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Catalogue of the Vernacular Society of Great Britain Papers

Date range of material: 1942-1980

Durham University Library
July 2022

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Preface

Creation of catalogue

Jonathan Bush

Contact details

Palace Green Library

Palace Green

Durham

DH1 3RN

England

Telephone: 0191 334 2972

Email: PG.Library@durham.ac.uk

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Introduction

Collection title: Vernacular Society of Great Britain Papers

Reference code: GB-0033-CSU-D5

Dates of creation: 1942-1980

Extent: 5 boxes

Repository: Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections

Language of material: Latin and English

Contents

The papers of the Vernacular Society of Great Britain and its predecessor, the English Liturgy Society, including secretarial papers covering a range of different subjects pertaining to the management of the organisation, including newspaper cuttings, newsletters, correspondence with the Catholic Hierarchy, papers relating to the Second Vatican Council, papers of the Latin Mass Society, and printed periodicals/pamphlets.

About the creator

The English Liturgy Society was founded in 1943 to promote the use of the vernacular in the liturgy of the Mass. It began its work with a translation of the Rites of Baptism and Churching (excluding the form of the Sacrament) with a view also to compiling an English version of Vespers and Compline. The relationship between the Society and the Catholic Hierarchy was a fractious one throughout the 1940s and, following the refusal of the bishops to endorse the Society in 1952, it changed its name to the Vernacular Society of Great Britain. This relationship did not improve, reaching something of a nadir in 1959 when the Society became embroiled in controversy with the Westminster Diocesan Council of Censorship, who forbade the publishing of an article in the Society's new journal, *Language and Worship*. However, following the decision of the Second Vatican Council in October 1962 actively to promote the use of a vernacular liturgy, the Vernacular Society acted in an advisory capacity to the Hierarchy for the English translation of the Mass. Its purpose achieved, the Society disbanded in 1967.

Accession Details

Donated by Keith MacMillan on behalf of the late Richard Cunliffe (1926-2012). Received 27 January 2015, Acc No Misc.2014/15:39.

Previous custodial history

Stored privately by Richard Cunliffe.

Conditions of access

Open for access.

Copyright and copying

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Form of citation

The form of citation should use the code GB-0033-CSU-D5, or the collection name Vernacular Society of Great Britain Papers, followed by the *reference number*

To order items in the searchroom, use the collection reference code(s), derived by removing the repository code (GB-0033-), followed by the reference number. Citing the section of the finding aid is useful.

D5/1/1-5 1942-1967

Newspaper cuttings, arranged chronologically, on the English Liturgy Society/Vernacular Society of Great Britain, as well as the use of the vernacular in the Mass generally, mostly from British Catholic newspapers including the *Catholic Times* and the *Tablet*

4 files & 1 volume

D5/2/1-11 1943-1980

Secretarial papers, mostly reports, minutes of meetings, members correspondence and lists, publicity material and correspondence on the administration of the English Liturgy Society/Vernacular Society of Great Britain:

11 files

D5/2/1 1943-1944

Papers, including Bernard Griffin (later archbishop of Westminster) to J.H.S. Wharton arguing against the use of the vernacular in Mass services on the basis of needing to learn a number of languages to celebrate the Mass abroad (14 January 1943); a number of letters from Bernard Goode, A. Hulme, Oswald Sumner and others to Wharton offering opinions on Wharton's article in the *Catholic Herald* calling for the use of the vernacular in the Mass (January/February 1943); Samuel Gosling to Wharton on the need for the Hierarchy to prepare a report on the subject (10 February 1943); Wharton to Fr Connick enclosing the draft of a letter from Gosling to the *Catholic Herald* on the liturgy in English (14 March 1943); and Wharton to Fr Vermilyea on a manifesto for the English Liturgy Society (14 April 1943)

1 file

D5/2/2 1945-1946

Papers, including minutes of the meeting of the English Liturgy Society (16 January 1945); a number of letters from Rev Thomas J. McMahon (National Secretary to the Catholic Near East Welfare Association), Polycarp Sherwood, Rev George B. Ford, and others, to Wharton commenting on the manifesto of the English Liturgy Society and the *English Liturgist* (January-May 1945); Gerald Ellard (St Mary's College, Kansas) to Rev H. Francis Davis (Oscott College) on support from the American Hierarchy to the English Liturgy Society (3 June 1945); and Maurice Quinlan to Gosling on the *Universe's* opposition to the vernacular (15 March 1946)

1 file

D5/2/3 1947-1949

Papers, including C. Holder to Gosling enclosing notes on the vernacular liturgy in France (30 March 1947); Christopher Clarke to Gosling on the need for the English Liturgy Society to amalgamate with other organisations in other countries (5 March 1948); [?Gosling] to Archbishop Bernard Griffin asking him to sponsor a petition for an extended use of the vernacular in the Liturgy (9 March 1948); and correspondence between William Godfrey (Apostolic Delegate) and Gosling on the Holy See's opposition to an editorial in the *English Liturgist* (28, 30 April, 13, 16, 17 May, 17, 21, 22, 25 October 1949)

1 file

D5/2/4 1950-1951

Papers, including Col John K. Ross-Duggan to the literary executor of S.J. Gosling concerning Gosling's death (16 November 1950); H. Francis Davis to Mr Johnston on the appointment of Dr Edward Neary as Acting Secretary following Gosling's death (9 March 1951); and H. Francis Davis to Dr [Edward Neary?], and Neary to Johnston, and other letters, on the rejection by the bishops of the use of the vernacular and its likely effect on the Society (26 April, 1 May 1951)

1 file

D5/2/5 1952-1954

Papers, including minutes of the London meeting of the English Liturgy Society (7 February 1952); correspondence between P. Whittington, E. Neary, Johnston, and others on drafting a constitution for the Society (March-May 1952); circular letter from Neary to members on the transfer of power to the London Area Section (24 June 1952); Neary to Whittington on Whittington's appointment as Acting Secretary (22 July 1952); [?Neary] to Bishop [?] asking him for his endorsement of the English Liturgy Society (9 October 1952); a confidential memorandum on the Hierarchy's wish not to endorse the Society (1 November 1952); and the first newsletter of the Vernacular Society of Great Britain (November 1953)

1 file

D5/2/6 1955-1959

Papers, including circular letter by C.R.A. Cunliffe (secretary) on the publication of a new journal (*Language and Worship* by the Society (30 June 1958)); [?] to Fr Howell on the appointment of the bishop of Aberdeen to chair a special commission on preparing a vernacular ritual for the Scottish dioceses (18 July 1959); and correspondence between P. Lowry, Cunliffe, and others, on the Westminster Diocesan Council of Censorship's decision to censor an article in *Language and Worship* (October 1959)

1 file

D5/2/7 1960-1961

Papers, including correspondence between Clifford Howell, C. Cunliffe, and others, on the Westminster Diocesan Council of Censorship's decision to censor an article in *Language and Worship* (January - April 1959); correspondence between Cunliffe, F. Hastings, A. Faulkner, and others, on the questionnaire commissioned by the Vernacular Society to the secular and regular clergy of Portsmouth Diocese seeking views on the use of the vernacular in the Mass (June 1960, July 1961); minutes of a meeting of the Vernacular Society (20 March 1961); correspondence between Ronald Pilkington, P.J. Cassidy, Howell, and others, on Pilkington's decision to resign his position as chairman of the Society owing to the decision of Cunliffe to publish a memorandum to the preparatory Liturgical Commission of the General Council (October-November 1961); and minutes of a Special Committee meeting (16 October, 16 November 1961)

1 file

D5/2/8 1962-1963

Papers, including correspondence between Cunliffe and various editors of Catholic newspapers, and others, on the publication of the Pope's *Veterum Sapientia* (March-June 1962); annual report of the Vernacular Society (October 1962); and correspondence between Cunliffe, the editors of the *Universe* and the *Tablet*, and others, on the decision of the Vatican Council to promote the vernacular in the Liturgy (October-November 1962)

1 file

D5/2/9 1964-1965

Papers, including correspondence between Cunliffe, Donald Attwater, L.C. Shepperd, and others, on assistance to be provided to the bishops on liturgical reform (February-March 1964); Bernard Dunne to Cunliffe on Cunliffe's appointment as chairman of the Vernacular Society (1 May 1964); the appointment of a sub-committee to investigate the production of a recording of an experimental Mass in English (23 May 1964); minutes of a meeting of the executive committee (23 May 1964); John Challenor to Cunliffe, circular letter from Cunliffe to members, with responses from members, on the future of the Vernacular Society (21 January - May 1965); and a petition from Gareth Edwards to the bishops calling on babies and small children to be forbidden from celebrating Mass (6 March 1965)

1 file

D5/2/10 1966-1980

Papers, including Cunliffe to the Very Rev Mgr John Humphreys on the consideration of texts to be used by the advisory committee on English in the Liturgy (27 June 1966); Cunliffe to the manager of the Midland Bank, London, on the termination of the Society's activities (22 September 1966); the death of Col John K. Ross-Duggan (1 August 1967); and Thomas T. McAvoy (University Archivist of the University of Notre Dame) to Cunliffe on the termination of the Society and the disposal of its records (28 August 1967)

1 file

D5/2/11 1951-1952

Correspondence file (arranged alphabetically) including letters from C. Cunliffe, S.J. Gosling, C. Holt, Clifford Howell, C.F. Hynes, P.E. Howell, and others.

For subjects see D5/2/4

1 file

D5/3 1952-1967

Printed newsletters of the English Liturgy Society/Vernacular Society of Great Britain

1 file

D5/4/1-2 1952-1962; 1963-1967

Papers relating to the attempts of the Vernacular Society to secure the support of the Catholic Hierarchy, mostly correspondence between the Society and the English bishops, as well as reports on various viewpoints

2 files

D5/5 1959-1961

Reports by Col John K. Ross-Duggan on participation in Mass services in Europe and North Africa

1 file

D5/6/1-5 1960-1961

Papers, including correspondence and data, relating to a questionnaire commissioned by the Vernacular Society to the secular and regular clergy of Portsmouth Diocese seeking views on the use of the vernacular in the Mass

5 files

D5/7/1-2 1961-1965

Papers relating to the Second Vatican Council:

2 files

D5/7/1 1961-1965

Memorandum of evidence submitted by the Vernacular Society to the Preparatory Commission for the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council

1 file

D5/7/2 1964-1965

Papers relating to the conciliar constitution of the liturgy discussed at the Second Vatican Council, mostly correspondence between the Society and Catholic newspapers, as well as draft copies of the liturgy

1 file

D5/8 1965

Papers of the Latin Mass Society, mostly newspaper cuttings from the *Catholic Herald* and *The Times* on the reaction to the introduction of the vernacular Mass

1 file

D5/9 1965

Voting slips of those members unable to attend the Annual General Meeting relating to their views on the future of the Society

1 file

D5/10 1944-1966

Printed religious periodicals and pamphlets

For more detailed catalogue entries, search for "British Vernacular Society Archive" in the Durham University Library catalogue

49 printed items