

Markenfield Hall revisited: Catholic family back in ancestral recusant house

In April of this year Holy Mass was offered in the *usus antiquior* by Fr de Malleray, FSSP in the private chapel at Markenfield Hall, near Ripon, North Yorkshire. This historic house was built by Canon John de Markenfield, a high official under King Edward II, who obtained a licence to crenellate the house in 1310. His descendant Sir Thomas Markenfield was the main instigator of the Rising of the North in 1569, a doomed attempt to restore freedom for the old religion to the North of England during the Reformation. His main co-leader was his elderly uncle, Sir Richard Norton of Rylstone Castle, known as "old Norton", a former High Sheriff of Yorkshire, who had taken part in the equally ill-fated Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536. On 20 November 1569 a large contingent assembled in the courtyard at Markenfield. Bearing their standard, the five wounds of Christ, they proceeded to Ripon Cathedral where amidst scenes of great rejoicing they overturned the new high altar and took out the new Protestant prayer books and burnt them. The Rising was a tragic failure and was put down with great savagery. Over 200 who took part were hanged, drawn and quartered. The leaders were attainted for high treason and fled to the Low Countries where they lived in great poverty.

(Fr de Malleray after Mass in the chapel)



(Above: Entrance gate to the Hall.)

Sir Richard was captured over there by agents of Queen Elizabeth in 1585, well into his eighties, and died a prisoner on the boat back to England; he gave his last few remaining possessions to the sailors who had been kind to him. Eight of his sons had joined in the Rising. One son Christopher, and his uncle Thomas Norton, were executed at Tyburn. Rylstone Castle was razed to the ground, and was subsequently commemorated by Wordsworth in his poem "*The White Doe of Rylstone; or, the Fate of the Nortons*".

Sir Thomas was sentenced in absentia to be hanged, drawn and quartered. In August 1592 a papal correspondent wrote: "Sir Thomas Markenfield has been found dead, lying on the bare floor of his chamber, no creature being present at his death... He died this week in Brussels, in extreme want



and in a most miserable cottage". Markenfield was confiscated by the Crown and acquired by Sir Thomas Egerton, who subsequently became Lord Chancellor. It passed down through his descendants to the Earls and Dukes of Bridgewater, who never lived there.

In 1761 Sir Fletcher Norton, a descendant of Sir Richard, bought Markenfield back from the Egerton family. Sir Fletcher was a successful barrister and MP and lived nearby at Grantley Hall. He gave Markenfield a new roof and saved the house from ruin. He became Attorney General and from 1770-80 was Speaker of the House of Commons. In 1782, when offered a peerage, he took the title Lord Grantley of Markenfield.

After several centuries as a tenanted farm house, Markenfield is now once again a family home. It is occupied by Ian and Lady Deirdre Curteis, formerly widow of the seventh Lord Grantley and the first Catholic occupant since the Reformation. Her son, the eighth Lord Grantley, serves on the Council of the British Association of the Order of Malta. The chapel is dedicated to St Michael the Archangel. Since 2006 there has been an annual Requiem Mass in the chapel for the souls of the Markenfield family, celebrated in the old rite by Fr Ronald Creighton-Jobe, *Cong. Orat.*, and sung by monks of Ampleforth.



(The moated House now restored.)

Markenfield is surrounded by a moat with swans. Scarcely altered since 1310, it is the most complete fourteenth century manor house left in England. The house and the chapel have been beautifully restored, and in 2008 Markenfield won a new award, conferred by Sotheby's and the Historic Houses Association, for "*the best restoration project in England*".

Lord Grantley,
on the feast of St Michael the Archangel 2009.

Information: The house is open to the public 28 days a year (group visits by appointment), and Mass is celebrated in the chapel about once a month. It has become a popular venue for weddings. Details of the house, opening times and Mass times are available on www.markenfield.com, or telephone 01765 692303.

Advent retreat on the theme:

'The Holy Angels - who they are, and what they do'.

Advent retreat at Douai Abbey (Upper Woolhampton RG7 5TQ, Berks. – railway: Midgham)

Tues. 15th (2pm)- Fri. 18th (11am) December 2009

Preacher: Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP

Cost: £107 - to cover:

- *Accommodation: single room with en-suite bathroom, full board: £92, full board, including VAT.*
- *Retreat Master's expenses: £15.*

Booking: *please send a £15 check made payable to 'FSSP England' to : Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP, 179 Elgar Rd, RG2 0DH, Reading, Berkshire, UK.*

