In June 1580, when Campion landed on the cause of the Forty Martyrs, wrote: ‘recusant England. Their faith. Our memory of the killing of today’s Wednesday – and Christians and many other buildings are floodlit important to us today as it was when it happened. It hadn’t always been so. Campion was a scholarship boy and learned early to phrase the establishment. He was chosen to speak before Queen Mary on her visit to the City and later, as a student at Oxford, to debate before Queen Elizabeth. He was described as “one of the diamonds of England”. Great men offered him patronage. In the turmoil of the Reformation this promised safety. His friend, Tobie Matthew, urged him to embrace the opportunities. Campion accepted ordination as an Anglican deacon and buried himself from the sacraments for twelve years. His conscience troubled him. Matthew, who told him not to bother, went on to become the Anglican Bishop of Durham and Archbishop of York. As Evelyn Waugh says in his classic 'The harvest is wonderful… I cannot forget the hands of the heretics; the enemy have so many eyes… I am in an appeal to mystery ridiculous… With Persons he set up a secret printing press to circulate his ‘Ten Reasons’ for being a Catholic and his ‘Regia’ a justification of his mission and a challenge to the authorities. ‘And teaching our Society, he is known to us that we have made a league—all the Jesuits in the world… cheerfully to carry the cross you shall lay upon us, and never to despair your recovery, while we have a man living who was in the fire, to be necked with your orisons, and consumed with your prayers. The expense is reckoned, the enterprise is begun; it is of God; it cannot be withstood. So the faith was planted: so it must be restored.’

Their circulation and popularity made his capture inevitable. In the summer of 1581 he rode out of London, passing at Tyburn to pray under the gallows. ‘Because’, says Persons, “he used to say that he would have been executed there.” He stopped at the Catholic church of St Paul in the City. There was a priest hunter in the congregation. ‘The Gospel of the kingdom is preached, ‘Jerusalem, and those that kill the prophetsUriah, the priest’s son. Campion was bound to his horse. He disappeared into the Tower for four months of interrogation and torture. Rumours flew, he had recanted, accepted a bishopric, betrayed his faith. When he emerged, brought to debate with the Anglican divines, it was the same genetics, eloquent Campion who confounded his adversaries. Except, at his trial, he couldn’t lift his right arm to take the oath because of the racking. Condemned to death by perjured witnesses and a packed jury, Campion spoke for all Catholics: “In condemning us, you condemn all your own ancestors, all our ancient bishops and kings, all that was once the glory of England, the island of saints, and the most devout child of the ‘Sea of Peter’.”

He was dragged to execution on 1st December, his feast day. He greeted the crowd “God save you all, and make you all good Catholics.” His final words were “Here celebrate God, and for the Catholic universe newspaper. An extract from Animina. The original copy of Animina, which draw this on country’s Christian story. This registered charity is currently creating accommodation for scholars, retirees and those wishing to deepen their Christian faith. Theodore House will be followed by a Visitors’ Centre which will enable parish, schools and the general public to have even greater access to these amazing collections. To find out more go to www.christianheritagecentre.com or contact info@christianheritagecentre.com

Sacred Treasures: Christian heritage centre, Stonyhurst

St Edmund’s rope binds us to the memory of his sacrifice

Christopher Graffius

At Stonyhurst there’s a rope. Among all the treasures of the college this receives the most honour. Housed in a reliquary, it is placed on the altar on the great feast days. The pupil who carries it there, until the candles and the incense, on his feast day on 1st December, will never forget the experience. A simple rope, some five hundred years old. The rope that bound St Edmund Campion to the hurdle on which he was dragged to execution. A rope smuggled away from the butchery and worn by Fr Robert Persons, the founder of the college who escaped the martyrdom of his companions, round his waist for the rest of his life. What’s the point of a rope? It is merely a cultural artefact collected amid the gore? Or does it hold a greater meaning?

As the new Christian Heritage Centre ries at Stonyhurst these are questions worth asking. Museums must have some relevance or the exhibits are merely dry as dust. The rope binds us with the hurdle and is now owned by the British Province of the Society of Jesus. Below left is a traditional image of St Edmund in Stonyhurst Sodality Chapel.

Stonyhurst College is held in the care of the British Province of the Society of Jesus. Below left is a traditional image of St Edmund in Stonyhurst Sodality Chapel.

In the summer of 1581 as he was returning to the mission field in England – and to certain death – is held in the Collections at the Christian Heritage Centre.  

'Hope, greatest and ever-present to the Dead, Hope is the Host which I behold; Here, be assembled here, I pray: Here celebrate God, and for the afflicted seek peace.'

The Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst creates access to unique Catholic collections – items which draw on this country’s Christian story. This registered charity is currently creating accommodation for scholars, retirees and those wishing to deepen their Christian faith. Theodore House will be followed by a Visitors’ Centre which will enable parishioners, schools and the general public to have even greater access to these amazing collections. To find out more go to www.christianheritagecentre.com or contact info@christianheritagecentre.com