



# GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE

GLENSTAL ABBEY, MURROE, CO. LIMERICK, IRELAND

ISSUE 14 SPRING 2022

[WWW.GLENSTAL.ORG](http://WWW.GLENSTAL.ORG) [WWW.GLENSTAL.COM](http://WWW.GLENSTAL.COM) (061) 621 000



Magnolias in bloom  
near the entrance to  
Glenstal Abbey.

**GLENSTAL ABBEY, MURROE, CO. LIMERICK, IRELAND**

Prayer is the foundation of our monastic life and each day in the monastery is centred around times of prayer, together and in private. The backbone of our prayer is the 'Liturgy of Hours' – sometimes called the 'Divine Office' or the 'Work of God' – where the monks gather in the Abbey church at appointed times to chant psalms and sing hymns to God, to listen to the Scriptures and to pray for the needs of the world. This daily round of worship consecrates the course of the day and night as the community gathers in the stillness of the morning, at the setting of the sun, and at the closing of the day.

**W E E K D A Y S****6:35am: Matins and Lauds (Morning Prayer)****12:10pm: Conventual Mass****6:00pm: Vespers (Evening Prayer in Latin)****8:35pm: Compline (Tuesday - Friday: Night Prayer)****8:35pm on Saturday Nights: Resurrection Office/Vigils****S U N D A Y S****7:00am: Lauds (Morning Prayer)****10:00am: Conventual Mass****12:35pm: Sext (Midday Prayer)****6:00pm: Vespers (Evening Prayer in Latin)****8:35pm: Compline (Night Prayer)**

Liturgies are broadcast each day as per our daily timetable:

**[glenstal.com/abbey/webcam/](http://glenstal.com/abbey/webcam/)**

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## Journeying together toward Easter



Spring takes on a new significance for us this year as we finally begin to emerge from these years of pandemic and from the associated restrictions, which are finally being relaxed. So much has changed for all of us over the past two years. Our daily lives were altered beyond recognition; human contact was reduced to an absolute minimum and participation in our liturgical celebrations moved on-line for extended periods.

As we leave this extraordinary time behind us and begin to return to normality, we approach Holy Easter this year with fresh hope and joy. For some of us this new hope might mean that for the very first time we are really hearing the call to conversion in Lent, the call to turn towards God. As we journey towards Easter together this year, we carry with us all of those people who have been touched by suffering over the past two years and all those who have asked us to remember them in our prayers.

In many ways, the last two years seemed like a continuous Lenten experience. We had a lot of time for reflection and the furious pace of life came to a halt. The global gave way to the local and the importance of family and community became apparent to us all. As we journey towards Easter this year, we bring all of these experiences with us, aware that more than ever we need our celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord.

Easter says to us that there is hope; Christ is risen. Just as the earth itself is starting to rejuvenate out of the ashes of its winter, so Lent is inviting us to become a pilgrim people, on a journey to Holy Easter. This is our hope and our prayer for you all.

With every blessing,

**Abbot Brendan Coffey OSB**



## Symbol of Ministry

### The Wooden Crozier of Glenstal Abbey

The crozier or pastoral staff is a sign of the episcopal and abbatial office. It usually takes the form of a stylized shepherd's crook. Some scholars argue that this style of crozier was of monastic origin and that bishops replaced an earlier form of staff, without a crook, by the abbatial model. This is far from certain. Today in Glenstal, it is the major symbol of the abbot's ministry. When Abbot Joseph Dowdall was blessed as Glenstal's first abbot on 29th June, 1957, the crozier with which he was invested had, according to the late Dom Paul McDonnell, been borrowed from the archdiocese of Cashel and Emly. Shortly after the blessing,

our founding abbey of Maredsous gave Glenstal the permanent loan of a neo-baroque crozier of slivered brass. Many found this pastoral staff too grandiose and steps were taken to provide the new abbot with something more low-key. The result was the wooden crozier that all abbots have used since. It was presented to Abbot Joseph early in 1958.

The crozier was made by Mr Kevin O'Nolan, who, for some years, had been a master in the school. Mr O'Nolan was an expert woodworker with a keen interest in woodcarving and marquetry. The crozier is an example of all three interests

**HENRY O'SHEA OSB**

PHOTOS: DENIS HOOPER OSB AND OSCAR McDERMOTT OSB



incorporating, as it does, a carved central boss in the crook and a series of motifs inlaid on the body of the crook. The crozier is made of walnut and the marquetry inlays are made of holly and boxwood.\* The central boss is carved on one side with a representation of the Nativity and on the other with a representation of Jesus falling under his Cross.

The insets on the Nativity side show, on the shaft, the then – unofficial – coat-of-arms of the abbey. These show on a silver background, three oak tress intermingled with, in the top left-hand corner, a gold cross on a black square. In 1981, the Abbey received an official coat-of-arms from the Chief Herald of Ireland. Moving around the crook of the crozier, clockwise from the left, are depicted: The raising of Lazarus(?)†; The flight into Egypt; Jesus reading in the synagogue and the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.

On the shaft of the Jesus Falling side, is a rendering of the coat-of-arms assumed by Abbot Joseph when he became Abbot. This shows on a (blue) shield a dove on a (green) hillock, the dove holding an olive-branch in its beak. These

charges were borrowed from the coat-of-arms of Pope Pius XII. The shield is surmounted by a bar – here incorrectly shown as silver instead of black, with a gold cross. This latter motif was common on shields from Maredsous. Moving to the crook and again looking clockwise from the left, the motifs are: The changing of water into wine at Cana; Mary Magdalene washes the feet of Jesus; the miraculous draught of fishes and Jesus is scourged at the pillar.

This wooden crozier is now the crozier used on all occasions when the Abbot needs to carry the symbol of his office. It is carried on major solemnities such as Easter and Christmas when the Abbot presides at Mass, at professions, the clothing of novices, the renewal of vows by the community at the end of the annual retreat etc. When not in use, the crozier rests on a stand beside the Abbot's stall in the monastic choir. ■

\* My thanks to Father Anthony for identifying the woods used.

† With time, the various woods of the crozier have darkened, making the motifs difficult to read. Hence the question-mark after The raising of Lazarus above.

## Upcoming Events at the Abbey

### LENT AT THE ABBEY 2022: A NEW SEASON OF HOPE SUNDAYS OF LENT 4:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

The name Lent is linked to an old Germanic word signifying "Spring". As we emerge from the pandemic and enter into the world whose freedoms we once took for granted, it is perhaps more necessary than ever to celebrate this season of renewal. Benedict values Lent as a special time of training. All are invited to avail of this training by attending either in person or online the Lent at the Abbey Series of talks, which take place each Sunday of Lent at 4.30 and are followed by refreshments and Vespers with the monks.

### EASTER RETREAT 2022 APRIL 14 - 17, 2022

After a gap of two years, we are looking forward to welcoming familiar and new faces to the Easter Retreat from Holy Thursday (April 14th) to Easter Sunday (April 17th). The Retreat

is centred upon the great ceremonies of the Triduum, the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Celebration of the Passion and the Easter Vigil. These will be accompanied by the praying of the hours with the monks and a number of reflective talks and presentations. The retreat is open to third level students and upwards.

### THE WISDOM OF UNCERTAINTY MARCH 28—APRIL 3, 2022

Glenstal Abbey once again provides the setting for the *Jung in Ireland* Spring travel programs.





## IN MEMORIAM

# Brother Ciarán Monk of Glenstal 1961-2022

**Do you not know that in a great household there must be people who follow strange ways: whatever music you beat on your drums, there must be somebody who can dance to it.**

Chinua Achebe: *The Arrow of God*

Eoin Forbes (alias Tadgh Mac Fírbhisigh) joined the community at Glenstal Abbey in 1961. The place has been rocking ever since. He was dissuaded from taking the name Samson at profession and eventually settled for Ciarán, one of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland and the first abbot of Clonmacnoise (with imperious tuition on how to pronounce the fada'd ending to this name for those who dared to call him Kieran). A maverick monk, he had his own eccentric way of leading monastic life. Obsessed forever by the idea of

monkhood, he idolized various rugged versions of the breed like Thomas Merton and Eugene Boylan and he found places like Caldey Island to spend many summers of his youth. His father died when he was twelve and this, he would claim, had a lasting influence on his psychology and his development. It became an alibi for many endearing and not so endearing eccentricities. He loved people, especially women, but was allergic to whatever he found inauthentic. He could be devastatingly dismissive of those he decided were

**MARK PATRICK HEDERMAN OSB**

PHOTOS: VALERIE O'SULLIVAN

'not real people' including members of his own community. There were two doors to his work studio with a driving mirror outside the entrance so he could see who was coming to visit. This gave him time to dodge out the back if he wasn't in the mood or the visitor[s] didn't quite measure up. His family of five siblings with their partners and offspring were exempt from all such critical scrutiny.

Everyone must have their favourite Ciarán story. Mine is as follows, although many others scream their eligibility. After Vatican II when efforts were being made to promote heartfelt participation in liturgical prayer life, Glenstal Abbey introduced spontaneous prayers during early morning Lauds. Each monk could pipe up at random during the time allotted and offer some pitiable cause for attention to which the others would chorus their agreement with cries of 'Lord, hear us' or 'Lord, graciously hear us' or words to that effect. Several monks would listen to the early morning radio to garner causes which might elicit sympathy and astonishment from their brethren. The tsunami that hit a Hawaiian village or an earthquake in Italy

would evoke sympathetic gasps from those who had not heard the news; thunderous response would greet the judicious selection of tragedies which triumphant confrères would bring to the fore. On the second of February 1979, Ciarán prayed loudly at 6.30am "for Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols who died of an overdose last night". A choked silence ensued – few of the brethren were punk rockers and none had ever heard of Sid or the Sex Pistols. This memorable intervention put paid to any further impromptu prayer in the community. From then on we stuck rigidly to the text-book.

Possessed of great compassionate charm, coupled with acerbic wit, Ciarán made many friends and was dearly loved by people of the locality, who found him a refreshing and often outrageous contrast to what they were brought up to expect from 'holy monks'.

His passions in life, alongside people and friendships, were dogs, poetry, music and woodturning. Whatever he found lacking in devotion and fidelity from his many friends was redeemed by the unrestrained adoration of his

two dogs, Bede and Blixen, who followed one another, and him, in quick succession. Their symbiotic attachments often led to shared antipathies whereby unsuspecting guests or confrères could be nipped (in the bud, or elsewhere) in warning of potential danger from the missile

Ciarán was choir master at Glenstal Abbey for many years and a devotee of plainchant. During his reign as chief Cantor, the community, with Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin and Noírín Ní Riain, produced a trilogy of recordings which were well regarded and pleased him greatly. His own

**Ciarán had an untutored love of music and a natural singing voice but no training apart from an overnight stay at Solesmes Abbey in France from which he fled in allergic reaction to their version of monastic life.**

or its master. Not easy when you are living in community. Eventually both pets had to be 'let go'.

Never a great fan of asceticism, Ciarán was a committed cigarette smoker all his life. He did make one or two attempts to rid himself of the habit, which he knew wasn't doing him much good; however his record for abstinence in these (usually) Lenten resolutions, was 10.30am on Ash Wednesday morning in 1995, when he felt he had done enough at least to show cause.

favourite party piece, to the dismay of his formators, was *The Stuttering Lovers* from The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem.

Mozart, Schubert, Pavarotti, Cecilia Bartoli (his private email address was Cecil Bartoli) headed a long list of musical favourites which he played constantly on CDs in his dishevelled studio. Music was his sustaining atmosphere. He was witheringly contemptuous of radio D.J.s who served up programmes aimed at popular taste. He would send his



favourite renderings to all those he hoped to educate and with whom he tried to share his transports.

Rilke, Sigrid Unset, and Karen Blixen were Ciarán's favourite authors. He named his dog after the last mentioned and he wanted some of his ashes to be scattered at Rungstedlund, Isak Dinesen's home in Denmark. Thomas MacDonagh and John McGahern were top of his list of Irish writers. He sent McGahern a series of tiny bowls carved from the various trees mentioned in *That They May Face the Rising Sun*.

In the year 2016, Kim Haughton produced a book called *Portrait of a Century* in which one person was photographed to represent each year of the hundred since 1916. Ciarán, one of Ireland's foremost wood turners, was the person chosen to represent the year of his birth, 1942. This placed him beside president Michael D. Higgins born the year before, and Mary Robinson born two years after. The photographer told him that he looked like Jeremy Irons. Ever fastidious and demanding, Ciarán told her his preferred prototype was Robert Redford.

Ciarán was a craftsman recognized for his talent the world over.

A member of The Crafts Council of Ireland, both as working artist and instructor, his bowls were often displayed at the RDS and at many international exhibitions. He was recipient of umpteen awards and his work is to be found in many prestigious collections worldwide.

The event he most cherished was organised by Danae Kindness in *DesignYard*, where well-known personalities chose craftspeople to accompany their own artwork. President Michael D Higgins chose Ciarán, whose required statement for the occasion spoke of Michael D's integrity, and the convergence of his politics, his ideals, and his poetry.

Ciarán hoped his own work as a wood turner shared a similar integrity – 'that simple flowing unbroken line.' *"I'm not particularly interested in wood for its own sake, he would say. "I'm interested in the rightness of the line. There's a word for it in French, justesse – that's what I'd be looking for. It's a preoccupation with 'rightness!'"* He spoke both Irish and French fluently.

Continued on page 15 >>

## Abbey Updates

### SCHOOL CHOIR RETURNS TO ABBEY CHURCH CAROL SERVICE AND CHORAL ACCOMPANIMENT AT LITURGY

After a long pause, due to Covid, the boys finally entered the sanctuary of Glenstal Abbey Church to sing. The occasion was the traditional Advent Carol Service at Glenstal. For many of them this was the first singing performance of their lives. They were a bit stressed, and yet excited, however, the result was exceptional. They won the hearts of the congrega-

tion, composed mostly of their families who longed to listen to their boys. They spent many hours in rehearsal preparing for this moment. The experience made our students happy to work hard and lifted the spirits of those who frequently listen to them. Music plays an integral part of life in Glenstal, whether it be in the daily singing of the Divine Office by the monks, the contributions of the school choir to Sunday Mass or the occasional Battle of the Bands. It's a reminder that the 'one who sings prays twice' and 'that in all things God may be glorified'.



DENIS HOOPER OSB

## OAK JUBILEE OF ORDINATION FR. PLACID CELEBRATES 80TH ANNIVERSARY

On 20th December, during our Community Mass, we marked the 80th anniversary of Fr Placid's ordination as a priest, his Oak Jubilee. This is not a familiar celebration, as most of us never get to this point in life. It is a tremendous testimony to fidelity, all too seldom seen today in any



walk of life, that someone faithfully carries out their work for eighty years. We celebrate with him these eighty years of priesthood and give thanks to God for all his blessings.  
*Ad multos annos!*

## GLENSTAL ABBEY OBLATES NEWS UPDATE ASPECTS OF PRAYER

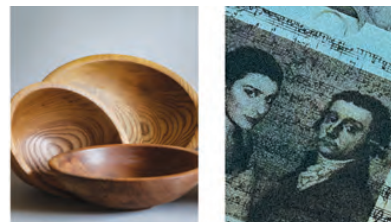
In February 2022, a series of talks for oblates and associates

in the Abbey began with a presentation on *Four Aspects of Prayer*. Given the continuing difficulties in organising large in-person meetings, all talks are recorded on the church Webcam. The Webcam can be accessed by going to the Glenstal Abbey Monastery (*not* School) website. Click on 'Prayer' and you will find Church Webcam. Alternatively, please go to [churchservices.tv](http://churchservices.tv) and scroll down to Glenstal Abbey. The dates of the next talks are: 12th March and 26th March.

## SCRAP LEAD FROM ABBEY ROOF GENERATES FUNDS FOR HOUSING CHARITIES

During the redevelopment of the castle roof the scrap lead was sold allowing us to give €4,000 outside our usual budget in alms. As the money came from our home we thought it appropriate to give this money to two charities that deliver housing support to those without a home and to those who find home an unsafe place to be at this time.

For additional updates and for more information about life at Glenstal, visit the Abbey website: [glenstal.com/monastery/news](http://glenstal.com/monastery/news)



## Brother Ciarán Monk of Glenstal 1961-2022

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Two hundred acres of woodlands at Glenstal, where the Barringtons left behind one of the best planted estates in Ireland in the 19th century, provided Ciarán with a perfect backdrop for his craft. Monkey Puzzles, Californian Redwoods and Eucalyptus were some of the exotic offerings to hand as storms felled specimens over the years. His bowls were offered as gifts, representative of Irish craftsmanship, to celebrities from Yasser Arafat to Pope Saint John Paul II.

Wood turners sometimes describe their craft as a dialogue with the wood: like a potter shaping a lump of clay on a wheel, a wood turner shapes a piece of wood on a lathe, the wood spinning fast and the turner removing shavings with razor-sharp gouges and chisels. "Wood turners work with the wood, negotiating a compromise between imposing

*themselves on the material and allowing it to retain its own voice. Legato singing in the Western Art Tradition mirrors the flowing line of a wooden bowl; as in a Schubert song there is a sustained, unbroken line from rim to base."*

Glenstal has lost in Ciarán a rare countervailing presence; a laser beam of candour, an element of outrageous non-conformity, a counter-balancing measure of intractable wackiness; all of these helped to prevent the lumpen dough of our community from congealing over the years. Without him the brotherhood might easily have settled for a sedate profile of conformity; the tedium of propriety. Ciarán was the last remaining gadfly who consistently gave the prim and the proper their comeuppance. Like the fool in King Lear, he reminded even the most immune and imperturbable: *Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise.* ■





**WATCH TOWER** New lead roof and lead DPC installed under coping stones.

**MASONRY** on both the watch tower and the library tower has been 'doff' cleaned.

**NEW STONework** replaced those damaged areas of the walls that were beyond repair.

'**PIERRE**' (French for 'stone') has been cleaned and returned to his lookout post.

*Castle Renovation:*  
**COMPLETING**  
— *the* —  
**FIRST PHASE**

**SENAN FURLONG OSB**  
PHOTOS: DENIS HOOPER OSB





**The first phase of the castle renovation** is now drawing to a close. Its scope encompassed the 'priority one' urgent works identified in the condition survey carried out in 2018 by the architectural conservation firm Consarc. This identified the library tower, the watchtower and the entrance archway with its towers as being in need of immediate attention. In all these areas there was significant water ingress caused by leaking roofs and damp penetration of the stone work.

- 1 NEW LEAD ROOF** with secure access point.
- 2 TOWER WALLS** 'doff' cleaned.
- 3 LEAD DPC** placed under coping stones. Spikes installed to secure coping stones in place.
- 4 NEW ROOF SLATING** with reclaimed Bangor Blue slates.
- 5 NEW LEAD PERIMETER GUTTER** to remove rainwater more efficiently.
- 6 NEW CAST IRON DOWNPIPE** added to improve drainage.



## ROOFS

As part of the process, five roofs were fully replaced and one was upgraded. Where possible, original timbers were retained and treated. In all cases new gutters were installed to improve drainage.

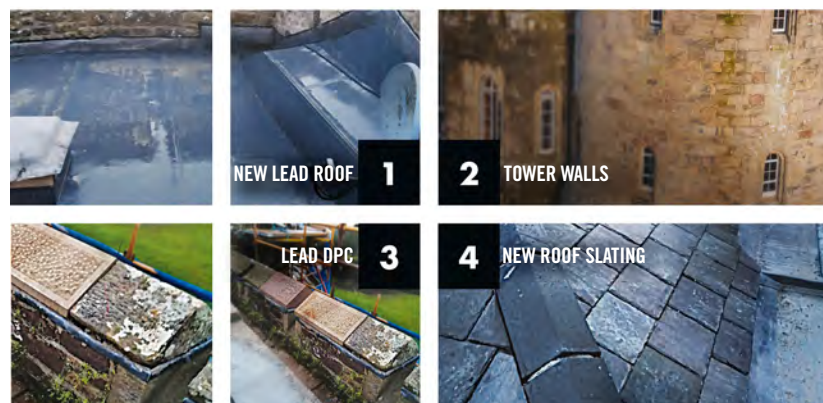
The conical slate roof of the library tower was re-slatted with 'reclaimed' Bangor blue slates. Reclaimed roof slates are usually salvaged from another building and not only add character to historic buildings but also have a very long lifespan. This roof was also insulated and ventilation installed. In addition, the perimeter lead gutter was replaced and appropriate falls incorporated to drain off rain-water quickly and effectively.

The roof of the watchtower was replaced with a new lead roof and a new access to the rooftop provided. The flat roof adjacent to the library was also re-roofed with lead. A new pyramidal shaped roof was installed above the so-called 'arch dorm'. It too was slatted with reclaimed slate and a lead perimeter gutter installed.

The roof of the tower on the left of the arch received a new slated roof and lead gutters. The matching tower roof on the right had been replaced some years ago and required less attention.

## STONework

To address the pervasive problem of damp penetration of the stonework the coping stones of the parapets were lifted off (using a crane) and a lead damp proof course (DPC) was laid down. The coping stones were then re-fixed into position on a bed of lime mortar secured with stainless steel dowels. The parapet walls were cleared of vegetation and 'doff cleaned' (a gentle form of steam cleaning). The joints between the stones were repointed with lime based mortar. A number of stones and coping stones had either to be replaced entirely or received indented repairs from the on-site masons. The end result of this work is very striking and quite apart from the aesthetics, the repairs have already had a positive impact on the interior fabric and atmosphere of the castle.



We hope to complete this initial phase of the restoration by the end of March. In time we hope to complete the full project and thus preserve this architecturally significant monument for generations to come.

This phase of the restoration has been made possible by the kindness of a donor for whose generosity we are most grateful. Indeed we are very grateful to all our donors for their ongoing support and encouragement of our work and ministry. We remember them in our prayers and the Conventual Mass each Sunday is offered for their intentions. ■





# Preglacial Puzzle

Pride of place in the woods that surround Glenstal Abbey goes to the Monkey Puzzle trees planted by the Barringtons in 1860s.

Monkey Puzzles (Chilean Pine; *Araucaria araucana*) are best approached with caution. They are so terrifyingly green that they are almost black and menacing against the sky, with foliage sharp like plectra to play the gut strings of any who come close. Purely for defence they say, against *Diplodocus* or *Argentosaurus* or any higher mega herbivores that would eat the head off them. The tree is particularly terrified of the claw-sharpening carnivores who would ring bark it in seconds were it not for its thick bark made from a matrix of fibre

into which latex is pumped at high pressure. Attack the tree today with a powerful chainsaw: and after an inch the bark grabs and stops it in seconds. Take the saw out (with effort) and there is no cut: it has already healed.

Normal evergreen trees keep their foliage for a year and a day or for a bit longer. Many pines keep their foliage for seven years, back along the branches. The paranoid Monkey Puzzle keeps its hand piercing foliage for fifty years, making them a puzzle for a monkey to climb, causing

**ANTHONY KEANE OSB**

PHOTOS: OSCAR McDERMOTT OSB

despair, apparently to simian franco-phones who fatalistically call the tree *le desespoir des singes*.

The origins of the tree, like that of many conifers, seem close to the logic and structure of creation. Alternatively, they may owe something to crystalline shapes of basic minerals, enlivened with a little twist of spiral form. Their lighter branches are like heavy cables or stout snakes with savagely spiralling imbricated scales faithfully following *Fermian formulae*. Given space and freedom, they generate beautiful *Gaudiesque* catenual curves. Their primary branches persist undivided, growing longer and stronger and eventually forming the great roof beams of an enormous canopy, pendant along its rim.

We may accuse the tree of being paranoid, but it has had a lot to put up with. Films like *Jurassic Park* have, perhaps, not been very helpful. We too remember the terror of the dinosaurs: they emerge in dreams and in children's playgrounds. Our noble ancestor, the tree climbing mouse *Eomaia scansorial*, often had

reason to be grateful for the protection of this tree.

The tree is dioecious. The fruit comes as a giant globular grenade which disintegrates into delicious nuts. It lived in these parts in preglacial times. Its return from Chile happened thus: Archibald Menzies, invited to a feast by the Spanish in Valparaiso, noticed a centrepiece filled with nuts and reached out for a hand very full which he put not on his plate, but into his pocket. Returned to England he threw these dragons teeth out into the garden. We have been dealing with or enjoying their progeny ever since.

With its shade tolerance, sought after seed and its ability to grow from surface roots or from cut stumps, the tree has become naturalised in Britain and Ireland. In fact there are now more specimens in these parts than in its native Chile. Its timber is strong and resilient. The dark amber of the knots of the primary branches can show up beautifully, especially when the central vertical axis of a turned bowl is one with the central axis of the tree. ■

## Carol Service Photo Essay

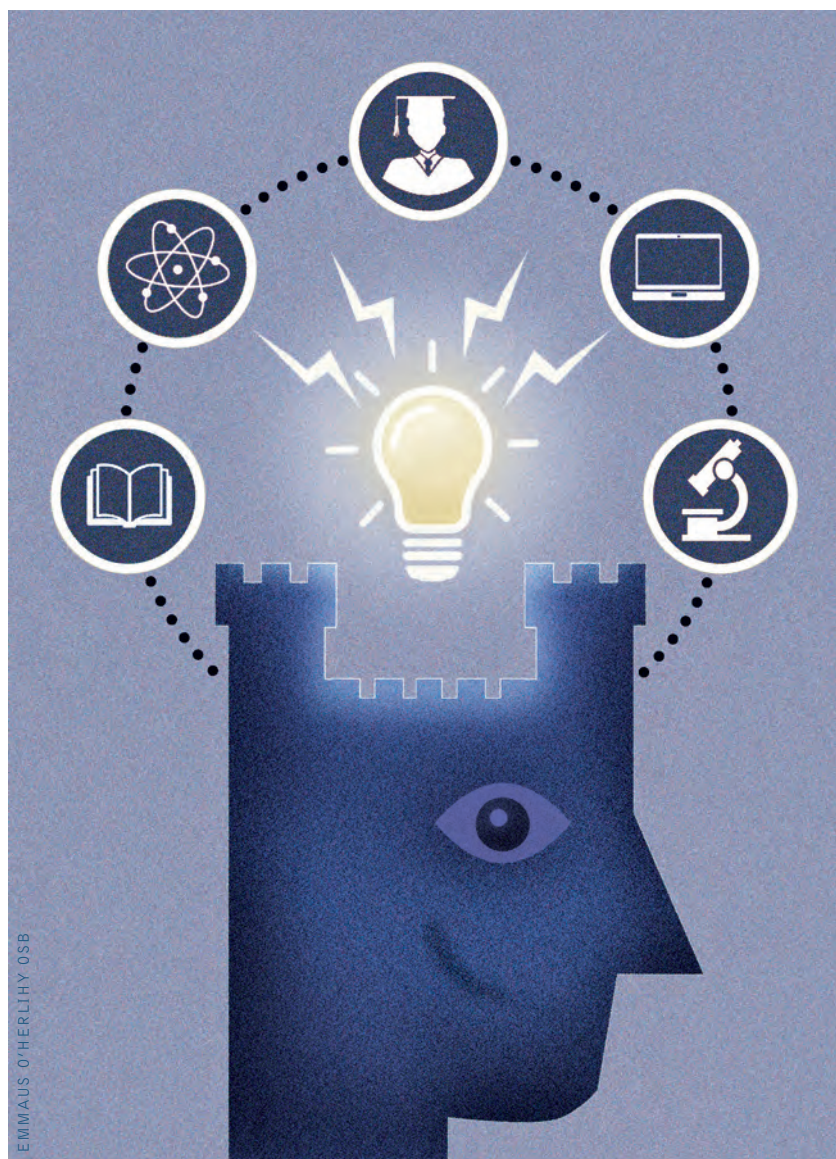


### PHOTOS BY DENIS HOOPER OSB

Glenstal Abbey School Choir numbered more than fifty members at the Advent Carol Service; boys of different nationalities, boarders and day boarders, from first to sixth year. They were led by Br Jarek, their Choirmaster and Luke Nicholas, Captain of the Choir. Additionally, some students accompanied the choir playing saxophone, trumpet, clarinet, triangle and violin. Nóirín Ní Riain made a guest appearance at the Service.







EMMAUS O'HERLIHY OSB

## GLENSTAL TRAILBLAZERS SERIES

**JAMIE REILLY**

(Glenstal Abbey School 2001-2007)



# Lighting the Way Ahead

Jamie Reilly has spent seven years doing doctoral research on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at the Regenerative Medicine Institute at NUI Galway (2014-2021) and will graduate in April. He has explored the genetics and neural pathways of ASD and the strong associations with other disorders such as anxiety, depression, ADHD and Schizophrenia. One area of particular interest was the use of biobanks. These are repositories of biological samples (like skin or hair) from people with ASD, which are used to develop Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (iPSC). These cells can develop into any kind

of cell in the body. This allows researchers to produce specific kinds of tissue to explore how they function in conditions such as ASD and Long QT syndrome (a condition that involves irregular rhythm of the heart). The development of iPSC technology is particularly welcome, as it avoids the ethical questions associated with the use of foetal stem cells.

While in Glenstal Jamie particularly appreciated its homely atmosphere. Although primarily interested in the sciences, he developed, with the help and friendship of Ken O'Toole (English), the late Fr Dominic



Johnson (Latin), and others, a literary flair, which he now employs in his academic writing. This includes several publications on autism in peer-reviewed journals. After school he completed a science degree with specialisation in genetics at Trinity (2007-2011) followed by a Masters in Biotechnology at Queen's University Belfast (2011-2012).

present and future generations of people with ASD and their families. Jamie also has an interest in renewable energy technology and was involved in a short term project focusing on developing the use of Graphene, a one-atom-thick flat sheet of carbon molecules for electric batteries. Graphene is a great electric conductor and very strong and could

**For those who struggle with anxiety, one of the important things to remember is to reach out to those you can trust to help and give support, such as family members, teachers or housemasters.**

Jamie has been active in advocacy for people with ASD. He has spoken at conferences on Autism and, in 2012, he, his mother Dorothy, and sister Megan ran a workshop for over 100 parents of children with ASD. This featured speakers such as Adam Harris and Nicholas Ryan Purcell, and academics such as Dr Louise Gallagher (TCD), Dr Geraldine Leader (NUIG) and Dr Karola Dillenburger of QUB. While others have a more public role in promoting Autism awareness, Jamie's careful scientific research holds promise for

potentially enhance the productivity of batteries.

Jamie feels that for those who struggle with anxiety, one of the important things to remember is to reach out to those you can trust to help and give support, such as family members, teachers or housemasters. He particularly recommends this to anyone struggling with mental health, especially in these current times. We wish Jamie well in his future biomedical and ecological research projects. ■



## First Impressions

**MARIUS CARNEY**

**Glenstal Abbey School Headmaster**

One might suppose that starting as Head of a school in January would allow for a quiet and gentle beginning. After all the institution's sails are set, everything is settled, and the new Head may anticipate the luxury of quiet meetings with the various members of staff, parents and students, taking stock and planning for the new academic year

in September. The lived experience of arriving at Glenstal in January 2022 could not have been more different! 'Omicron', the latest variant of the pandemic, quickly engulfed our community, both school and monastery. My initial weeks have largely been spent arranging antigen testing, self-isolations and on-line lessons.

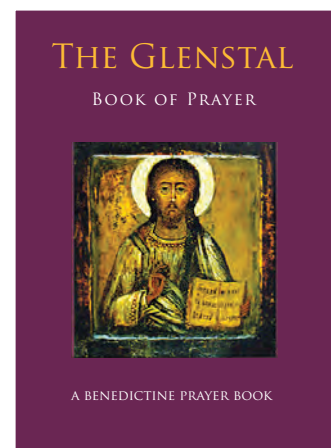
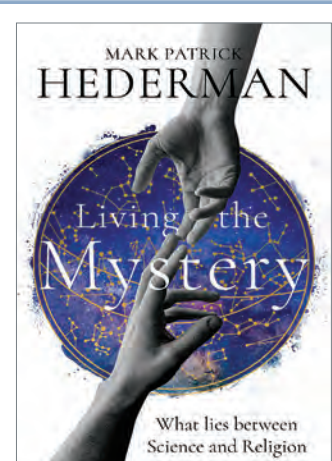
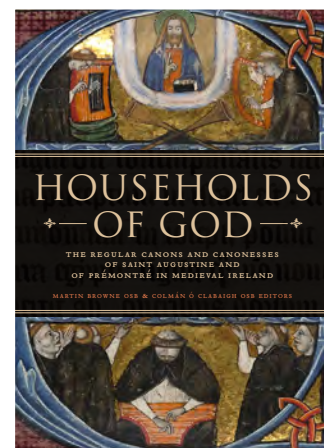
A crisis can of course bring out the best in us. This one has certainly served to highlight the characteristic strengths of Glenstal Abbey School. I was very struck by the professionalism and solidarity shown by our House parents, nurses and house keepers; the good grace of our students and their families when entering periods of self-isolation at home and the commitment of our teachers to providing work and on-line lessons — including some who had tested positive themselves. All of this showed that the gospel spirit of charity and care for one another is alive and well in our school.

The theme of Catholic Schools Week in January this year was taken from John 10:10: 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full'. Since we all returned to school, I have been increasingly aware of a return to that abundance in all our activities — spiritual, physical, social and intellectual.

The profound abundance of talent — both academic and in a tremendous

variety of sports and music, is humbling. School life is becoming busier by the week as tournaments, fixtures, rehearsals and Masses jostle for position in the already crowded day. Now that I am getting to know them, I find the Glenstal students of 2022 thoughtful and responsible young men, highly articulate — interested in current affairs and pleased to debate them, respectful of the needs of one another and the common good. Many enjoy daily sessions in the gym, and as most afternoons involve sports training or competition or music rehearsal, they have enormous appetites!

Asking our students what they love about Glenstal, the beauty of the landscape and the tremendous friendships are two consistent themes. I have been stunned by the profound darkness that settles over us here each night and have been delighting in contemplating the heavens. I already know that I too shall be sustained here in my work by the profound beauty of Glenstal, and the many friendships I have already begun to forge. ■





# LENT AT THE ABBEY 2022

## A NEW SEASON OF HOPE

———— SUNDAYS OF LENT AT 4:30PM. ————

March 3 **Prayer in Testing Times (Luke 4:1-11)** Luke Macnamara OSB

March 13 **Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-43)** Abbot Brendan Coffey OSB

March 20 **The Poetry of Lent** Mark Patrick Hederman OSB

March 27 **The Lost Sons (Luke 15)** Pádraig McIntyre OSB

April 3 **Salvation's Unusual Contours: Jesus and the Criminals** Anne Lanigan

April 10 **A Subversive Triumph** Henry O'Shea OSB



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [GLENSTAL.COM/ABBHEY/EVENTS/](https://www.glenstal.com/abbey/events/)

OR CONTACT: [EVENTS@GLENSTAL.COM](mailto:EVENTS@GLENSTAL.COM) OR TELEPHONE 061 621 005