A very happy Easter to you all. May the peace and power of the risen Christ keep you faithful to the promise of the Resurrection. Those of you who witnessed receptions into the Church at the Easter Vigil will have seen something of the joy of those who received the Easter sacraments; ‘Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, Peace be with you’. The promise of the Spirit and the peace of the Risen Christ are presented to us during every day of the Easter season. Let us pray for those who have been received, especially former clergy and their families. Let us take every opportunity to share our own delight at simply being at the very heart of the Catholic faith. I hope you will find something of this in the pages of our expanded newsletter. Our pattern of production will be Easter and Christmas. Any contributions and suggestions are gratefully received. Over six months at Wolvercote directing the Society have passed. I should very much like to invite our members, our supporters and our followers, to become ‘Friends of The St Barnabas Society’. The more formal membership of the Society will remain but I believe this new group will help us focus on the prayerful work of the Society and its thoughtful response to the call to full communion. As the Lord calls us all to a deeper faith in Him, may we respond with all the generosity which hallmark these holy days of Easter.

FR RICHARD BIGGERSTAFF

THE SOCIETY PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the life and work of your servant St Barnabas. Through his intercession may all who work for the St Barnabas Society be strengthened to follow his example of joyful encouragement.

Help them to extend a warm and generous welcome to those who have left home and livelihood to be united with Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

CONTACT US...

The St Barnabas Society
President: Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster
Director: The Revd Richard Biggerstaff
4 First Turn, Wolvercote, Oxford, OX2 8AH
Tel: 01865 513377
directorstbarnabas@gmail.com
www.stbarnabassociety.org.uk
How it was that an Anglican priest converted to Catholicism and that three of his sons went on to become Catholic priests is a subject that has intrigued my family for many years.

Without doubt, the decision to become a Catholic came at great personal cost to my great-grandfather, The Reverend Septimus Pontifex. From this distance, it is difficult to assess what impact that this bold step, made in 1904, had on the emerging vocations of three of his sons.

Those three sons became monks of Downside Abbey – the oldest, Eric Pontifex, became Dom Dunstan in 1912. A year later, he was joined by Mervyn (Dom Charles) and finally in 1914 Roy entered the noviciate as Dom Mark. By the time Dom Mark, the youngest, died in 1991, the three had clocked up almost exactly 200 years of monastic life. For me, their enduring engagement with Catholicism has an added personal dimension in that I came to know Dom Mark as a very old man when he and I were together at Downside – he as a monk, me as a boy in the school. I was half-way through Downside when he died at the age of 95.

In tracing the history of the family and investigating the background to my great-grandfather’s conversion, we are fortunate in having ‘My Family: Looking back through four generations’, an unpublished work by my father, Brigadier David Pontifex. (That one of the brothers of the Pontifex monks married and had children at least ensured the family did not die out). Indeed, much of what follows is sourced from ‘My Family’, written more than 25 years ago.

Born in 1856 in Bath, Septimus Edmund Pontifex was the seventh son (hence his unusual name) of Edmund Pontifex, who ran a hugely profitable business, primarily in metal manufacture, based in Shoe Lane, in the City of London, before retiring to the West Country. With his father dying when he was still only 13, Septimus was fortunate in that his mother, Elizabeth, had no shortage of capital to ensure the completion of his education. Septimus went on to the Salisbury Theological College, a residential college for the Anglican priesthood, where he was ordained on 1st December 1881. What precisely drew Septimus to Catholicism is unclear but the college’s apparent Anglo-Catholic tendency may have played a part. What is more certain is the influence that this bold step, made in 1904, had on the emerging vocations of his sons.

Without doubt, the decision to become a Catholic came at great personal cost to my great-grandfather, The Reverend Septimus Pontifex. From this distance, it is difficult to assess what impact that this bold step, made in 1904, had on the emerging vocations of three of his sons.

Septimus had a large collection of Newman’s works, though sadly most of them are now lost. No doubt Newman’s thinking, the impact that this bold step, made in 1904, had on the emerging vocations of his sons.

It seems that in becoming a Catholic in 1904, Septimus was not acting alone. He discussed the matter at length with his eldest son, Eric. In his book on the family, my father writes that Eric “took the step simultaneously and with entire readiness”. The second son, Dudley, however, seems to have been more hesitant, a reluctance shared with his mother, Helena, Septimus’ wife. That they both soon became Catholics and were by all accounts committed in their faith to the rest of their days suggests that they may not have been thinking on altogether different lines after all.

There is little in family archives to indicate the impact on Septimus’ conversion on his sons’ later admission into a monastery. But geography offers a clue. For some years, the family had lived in Clifton, presumably to cushion the expense of sending the older sons to Clifton College, and after becoming Catholics, their spiritual centre of operations shifted to Downside, on the other side of nearby Bath. Indeed, it was to Downside School that the two youngest sons – Mervyn and Roy – were sent in 1907 and 1909 respectively. In contrast to the situation a century later, the monastery was enjoying a resurgence. Dom Edmund Ford had become the first Abbot in 1899 and the magnificent abbey church was quickly being built up, exhibiting some of the finest church craftsmanship of the era.

The young Pontifexes thus grew up with their own encounter of Catholicism resurgent after centuries of obscurity. But while Downside’s influence on the boys’ vocation is self-evident, their father’s role in their development is perhaps best glimpsed through the recollections of Roy, the youngest son. He remembered as a boy going with some of his brothers to his father’s study where they recited the Creed. It was part of their preparation for reception into the Catholic Church. As a very old man, recalling events so long ago, Roy was also paying tribute to his father; Septimus’ example of courage, constancy and faith had conceivably laid the foundations to monastic vocations that were to endure for a lifetime.

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THE DISTRICT ORGANISERS

Can Anything Good Come Out of Nazareth?

‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ is one of my favourite texts. It reminds me that parishes in those off-the-beaten-track places, those unfancied locations, those unglamorous towns, may harbour little-known spiritual delights for the visitor. The UK has its quota of tourist honey pots, places considered smart, places that people like to visit. But with its huge industrial history, it also has many grimy concrete jungles where the population are predominantly low-income. Last year one such ‘jungle’ location produced a £50 cheque for the Society from some kind soul who heard my appeal at Mass. This year I had a delightful encounter with a very gifted priest whose parish stands on a roundabout down a long and dingy road, with a flyover roaring overhead next to the church. Two years ago he nearly died from a particularly nasty ailment and he commented that once you have experienced something so awful it liberates you, because you know that nothing else can be so bad. I knew what he meant from the experience of losing a beloved wife some years back. He has a Licence from Rome to be so bad. I knew what he meant from the experience of losing a beloved wife some years back. He has a Licence from Rome, but I knew what he meant from the experience of losing a beloved wife some years back. He has a Licence from Rome.

The Spiritual Legacy of Cardinal Manning

In the entrance hall of the Society’s headquarters at Wolvercote hangs a picture of Cardinal Manning. He is dressed in the traditional manner with scarlet mozzetta and pectoral cross, his hands draped over the arms of a wooden chair. It is the first thing we see on entering the house and what is most striking about the picture is the intensity of the Cardinal’s expression. There is an iron determination in his mouth and a look in his eyes which appears fixed on things unseen. More than anything there is a dignity to his face which seems to have been forged through suffering. The pale skin and hollow cheeks point to an ascetic life but one that is tinged with tragedy.

The image of the elderly Cardinal could hardly be more different from that of the young, rosy-cheeked Anglican cleric. Manning stated later in his memoirs that he barely recognised the person of those early years, such had been the complete transformation of his outward circumstances and (more importantly) his inner life. As a young man he had chosen Caroline Sargent as his wife and from all accounts the marriage had been extremely successful. Then suddenly she was snatched away from him by an early death and he was left on his own. Manning always felt that there was a reason for this, that somehow through his suffering God was teaching him things that he would not have been able to learn in any other way. And so began the slow spiritual ascent, the toiling for God which would eventually see Manning become a Prince of the Catholic Church. In a letter to Archdeacon Hare in 1841 he stated that his former self had been abolished. “You have known me a sadder and, God grant, a better man. Between this and that glad morning when we shall sit down with our sainted ones in our Father’s Kingdom there lies only one thing, toil for Christ’s Church in warfare here on earth.” Caroline’s death although tragic was the means God used to spur him forwards along the path of his vocation.

There are countless examples of people who have been encouraged to do great things after a certain loss or difficulty in their life. Manning’s situation has an added poignancy given the nature of the office he was ultimately called to embrace. But his greatness lies not in the scarlet mozzetta and the Cardinal’s garb, as splendid as splendid, fitting as these things are. It surely lies in his acceptance of God’s will for his life and in the way he drew meaning from the tragedy of Caroline’s death. This attitude produced spiritual fruits that would have astonished his younger self.

Manning is an obvious model for us as convert clergy given the outward circumstances of his life. But it is perhaps his inner life and the placing of God’s plans above his own that can provide us with the inspiration to embrace our own particular cross and even be thankful for it.

CYPRIAN BLAMIRES
cpblamires@aol.com

WILLIAM JOHNSTONE
johnstonewj@gmail.com

THE ST BARNABAS SOCIETY

Easter 2015 3
A few months ago, while clearing out my mother’s loft, I found my dad’s old camera. It had been sitting, covered in dust, in a box in the loft for a couple of decades, its cardboard box was damp and mouldy. It even had a half shot roll of film inside, to which twenty or so years of sitting in the damp and cold had not been kind. When I developed it, I salvaged a few dark and misty photographs of our old house and the woods inside, to which twenty or so years of sitting in the damp and cold had not been kind. When I developed it, I salvaged a few dark and misty photographs of our old house and the woods around it; small, blurry windows on the past.

The camera was an old Zenit – made between the 1960’s and 1980’s in the USSR. The lens was stamped with ‘made in GDR’ – The German Democratic Republic; the part of Eastern Germany under Soviet control after the Second World War. The camera was a product of two countries that no longer exist, that contained pictures of a world that no longer exits; it was the embodiment of the transient nature of existence.

During the summer holidays of 2014 my family and I came to the decision to be received into the Catholic Church. My dad contacted an ex-Anglican Catholic priest, Fr Ed, who took us for lessons to prepare for reception. These sessions started during the autumn and gave us the background for the beliefs and practices of Catholicism. We are still going to the lessons so that we learn more.

These sessions took us though Creation, who God and Jesus is and the proof for him, confession, what the Church believes, the virtues and the seven deadly sins. These were really helpful and extremely interesting.

On entering the church on the day we would be received, we were greeted by the priest and were given our books just like any other Sunday. We had been told to sit in the front two rows, so we did – right at the front! The service was a normal Mass with hymns and a sermon (although it was brief). The only difference was that after the Creed we (those of us being received) stood up and each took it in turns to walk to the front with our sponsor – Fr Terry Martin for me, my brother and my dad, and Mrs Hayley Tomlinson for my two sisters and my mother. We were asked if we believed the teaching of the Catholic Church, we knelt in front of the priest, we were anointed with the oil of Chrism in confirmation. And just like that you’re a Catholic. The service then carried on as normal.

After the service pictures were take and then we left for home. At home my parents had invited our sponsors, Fr Richard and Fr Ed and his family for a very jolly Sunday lunch.

DAVID REDFIELD and his new focus

I have always been a great fan of technology; one of my earliest memories is of my parents bringing home a brand new Commodore 64 computer, upon which I spent many happy hours learning to code little programs and play games on cassette tape. This seems unbelievably archaic now.

I was fortunate enough to grow up in an era when computing was just entering schools, and to experience the many quantum leaps that the technology took; from a home computer about as powerful as a modern calculator, followed by PCs with floppy disc drives, then the arrival of CD and DVDs all the way through to the smartphone and tablet revolution, and the new Apple Watch, tempting me to break several commandments!

One of my favourite hobbies is photography and, of course, this has been another area where technology has changed beyond all recognition. Although I’ve had my share of digital cameras, I’ve recently found myself going back to using film. There’s something about using film, with its limited number of shots per roll, that forces you to slow down, to take your time and to engage with the present moment; a lesson I could probably use in the rest of my life, too!

A few months ago, while clearing out my mother’s loft, I found my dad’s old camera. It had been sitting, covered in dust, in a box in the loft for a couple of decades, its cardboard box was damp and mouldy. It even had a half shot roll of film inside, to which twenty or so years of sitting in the damp and cold had not been kind. When I developed it, I salvaged a few dark and misty photographs of our old house and the woods around it; small, blurry windows on the past.

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My spiritual journey has never been, what you might call, normal. As a child I went to church for the three sprinklings; weddings, christenings and funerals. At school I sang in a church choir but only because we were paid and as a teenager my friends and I would go to midnight Mass at the parish church because it was the only place open after the pubs shut!

At 18 I trained to be a nurse and specialised in Neuro (diseases of the brain and central nervous system) intensive care. Many of my patients would get up in the morning, go to work but not return home having experienced a catastrophic brain bleed or head injury due to an accident. This raised a lot of questions about life and death and I use to envy people who believed in God because they would have the answers to my questions. However when I did become a Christian I didn’t discover the answers but I found I had no need to ask the questions - I just trusted God in the situation.

I became a Christian through a road to Damascus experience, one minute I wasn’t and the next minute I was. This was witnessed by the hospital chaplain who, although he probably wouldn’t describe himself as such, became my first spiritual director. Although the hospital chaplain was Free Church, he at no time tried to persuade me towards one particular denomination. In fact I hadn’t actually settled in a church before I felt a very strong call to ministry, this narrowed the field somewhat as the Church of England hadn’t yet voted to ordain women.

Eventually I found myself in the United Reformed Church (URC) and so twenty years ago, I started training for ordination at Westminster College Cambridge. I was ordained in 1998 into the churches of Haverhill, a town which had grown during the sixties as part of the London overspill and was once again expanding in response to the development of Cambridge, and Castle Camps, a farming village about three miles away.

During my time as a minister I felt myself being drawn more and more towards the practice of contemplative prayer and would take regular retreats at Clare Priory where I was guided by Fr. Ben. Then in about 2010 a seed seemed to have taken root in my brain and I kept thinking of what it would be like to be part of a contemplative community. Needless to say I kept my thoughts to myself, after all the URC do not have monastic communities, contemplative or otherwise. When I could ignore it no longer I was pointed in the direction of the Carmelite monastery at Quidenham.

Now I had it all worked out, I would email the Prioress and tell her that I was an ordained minister of the URC and divorced, she would email back and say sorry but we can’t help and I could tell God I tried and then get on with my ministry. However nobody told the Prioress and back came an email which said, “I grew up in the URC and I’m divorced, come and see me.” Oh how God laughed at my feeble attempt to control His plans! I left my church communities at the end of November 2013, was received into the Catholic Church in December and entered Quidenham in January 2014. However it was not a smooth transition, as the reality of giving up ordained ministry hit me.

Although I knew in my heart that Quidenham was where God wanted me to be, another seed took root. Yet again I fought against it but it soon became clear that God was calling me to a more eremitical life and although it would have been ideal for me to remain attached to the community they could not accommodate me and so I had to leave.

Fortunately I part-owned a flat in Aldeburgh where I could live and so I moved. With no income and no idea what the future held, I could do nothing but trust in God. I still felt that in some way Quidenham was to be my home and would spend time there every month receiving spiritual direction. It was the parish priest at Aldeburgh who told me about the St Barnabas Society and they really have been an answer to prayer, stepping in just as I was about to admit that the eremitical life was not going to work out and that I had got it all wrong.

The Society has enabled me to continue discerning God’s call and in December a small mobile home in the grounds of the monastery became vacant. I tentatively asked if I could be considered and so in a few weeks time I shall be ‘going home’ to Quidenham. I could not have made this journey without the love and support of my friends at Haverhill, Castle Camps and Aldeburgh, the gracious understanding of my Moderator, the prayers and encouragement of my new sisters at Quidenham and of course the practical help of the St Barnabas Society, I thank God for bringing you all into my life.

KAREN KNIGHT

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

–Teresa of Avila
MESSAGE FROM...
ARCHBISHOP BERNARD LONGLEY
OF BIRMINGHAM

Over the years I have been most grateful to receive the Newsletter published by the St Barnabas Society, to learn of the Society’s important work and to read about the faith journeys of those it has supported. As you will be aware, the Society of St Barnabas is based in Oxford, a city which recalls the venerable tradition of those who, at great personal cost, have entered into full communion with the Catholic Church. I am delighted that the Society’s office and residence are based in the Archdiocese of Birmingham and together with the practical help which the Society provides, the newly re-furbished chapel will be a place where its many beneficiaries can be supported through prayer.

As the Easter Season unfolds and we continue to celebrate the joy of new life through Our Lord’s resurrection, I commend to you the work of the Society of St Barnabas and encourage you to pray for all those it supports throughout England & Wales.

Yours sincerely in the Lord,

+Bernard Longley

MESSAGE FROM... GERALD SOANE
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF THE SOCIETY

The Society started life as the Converts Aid Society, founded by Cardinal Vaughan at the specific behest of Pope Leo XIII to help to support clergy from the Church of England who were received into the Catholic Church, especially those with families.

Clerics, male and female, clergy and religious, now come to us from a variety of Christian denominations and even from other faiths. Their example is truly humbling; they abandon income, home, loving congregation and social status and step out into the unknown. Whenever they express gratitude for our help I feel that the boot should surely be on the other foot; it is we who should be thanking them for their inspiring witness.

It is a tremendous privilege to be associated with the above work, with a very supportive Board and such excellent staff: our Director, Fr Richard, our regional representatives, William Johnstone and Cyprian Blamires (all three former Anglican curates) and our headquarters staff, Christine Reynolds and Angel Collodel.

It is an exciting time for the Society. Fr Richard is building on the sure foundation put in place by Fr Robin and his predecessors. Our headquarters has been refurbished and now combines our offices with a residence (for Fr Richard and William) and a chapel, where the Blessed Sacrament is present continuously at the heart of our work.

Look out for other changes as the Society overhauls its ‘marketing’ and seeks to make its work better known so that it can continue to support the continuing flow of clerics who need its assistance. Meanwhile, thank you for your continuing support.

Pope Francis addresses the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on the Feast of St Andrew 2014 at the Patriarchal Church of St George, Istanbul.

Meeting each other, seeing each other face to face, exchanging the embrace of peace, and praying for each other, are all essential aspects of our journey towards the restoration of full communion. All of this precedes and always accompanies that other essential aspect of this journey, namely, theological dialogue. An authentic dialogue is, in every case, an encounter between persons with a name, a face, a past, and not merely a meeting of ideas.

This is especially true for us Christians, because for us the truth is the person of Jesus Christ. The example of Saint Andrew, who with another disciple accepted the invitation of the Divine Master, “Come and see”, and “stayed with him that day” (Jn 1:39), shows us plainly that the Christian life is a personal experience, a transforming encounter with the One who loves us and who wants to save us. In addition, the Christian message is spread thanks to men and women who are in love with Christ, and cannot help but pass on the joy of being loved and saved. Here again, the example of the apostle Andrew is instructive. After following Jesus to his home and spending time with him, Andrew “first found his brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus” (Jn 1:40-42). It is clear, therefore, that not even dialogue among Christians can prescind from this logic of personal encounter.
The Chapel at Wolvercote has been a huge part of the refurbishment of the Society’s headquarters. With the permission of Archbishop Longley the Blessed Sacrament is now reserved here and Mass is celebrated daily. Beneficiaries and benefactors are remembered at the altar, together with the needs of the Church and the world. The chapel is situated in an upstairs room. Its big front window looks over the front garden towards the road and Wolvercote School. At night the passer-by will be able to spot the gentle flicker of the red sanctuary lamp. It is where we pray. Be assured that you are well remembered in our prayers here. The altar was made in Lewes by the Sussex carpenter, Simon Goodman. A donor has covered the cost of the altar but it is still possible to contribute to this. Made in oak and edged in silver paint, it houses the tabernacle which found its way to us some years ago; we do not know its provenance. The front of this tabernacle, depicting the pelican in her piety, has been silvered and matches the candlesticks which, together with the crucifix, were a gift to the society. The Society has also received a picture of the Madonna of the Meadow by Giovanni Bellini which serves as the reredos. This was given to Fr Richard by Jean Wall, a convert to the faith from Lewes in the 1950s. The Friends of the St Barnabas Society (more elsewhere) will receive a prayer card depicting this image of Our Lady as a focus for the friends’ prayer.

Archbishop Bernard also arranged for a relic of Blessed Dominic Barberi to come to Wolvercote. Please let us know of any specific requests for prayers and Mass intentions and those intentions which we might commend to Blessed Dominic as we look forward to his canonisation.

BECOME A ‘FRIEND OF THE ST BARNABAS SOCIETY’

This new group within the Society will help to gather those who take a particular prayerful interest in our work. At each appeal we ask for prayers and our prayer card is widely used. Sometimes our prayers perhaps need a more specific focus, although confidences and even anonymity must always be respected. The Facebook page often highlights the lively contributions that many make about the concerns of our Society and those seeking full communion with the Catholic Church.

To become a friend E-mail or telephone Fr Richard.
directorstbarnabas@gmail.com 01865 513377

There will be a gathering of the Friends at Wolvercote on Saturday 10th October 2015. We will aim to meet annually, but there will be monthly newsletter. In addition, a copy of the Wolvecote ‘Madonna of the Meadow’ will be sent to you. The intentions of Friends will be included in the Friday Mass at the chapel which is usually celebrated at 8am.

THE SOCIETY’S LONDON MASS & RECEPTION

Wednesday 4th November 2015
The Feast of St Charles Borromeo
At 6pm at St Patrick’s, Soho Square, London W1D 4NR
A bishop will celebrate the Mass and there will be a guest preacher
Followed by drinks and canapés in St Patrick’s Parish Hall

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you are a priest…
Contact our local District Organiser or the Director to arrange an appeal in the parish or a talk about the Society’s work.
Let the Director know of any convert clergy who have been received into the Church.

Whoever you are…
Pass this Newsletter on to others and display the enclosed poster in your parish.
Pray for the Society and its work, those whom it helps and those thinking of coming into the Church.
Send the Society a donation using the back page or the enclosed forms.
Consider remembering the Society in your will.
THE ST BARNABAS SOCIETY
(successor to The Converts’ Aid Society)

Please return the completed form to:
The Director, The St Barnabas Society, 4 First Turn, Wolvercote, Oxford, OX2 8AH
Tel: 01865 513377 directorstbarnabas@gmail.com  www.stbarnabassociety.org.uk

Contact Details
Mr/Mrs/Ms __________________________ Name __________________________ Surname __________________________
Address ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________ Postcode __________________________
Email ____________________________________________ Phone no __________________________

Donation
I would like to give: £ __________________________
I enclose a: □ Cheque □ Postal Order □ CAF Cheque payable to The St Barnabas Society □ Cash

Gift Aid Declaration
Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made. Please tick all boxes you wish to apply, sign and date.

□ Today □ In past 4 years □ Future
I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p for every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008.

□ No, I am not eligible /do not wish to give Gift Aid

Signature __________________________ Date __________________________

Please notify the charity if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Standing Order
I would like to give: £ __________________________
Every: □ Month □ Quarter □ Year Starting from: __________________________

To: The St Barnabas Society, National Westminster Bank plc, Oxford North Branch,
249 Banbury Road, Summertown, Oxford OX2 7HR

Account Name: The St Barnabas Society Branch Sort code: 8 7 0 2 9 1 9 7 6 0 1 6 0 7

From my account: Name of Account holder: __________________________
Bank/Building Society Account Number Branch Sort code: __________________________
(please allow at least 3 weeks from today)

Signature __________________________ Date __________________________

To: The Manager (of your Bank/Building Society)

Bank address: __________________________ Post code __________________________

Other
□ Do you wish the Society to send you an acknowledgement?
□ Membership: Please send me details of becoming a member of the Society (This involves an annual subscription of £25 and gives the right to attend and vote at the Annual General Meeting)
□ Legacy: Please send me information about leaving money in my Will to the Society
□ Mailing List: I would like to receive the Society’s Newsletters