffiths@gmail.com

*Chairman:* Ian Nimmo-Smith  
17 Mariners Way, Cambridge CB4 1BN

*Executive Secretary:* Erica Scropo Newbury  
85 St Andrew's Road, Cambridge CB4 1DH  
Telephone 01223-315753, email ericascropo@hotmail.com

*Hon. Treasurer:* Mr Mark Stephens  
5 Woodgate Close, Woodgate, Chichester PO20 3TA  
Telephone 01243-545877, email marklynne5@btinternet.com

**The Scottish Waldensian Missions Aid Society**

*Chair:* The Rev. Mary Cranfield  
The Manse, Daviot, Inverurie AB51 1AJ, Scotland

*Secretary and Treasurer:* Mr D.A. Lamb, SSC  
36 Liberton Drive, Edinburgh EH16 6NN, Scotland  
Telephone 0131-664-3059

*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.

tick

- Change of address:
- I wish to donate £ . . . for the magazine:
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- Please send *The Waldensian Review* to (new supporter):

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**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE TREASURER AT THE ADDRESS ABOVE**

## Publications

**The Waldensian Story: A Study in Faith, Intolerance and Survival**  
by Prescott Stephens — £25 *inc. postage and packing*

**The Waldensians' 'Glorious Recovery' of their Alpine Valleys**  
The legendary 'Recovery' with a brief summary of the previous 500 years  
by Richard Newbury — £3 *plus postage and packing*

**Think of a Farmhouse in the Mountains**  
From refuge for antifascist partisans destroyed by the Germans to 'The House for Peace' holiday camp and retreat. In Italian and English  
*£12.50 inc. postage and packing*

**What the British found when they discovered the French Vaudois  
in the Nineteenth Century**  
by W.S.F. Pickering — £3 *plus postage and packing*

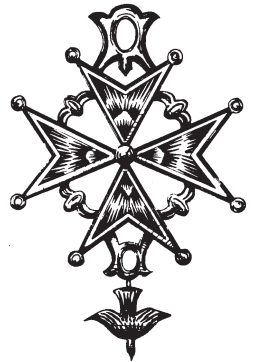
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**Please email for exact cost of postage**

**Souvenirs and information can be obtained  
from:**

The Huguenot Society, University College, Gow-  
er Street, London WC1E 6BT

*The Huguenot Cross, symbol of Protestantism all over Europe*



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