

# Celebrating 60 years!

## The Briery Retreat Centre



The Briery pre-1952



The Briery 2012





*The Briery is a place of spiritual renewal, where those who come can find God in an atmosphere of love, prayer, healing and peace - where all are valued, encouraged to discover their gifts and challenged to use them in the service of others - where the poor, the suffering and the lonely can experience the power of the cross and the hope of resurrection in Christ.*





**MEMORIES AND APPRECIATION**  
**OF**  
**THE BRIERY**  
**RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTRE**  
**ILKLEY**

**Friends and colleagues share their reflections**



## FOREWORD

What a lovely idea it is to have a Book of Memories and Appreciation on this occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of The Briery!

Stories are evocative and powerful, capturing the imagination and re-living experiences that we all share. Memories help us to live more richly within our history.

These 60 years are in the living memory of many Sisters and the lives of all of us have been enhanced by our times spent at The Briery, whether as staff, helpers, visitors, retreatants or participants in Congregational Assemblies.

It is heartening to read the words of appreciation and gratitude from people of various traditions who have also spent time in the Briery. Descriptions such as 'food for body and soul', 'wonderfully placid, sacred place', 'unbelievably tranquil oasis' and the beautiful description of the garden reflect the atmosphere those who come to The Briery can expect. Like the Apostles on the mountain at the Transfiguration, it is indeed 'wonderful to be here.'

The Sisters who have laboured and gone to God can rest in peace.....and the present Sisters and staff know that they provide the opportunity for so many to glimpse the Glory of God and to return home refreshed.

We thank them all for their faithfulness and vigilance, for their hard work and commitment to providing this sacred space. It is a labour of love, and it is certainly worth celebrating.

Congratulations and Ad Multos Annos.

And enjoy reading this little gem!

**Sister Máire O'Sullivan C.P.**  
**Feast of the Transfiguration,**  
**6 August 2012.**



## MEMORIES AND WORDS OF APPRECIATION

**Sr. Pat Carney C.P., The Briery Retreat Centre**

### **Reminiscences**

In 1952 I was in my final year at Mount St. Joseph Grammar School, Bolton, run by the Sisters of the Cross and Passion – and they were celebrating their centenary! So we put on a Shakespeare play – *The Tempest*; we had a glorious Mass in St. Peter and Paul's Church; we lined the paths at the front of the Convent as we waved good-bye to the first four Sisters setting out for Botswana - and we heard that the Sisters were opening a retreat House in Yorkshire: The Briery! That was the first time I had heard of it and it was just that – a name!

Two years later I visited it for the first time as we novices piled into a coach for a day's holiday in Ilkley. We arrived at Elmleigh and from there went up to The Briery where we were spoiled and made much of by Mother Madeleine, Sisters Macartan and Kilian, and Alice until it was time to board the coach once again and return to the reality of Bolton and the novitiate! A couple of years later I was to return to Ilkley as a young professed, again on holiday but this time for three weeks, and the week-ends always saw us up at The Briery peeling vegetables, setting tables and washing up under the eagle eyes of Alice and Sr. Macartan as they prepared meals for the large parish groups on retreat. Those were the days of the 'garage-chapel', heavy with the scent of roses from the garden and incense rising to heaven!

As a newly qualified teacher living in Bradford, The Briery was where I came for my annual retreat and I have hazy recollections of lots of beds in big rooms with screens that fell over at inappropriate moments – and all done (supposedly!) in silence! Then came Argentina and my visits to The Briery were restricted to rare occasions when I visited Sisters I had lived with either here or in Argentina, and Macartan, with true Passionist generosity, never let me leave empty handed! "No, pet," she would say, "we have to look after our missionaries!" What greater missionaries were there than herself and Kilian?

When my time in Argentina came to an end on returning to the Province, Sr. Anne Cunningham wrote to ask me if I would consider coming to The Briery to do retreat work and so began a much closer connection as, in 1996, The Briery became my home! I have many happy memories of these years but perhaps the one to choose is that of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 when The Briery welcomed my large circle of friends and family – both natural and religious – to celebrate my Golden Jubilee. And what an uplifting, joyous, prayerful celebration it



was, epitomising the warm, welcoming open-handed generosity, that has been so characteristic of The Briery over the years.

In 1952 The Briery was just a name to me; in 2012 it is so very much more! It is my place of work, where I am greatly privileged to accompany people on their journey with the Lord and witness His work in their lives. But it is also my home, which I love, where I share my journey with my community and receive their support. It is part of who I am and it has played a great part in shaping me, especially in recent years. For all of this I am immensely grateful to those Sisters who in 1952 had the inspiration to purchase a house in Ilkley for a retreat centre as part of the centenary celebrations! What a great loss it would have been if someone hadn't had that bright idea!

### **Sr. Patricia Redgrave C.P., Liverpool**

#### **A first visit...**

It was during the 1953 summer holidays that a school-friend and I first visited The Briery. For us it was a journey into the unknown. We were feeling quite apprehensive when we finally arrived and rang the bell on the front door of the "big house". Our apprehension was short lived when suddenly the front door was flung open by Sister Macartan, who gave us a hearty welcome in her own inimitable way. She introduced us to Mother Madeleine (who reminded us of Queen Victoria!). She sat in the bay of the sitting room accompanied by Monty, her pekingese dog, who lay curled up at her feet and made sure we were aware of his presence.

We then met Sister Dionysius and Alice. Sister Dionysius was a larger than life character and a marvellous cook. Alice was a wonderful lady, a true Associate of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion, who resided at The Briery after she left our Hostel in Pilkington Street, Bolton. She worked cheerfully and unselfishly for many years until retiring in the early 1990s. She was then able to enjoy a happy retirement in sheltered accommodation for a few years. We owe a deep gratitude to Alice for her presence among us.

Since the purpose of our visit was to help with household chores, various tasks were allotted to us by Sister Macartan. I distinctly remember erecting trestle tables in the front hall and, quite honestly I have never forgotten how to deal with them! We set and cleared tables, washed the crockery and, by the end of the day, were well and truly exhausted. Eventually we retired to the dormitory, not only to sleep, but to laugh and chat well into the night. Overall, ours were happy visits, which gave us an insight into the lives of the



Sisters of the Cross and Passion other than what we experienced at Mount St. Joseph School.

### **...and then, part of the family...**

In the late 1960s I was living at Elmleigh. By this time the new extension to The Briery had been completed and growing numbers were coming to the Retreat House. Its own unique ethos of welcome, compassion, prayer and fun was well established. Sister Macartan invited me once again to help out at weekends. This time I was assigned to the washing-up rota, and Sister Macartan kept a vigilant eye on us to ensure that the correct procedure was followed.

On reflection, I now realize that most of the food used for meals was organic, and continued to be so until the early 1980s. The Briery field produced potatoes, vegetables, lettuce, rhubarb, blackcurrants, gooseberries, raspberries and strawberries. The site where the garage now stands was then a greenhouse, which was also productive. So fruit picking was a major task for the helpers. Sister Kilian certainly fed the retreatants well, mostly with home produce, which she carefully scrutinized before laying it on the table.

I now look back with affection and gratefulness for the part The Briery has played in my life. May many more continue to come and experience the warmth and love that has made it a special home for searching hearts. My heartfelt prayer for The Briery is:

*God of wisdom and promise give us courage to travel on.*

### **Sr. Moya O'Cleary C.P., Elmleigh**

#### **Changing times**

My first memory of The Briery goes back to 1956 when I was a very young Sister, just 6 months professed and just 2 weeks in England. I was sent for a week's holiday to Elmleigh, which was then a holiday house, as companion to an older Sister. Naturally, we went up to visit The Briery and, to my delight, I met Mother Madeleine, a fellow countrywoman from Ballycastle. For someone feeling a little homesick she was just the tonic I needed! We did talk about Ballycastle, but she went on to talk about her life and what they were trying to do in The Briery, and I was very impressed. At that time the new building was not in existence and the chapel was just a prefab building.

Of course, I also met Mac and Kilian, the two pillars of The Briery right up to the nineties. They were so warm and welcoming. It was the beginning of a relationship which lasted for years and, like so many other young Sisters,



there were times when I too was initiated into endless washing up and the correct way to set tables! I can laugh now about it all, but I can also pay tribute to the hard work of those two Sisters. They were so selfless in the innumerable hours they gave to working in The Briery, especially when there were not the mod cons we have today - and yet they were always so cheerful.

My next memory of The Briery was many years later when retreat work was changing as a result of Vatican 2. By this time Sisters Consolata and Cyprian had joined the Community and they had introduced some changes like opportunity for spiritual direction and directed retreats. They had also opened the doors to ecumenical groups. It was time to bring in new blood and to allow those who had borne the heat of the day to stop and have some time for themselves. I happened to be on the Provincial Council at that time, which is why I can remember that particular phase so clearly. Our discernment, as a Council, led us to see that we needed a younger team of Sisters who would have the energy and vision to make changes in The Briery. Our decision to introduce such a change was ratified by a very beautiful Liturgy of Celebration, which paid tribute to the past but also welcomed the future.

That future is now present; it's no longer a memory. As I live in Ilkley, I see at first hand how The Briery Team has actually developed its retreat ministry without jeopardising the spirit they inherited. The values of welcome, hospitality and caring are still there, but I am also aware of a prayerful Community in the background, generous in their everyday commitment to their retreat ministry but also taking time for ongoing reflection and evaluation so that it will always be relevant to today's church and today's world.

So - Congratulations, Anne, Marie and Pat and Ad multos annos!

**Sr. Antonia I.B.V.M., Loreto Community, Llandudno**

### **No drinks for Sisters**

One day, at dinner, Sister Macartan gave us all a glass of sherry - and we drank it with great pleasure. Unfortunately, someone wanted the Provincial to know how well Sister Macartan had looked after us, so told her about the sherry! At supper, Sister Mac came in and told us that she had been reprimanded by the Provincial, who had told her not to give any more glasses of sherry to the Sisters. Sister Mac's reply was, "No more *glasses* of sherry, but instead I'll see it goes into the trifles!" She was always so good to us.



**Sr. Catherine Laboure C.P.**

### **Ironing and motor mechanics**

In around 1965 I went to Ilkley Convent for a holiday from Mount St. Joseph, Bolton. I was more or less on my own. Sister Macartan invited me up to help in The Briery. Rex, Mac's dog, did not look on this too kindly. However, he did get used to me, and we became fairly good friends! Just once or twice I took him for a walk, as Mac was busy. So that was something in my favour and, when I appeared in the mornings and afternoons, he did not bark at me. He could be very cross, especially if Mac was visible!

I used to spend my time ironing sheets and more sheets, not to mention pillowslips. All had to be done in the manner that Mac liked, regardless of the way we folded sheets etc. in the Mount. This I got used to very quickly, and I had a great time. Sister Kilian R.I.P. was very good to me and used to make me lovely black coffee.

Then the time came for me to be elevated to looking after the Choir and the Choir Linens. I really felt that I was very special to have this "office" to do. I enjoyed it very much, and Mac and I got on really well, as long as everything was ironed perfectly. I owe a lot to Mac, as I felt I really did the job very well. I found her several times looking and checking if all was well. Then she would say, "Katie, you can come here anytime and iron and clean."

Mac and I always got on very well, and it was wonderful to care for her in her declining years. When she was no longer able to speak, I used to chat to her and remind her of the times in The Briery. I always got a response from her, and sometimes she would say, "Ay," and smile.

We had much fun, as Mac in her hey day was always running around and making sure everyone was working hard. Bless her, she had a heart of gold, and was always kind and thankful for any little job that was done.

One thing she did, when I was living in Elmleigh in the 70's, was that she drove the car over the curb at the chapel in Elmleigh, as she was turning to go towards the chapel door. She came running to me and said, "Katie come quick and help me!" When I saw what had happened, she said, "help me lift this wheel out!" Needless to say, I was helpless laughing at her - until I realised she was not joking! I said, "Mac - I cannot lift that! The story ended with the man from the garage coming to her rescue.



I worked hard at The Briery, and laughed a lot too. Many a time Sister Kilian would say, "never mind, Katie, you can only do one job at a time..." I think to enjoy all of the goings on at The Briery, one needed to know Mac. *May she rest in peace.*

**Sr. Dominic Savio C.P.**

**Washing up, walks and worship**

It was in 1953, I think, that I attended a Young Catholic Students' Training Week in The Briery. I remember that we helped Sister Macartan with the washing up after meals; went up into the woods and onto the moors; and that we had a 'midnight' feast, early, because at that time one had to fast from midnight to receive Holy Communion in the morning - and Mass was a *sine qua non*.

My strongest memory, however, is of the large Crucifix, which was, and still is, on the wall upstairs on the landing. Beside it was a box holding some prayer cards, which were free and so, with true teenage devotion, we all made sure we took one. This was the prayer:

**O my Crucified Jesus, I kiss the Wounds of Your Sacred Head with sorrow deep and true; may every thought of my mind this day be an act of love for You.**

**O my Crucified Jesus, I kiss the Wound of Your Sacred Shoulder with sorrow deep and true; may every cross I bear this day be an act of love for You.**

**O my Crucified Jesus, I kiss the Wounds of Your Sacred Hands with sorrow deep and true; may every touch of my hands this day be an act of love for You.**

**O my Crucified Jesus, I kiss the Wounds of Your Sacred Feet with sorrow deep and true; may every step I take this day be an act of love for You.**

**O my Crucified Jesus, I kiss the Wound of Your Sacred Side with sorrow deep and true; may every beat of my heart this day be an act of love for You. AMEN.**





## **Sr. Anne Hammersley C.P., The Briery**

### **A hope fulfilled**

My first visit to The Briery was on 31st August 1987, when I came, as a Novice, to make my first retreat, a three-day directed retreat with Sister Consolata. I had been to Ilkley before, and visited Bolton Abbey on many occasions - but I had never even heard of The Briery!

It was mid-week so I was the only retreatant. I can still remember Sister Consolata's expert accompaniment and the first text of scripture she gave me, which has remained a favourite; Jeremiah 31: 3:

*I have loved you with an everlasting love and I am constant in my affection for you.*

Sister Macartan was there, calling me "Pet", Sister Gregory was quietly in the background, and Sister Kilian made sure I was well fed. In fact, I can still remember how tasty those lamb chops were. I got two chops because I was a growing girl, and a good appetite was a sign of a good vocation. Sister Cyprian was a member of the community too, and one sunny afternoon she took me for a lovely walk on the moor. On our return, I can still see us walking up the yard and her asking me what I would like to do when Professed. I remember saying I would like to do retreat work - never imagining that I ever would, nor at The Briery! Cyprian was so positive and encouraging, saying something like, "Wouldn't that be wonderful!"

I've been in The Briery now since 1996, although I was in Romania from 1999 to 2001. I feel very privileged to live and work in such a beautiful environment, in a ministry that I love, and where I am blessed with such a supportive community and a loyal and hardworking staff.

## **Sr. Cecilia Wilkinson C.P. Minsteracres Retreat House**

### **Welcome to work**

I came to The Briery in January 2000, and received a warm welcome from Sisters Marie de Carmel and Patricia. They went out of their way to make sure that I was comfortable and feeling 'at home'. I spent a year there working part-time, as the rest of my time was with the Sisters in Elmleigh. I enjoyed my time in The Briery, and the experience gave me great insight into what retreat work was all about. What a beautiful place to live and work in!

Also, I have fond memories of visiting The Briery when I was a young Sister. Quite a few of us came to help with the 'wash-up' when we were on holiday in Elmleigh. I met Sister Madeleine, who was one of the first Sisters to come



to The Briery. She was from my native town of Ballycastle. I thank God for the many blessings He has showered upon The Briery over the past 60 years and pray that it will continue to be a haven of peace and rest for all.

**Sr. Mary Curtin C.P.**

**Coming home**

I always look forward to coming 'home' to The Briery as an oasis of peace and prayers. During the retreats the whole setting lends itself to the glories of creation. May The Briery continue for many years to come, in spreading the love and peace of God.

This is my appreciation and thanks for all the benefits and graces received here.

**Sr. Monica Byrne C.P.**

**A day to remember**

The date was Saturday 21 September 2002. The occasion was the Reunion of Former Sisters and the venue was The Briery – where else?

The sun was splitting the stones when Sister Brigid Mary, Pat Marshall and I arrived at The Briery on that Saturday morning. Pat lived in Bolton and was pleased to accept our invitation to travel by car with us.

We were delighted to meet up with Angela Rainey, Clare Grogan, Frances Leigh, Joanna Jackson, Margaret Aspull, Mary McCormick, Pat Knowles and others whose names I have forgotten. To Pat Marshall's great delight she spotted none other than Sister Patricia Denny, whom she hadn't seen since 1948! They had been in the Novitiate together, where Pat was known as Sister Frances – a postulant. She was sent home for health reasons.

The morning passed quickly, with Morning Prayer and an update on the 2001 Chapter. After an excellent lunch there was free time to talk to our former Sisters and catch up on the latest in their lives. Pat disappeared with Sister Patricia Denny, and they had a long conversation together.

When the day came to an end, Pat thanked me profusely – but it wasn't until a much later date that she told me what the day had really meant for her. Over the years, and in spite of being very happily married with four wonderful children, she had secretly carried a feeling of guilt. She had been told that the order would welcome her back when her health improved. Had she done the right thing in not returning to Kilcullen Convent? This guilt



feeling had nagged at her and had always seemed to be in the background. In the Briery that day, however, seeing so many others who had left the convent – some after ten years or more, – together with her conversation with Sister Patricia Denny, that feeling of guilt had completely disappeared.

I had thoroughly enjoyed the day and felt we all owed a huge debt of gratitude to the Provincial Team that had initiated these reunions, and to The Briery for hosting them in their usual superb way. I ask myself, "How many other 'happy outcomes' have followed from these Reunions?" We shall never know.

### **Fr. Daniel Donovan C.P.**

When I was getting the wood to make the cupboards in the dining room, Mac and I went into Arnold Lever on the road into Bradford. It was at the time of the 3-day week and there was no electricity. We were there around 4pm, so the warehouse was already almost pitch black. However, the manager got a torch and offered to show us round. Mac tripped over a plank and fell against me shouting, "Jesus, Father!" Imagine the look on the face of the man with the torch!

After the first talk every Sunday, there were confessions, so all the good ladies came in a constant stream. Relief came when Mac started the Stations, but it didn't last long, as she put three sentences together without pause.

"The fourth station Jesus meets his blessed mother - Ladies, Father is still hearing confession - we adore you Christ and we praise you..."

And finally, when a group of girls who'd caused loads of trouble were departing on the bus, Mac was there enthusiastically waving them off, but saying to me at the same time: "That's the last time they're coming here"!

### **Fr John Kearns C.P.**

#### **In fear and trembling**

My first visit to The Briery was as a Passionist student, twenty years or so ago. What a beautiful place! Father Ben Lodge C.P. was leading a retreat for Palm Sunday. I thought that I was simply there to enjoy the retreat, to pray and to listen to the talks. And all was going according to plan till Ben said to me, "Fancy doing a reading?" Well, that seemed simple enough. "Yes, sure," I replied, thinking that it would be a few lines of Scripture. "You do the Narrator for the long Gospel," he generously offered. Gulp! "Long" is correct, and it needs lots of concentration, because three voices are involved.



So, in fear and in trembling, there I stood, proclaiming the Gospel of the Passion. My first time to read that wonderful passage in public.

What a powerful first memory for a Passionist to have! The Briery has remained since then a great place of welcome, community, prayer, rest and friendship for me. Rooted in the love of Christ Crucified, The Briery is a very special place.

Hearty congratulations for the Jubilee!

**Fr David Williams C.P.**

### **Three memories of The Briery**

Strangely enough, the first thought I have of The Briery is not of Mother Madeleine, whom I met in the winter of 1967; neither do my thoughts focus on Mac or Kilian. Rather the first thoughts are of Alice and Rex - housekeeper and dog - who, for me, made The Briery not so much a retreat centre but a home.

Secondly, I remember the excitement that was generated when Mac won a car in a raffle. Neither she nor Kilian could drive, so it fell to Daniel to teach Mac, and to me to teach Kilian, and thereafter Daniel and I engaged in a holy rivalry to see which of us could get our pupil ready for the driving test before the other. I forget who won!

The third memory is of a Sunday in February. During the night a rapid thaw had set in, and the river burst its banks. The water covered the two lower arches of the Old Bridge, and the road was impassable to traffic. I had to wade through the water in order to reach The Briery for Mass. Unfazed by my sodden appearance, Mac went next door, where a lawyer lived, to borrow a pair of trousers - and took great delight in recounting that she had collared a pair of lawyer's briefs for me.

### **Audrey Cohen told this story to Sister Anne.**

Michael Cohen, Painter and Decorator, worked for the Convent. When the Sisters bought The Briery, he was asked to decorate it from top to bottom. He also converted the garage into a chapel.

Audrey Cohen, Michael's wife, vividly remembers going to The Briery soon after it was purchased, at the request of the then Mother Provincial, who wanted Mick to help her choose carpets for the rooms. When they finished, she put a little statue of the *Infant of Prague* on the mantelpiece in the dining



room, now Bolton Room, and told the Cohens that the Sisters had prayed to Him every day to help them get a house, and He had got them The Briery.

Audrey, who was expecting her third child David, and was living with her in-laws, asked if the *Infant of Prague* would help them find a house in Ilkley. Mother Provincial gave Audrey a little *Infant of Prague* prayer card and told her to say the prayer every day. In a short time, the Cohens were moving into their own house in Ilkley. A friend of Audrey's was also desperate to get her own house so the prayer card was passed to her, and eventually she got her own house too!

**The little statue of the *Infant of Prague* can still be seen on the mantelpiece in the hallway.**



**Madeleine Swann (nee Albrow), Lay Associate of The Briery**

My first memory of The Briery is of going there on retreat in 1952, with a group from the *Children of Mary* from St Clare's Parish, Bradford. I realise now that The Briery had only just opened its doors.

Years later, after I had moved to Ilkley, I was asked to join a newly formed group of Passionist Lay Associates in 1997, under the leadership of Sister Marie de Carmel and, since then, my contact has continued.

In 2004 I celebrated my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, and the party was held at The Briery for 60 guests, including past and present Lay Associates. The biggest surprise was when my lifelong friend, Pat Lambert (now Syrus), who now lives in



Adelaide, Australia, arrived and gave a speech! We both attended St Joseph's College, Bradford, from 1945 to 1952.

### **Katharine Cheney, Skipton**

I came to live in Ilkley as a child in 1953, a year after the establishment of The Briery. Passing it often when walking to Heber's Ghyll, I always knew the house was there but, being Methodist, I thought it was simply 'a convent where nuns lived'. It was in Ilkley that I first saw two Sisters, fully clad in black habits, driving around in a pale green Morris 1000 – quite an unusual sight in the 1960s. Perhaps it was the one mentioned in Father David Williams' memories!

It wasn't until I retired back to Yorkshire nearly fifty years later, in 2002, that I discovered The Briery's real role and purpose. Since then, I have been blessed by my contact with the Sisters and staff, and I am glad and privileged to have been able to receive from, and contribute to, their resources.

### **Deacon Jean Stephenson, Steeton**

My Briery memories really go back a long way, when I was at the Ilkley Methodist Deaconess College in the 1950s - and in those days we could not go in. But it has been good to go several times in these last few years, and to reconnect with the Sisters.

### **Florence Begley**

My first introduction to The Briery was in my early teens when, along with other young women from our local parishes, we went there for our first retreat – probably about 1955. My recollections are of a beautiful house set in lovely gardens, with dormitory accommodation and meals in silence. At that time the Chapel, affectionately referred to as 'the tin hut Chapel' was in the grounds. The Sisters and Alice, who helped serve meals, were welcoming, but quite specific about what they expected of us. One of the Passionist Fathers came across the valley from the Monastery each day to give us talks, hear confessions and celebrate Mass, and we also had the opportunity for one to one interviews. The annual retreats continued for the next five or six years until I left home and I have always felt that I owe a debt of gratitude to the Passionist Fathers and the Sisters of the Cross and Passion for my early spiritual development.

After I left home, my parents became frequent visitors to The Briery. My Father was a Master Baker and Confectioner, and he would often arrive with 'goodies' and, while there, share recipe ideas with the kitchen staff. When he





Entrance & Front View pre-1952





# Opening of the New Chapel







Setting Tables & Serving Meals





Entrance Hall pre-1952



Garage, Entrance and Lodge pre 1952





retired from his own business in the 1970's, he donated some of his bakery equipment to The Briery, and I understand that one of his electric mixing bowls is still used today.

I returned North to live and work in the mid 1980's and returned to the Briery to lead one or two courses on behalf of the Bradford Anglican Diocese for whom I was working at that time. After I retired, Sister Anne asked me if I would be interested in helping The Briery Team by leading some of the Parish Retreats. After some initial reluctance I agreed, and count it a special blessing that I can now give something back for all that I received so many years ago.

The Briery is a very special place for so many people who come to find peace and refreshment, opportunity for prayer and reflection, a time to just 'be' with God and take stock of their lives. At this time of special celebration, we give thanks to God for all that this House of Retreat has meant, and still means, to so many people; and we pray that God will continue to bless the mission of The Briery for many years to come.

#### **Janet Daniel, St Benedict's Parish, Garforth, Leeds**

I have been going on parish retreat at The Briery for over 30 years and there have been a lot of changes in that time, but something that hasn't changed is the ethos.

Originally the retreat was Saturday afternoon until after lunch on Sunday, and we were supposed to be silent. We giggled a lot like schoolgirls, but the nuns were very kind to us and accepted our failings. Over the years we extended the time and attended a full weekend retreat.

Once upon a time The Briery was a cold and draughty place, and we always brought plenty of warm clothing - but it has gradually been updated and made warm and cosy. However, the welcome has never changed. As you walk in, your shoulders drop and you know you are in a calm, relaxing and safe environment.

One of my most memorable times at The Briery was the first Circle Dancing weekend I attended. Sister Breda came from Ireland to instruct on the dancing. Not knowing what to expect, I was quite nervous - but it turned out to be easy to follow and very prayerful in its content. I came for the next 10 years or more to Circle Dancing weekends.



It is always the same here, the Sisters and the staff are so welcoming, so warm, so caring, and the content of their retreats are so interesting and informative. Long may it continue.

**Rev. Cathy Nightingale, Chaplain among Deaf people,  
Diocese of Manchester, Priest- in- Charge St John's Roughtown.**

I first discovered The Briery when I went on a retreat organised by Ecumenical Deaf Clergy UK for deaf clergy. I was new to ministry, having started my curacy in Huddersfield as Assistant Chaplain among deaf people and Assistant Priest-in-Charge of a parish. I am deaf myself and, as a group we enjoy using The Briery, as it has a very homely feel. We can use the facilities of the retreat centre on our own with no other groups, and the quality of the cooking and serving the food is very good.

This started a link for me with The Briery. I was looking for somewhere for quiet days and for spiritual direction. Every time I went, I felt very welcome and it was a place of safety. It was one place that was a constant for me, through two moves over the next eight years, and I enjoyed the quiet time and the wisdom of the spiritual guidance. I loved sitting on the white bench in the veranda-like space, and people got used to seeing me sit there with my dog throughout the seasons. I would enjoy watching the changing of the colour of the copper beeches, seeing things grow in the garden, especially the passion flower on the veranda, watching the squirrels and the birds in the trees, and watching the rain and, on several occasions, watching the snow fall. The photo that is my computer background is the view from the white bench on the veranda, with the copper beeches in colour in the autumn and, whenever I look at it, I feel a deep sense of peace. The small size of The Briery meant that I got to know the staff and they would often ask me how I was, how the dog was, as she would sit outside next to the white bench when I visited. Part of my quiet days would usually involve a walk on Ilkley Moor via the lovely woods around Heber's Ghyll. But, on other days, I would enjoy looking round the shops in Ilkley, and enjoy tea and cake in one of the many good cafes.

I have used The Briery myself to lead retreats with another deaf colleague. The staff have always tried to make it welcome and be very helpful, and this has given me the confidence to look into how to provide more accessible retreats for deaf people, as there are very few choices for deaf people who use British Sign Language as their first or preferred language to make retreats.



My connection with the Sisters at The Briery has given me an awareness of Passionist spirituality and, on my recent sabbatical, I enjoyed reading and finding out more about the Passionist family. I am hoping that I can continue my link in some way, and am excited to see how it will develop.

**Deacon Hannah Smith**

'I went to The Briery for my pre-ordination retreat for becoming a deacon. Although I was full of many emotions - excitement, fear and bewilderment - it was good to come away and be with God in the space of The Briery. I loved the pictures in the corridor to the Chapel, particularly the large painting of the Prodigal Son near the door. That helped my reflections immensely. I shall always remember praying and celebrating the Eucharist in the Chapel with the enormous windows. Throughout our week, we saw spots of sun and lots of rain, which were a useful backdrop to prayer. Oh, and the food was excellent too...!'

**Joan Wager, Cumbria**

My first visit to The Briery was in 2011. I found a place of warm welcome and peaceful and comfortable surroundings. Here I was able to experience the benefits that come from sustained times of silence, enabling me to explore new depths in my spiritual journey in an atmosphere of prayer and 'safe space'.

This is a place to celebrate, especially at the time of Diamond Jubilee! Congratulations, and thanks for your special ministry.

**Rev. Hilary Ewing, Methodist minister, Cheltenham**

My particular impressions have been of a beautiful, peaceful garden and how, on one visit in January, the shape of one of the trees, which can be seen from the chapel window, looked strikingly like a man on a cross. At Christmas, I remember the arrangement of the nativity figures. With plenty of room in the chapel, it was lovely how the wise men were some distance from the crib, reminding us that they came to worship Jesus later than the shepherds.

And there was a warm welcome, and tasty meals!

**Margaret Chambers, Union of Catholic Mothers, St Benedict's Parish, Garforth, Leeds**

**Heart speaks to heart**

I had always said when I retired I would go on retreat with some of my friends from St Benedict's Parish here in Garforth, Leeds. So in 2011 I joined



our group, and we set off for a weekend at The Briery. I was unsure how I would meet this, but found such a lot of pleasure from it.

One highlight was an in-depth reflection on the psalm *The Lord is my Shepherd*. I had often said this in rote, but always loving the concept. I was so amazed when we looked at it further. There was so much more to learn about it, and I found the reflections so very moving. Now, when this psalm is said or sung, I always think back to my retreat with such memories.

On the retreat there were prayerful times, silent times, peaceful times, heart-stopping moments - and such a lot of giving of friendship and caring it really took my breath away at times. We even had a lot of fun shopping in Ilkley! I was really impressed by how well we were looked after, both spiritually and in our everyday needs.

I left The Briery well refreshed to meet my world, and grateful for such a lovely experience, knowing that I wanted to come again and again.

### **Joan Banks, St Mary's, Blackpool**

There are three words that sum up The Briery: serenity, peace and love. I defy anyone who stays there on retreat not to feel all these things – and so much more. Led by Father Clive, seventeen of us enjoyed yet another wonderful weekend.

Our first discussion of Friday evening was all about 'unfolding'.

Father Clive illustrated this by bringing a flower which was about to open, and a new neatly folded jumper. We talked about the Gospels unfolding their stories, and how our lives unfold. After *Order of Night Prayer*, which I always find so gentle and comforting, we met in the lovely oak panelled sitting room for a light-hearted quiz and social time together.

On Saturday morning we started with *Morning Prayer*. After lunch some of the group went down into Ilkley, and others made good use of the lovely gardens in the warm sunshine. Saturday evening was partly spent preparing for the Sunday Eucharist. Father Clive asked for people who did not normally do things, like reading the lesson or serving, to think about having a go at these things. One lady, who shall be nameless, was trying to hide behind her programme... Father Clive took this to mean she was volunteering, so guess who read the lesson? There were those who said they couldn't sing, but found themselves learning some Taize music (*Dona Nobis*



*Pacem* in two parts) – and so good werethey that on the Sunday morning at the Eucharist they were able to sing it.

All too soon it was Sunday lunchtime, and the coach arrived to take us back to Blackpool. But I know that everyone went home rested and refreshed, both in spirit and mind, thanks to Father Clive and the perfect atmosphere of The Briery.

### **Margaret James, Lay Associate and former Volunteer at The Briery**

The Briery – Oh, what you have given me since I first entered through your doors: comfort, affirmation, inspiration and a true befriending. Not to mention the glorious food, and every visit becoming joy-filled moments of the eternal. I love you! I lap it up! Bliss!

But what I love far more is this.

One Monday morning, I was in the office looking after the telephone, when a young electrician arrived to fix something. On his way out to say, “Job done,” he seemed bemused. “You can’t believe it.” he said, “You just can’t believe it.” He went on to say that, when he was told his first job of the day was at The Briery, he remembered his gran. His gran used to come to The Briery and she always said about the visit that “the minute you go through the door, you can feel it.” The young man said, “I never go anywhere myself, but I could feel it. All the while I was doing that job, I could feel it.” He went off shaking his head.

And that’s why I really love The Briery. That the essence of the Sisters’ lives over the last sixty years, and ongoing, is God’s love, is tangible and embraces everyone from the faith-filled and the searching and – for me most importantly – those who are not even looking, but just turning up to fix the electrics. Thanks be to God.

**Sister Anne made a film of some of the ladies who have come here on Parish Group Weekends; here are some of their reflections.**

### **From Worsborough, South Yorkshire**

Originally encouraged by nuns in the Convent of Mercy in Barnsley, in 1982 they had a new parish priest, and began a branch of Union of Catholic Mothers which came for years. They paid £1 for a day. They had to be silent, especially at meal times, and one member in her 70s who didn’t keep quiet was made to sit on the bench outside. Sister Macartan was very strict. She would ask them for hymns for the service but would then substitute her own.



Food was plain and wholesome: boiled eggs on Friday and home made bread and jam on Sunday. Sister Kilian's rice pudding, with ginger biscuit crumbs on top, was to die for. They have brought many others to share the warmth and love, and all appreciate the peace, tranquillity and friendship here. Although The Briery has changed through the years, with the addition of the chapel and extra bedrooms, its atmosphere is still the same.

Someone had commented in the past, "We pray all the way there, and talk all the way back." One lady confided that she always resolved that she would be a better person when she went home – but soon forgot!

**Emily** has been coming since 1984 and is now here with four other members of her family. Between them they notch up a total of 48 years! They love the peace and quiet, and particularly value the opportunity to have quality time together away from home. Time to stop and *BE*.

**Betty** has been coming for well over 23 years and is helped by the great solitude and peace. She is not a Roman Catholic, and she appreciates the friendliness and welcome she has always received from Sisters and staff. Betty's husband is quite ill, requiring six carers at home, and he has been willing to go into residential care for the weekend to enable Betty to come. She says she feels so much fitter now to face things when she goes back home.

### **From Wythenshawe, Manchester**

**Marie** values the peace and tranquillity. Here, friends who have known each other for many, many years get to know each other in a special way, because of the quality time they spend together. She enjoys the discussions, meditations and food for thought, and the fact that they have made some lovely friends from other parishes local to theirs – and can't wait for the following year.

**Margaret** is a wife, mother and teacher, used to telling others what to do, all day and every day. She finds it wonderfully refreshing to be on the receiving end and told what time is breakfast, lunch – and even bed! She loves the quietness, the calmness and time to reflect. She has found that the benefit of a retreat often comes later, in the weeks and months that follow. Thoughts and material that she takes away with her come back to her and help her to keep going through the year, until her next visit.



**Maria** says the retreats help in their parish life. They bond and become 'spiritually fastened together' here. Those who work full-time appreciate having their meals made for them. They feel that the Sisters in The Briery Team are also now their friends. After so many years, many of them are now grandparents. They chat about their families and thank God for the joy they share. Maria says that her faith today would not be as strong as it is if she hadn't had the time and support they have given to each other.

**Mary** has a busy life and comes for peace and quiet, reflection and renewal once a year. It is wonderful to get away from everything and be with the Lord for a weekend. There is always something to take home into daily life – though sometimes it takes a whole weekend to realise what has really gone on and what she has got out of it. She appreciates being able to share problems, and also to be a listening ear. These four ladies have been coming for between 23 and 25 years each.

**Andrea** has been coming for 7 years. She is a young Mum with three boys. She appreciates a weekend of peace and tranquillity with time to reflect. A weekend that grounds her for the year ahead and that she describes as:

**A Spa Weekend for the Soul**

## **MESSAGES OF GREETING**

**Rev. Monsignor Kieran Heskin BA, PhD**

**Vicar General of the Diocese of Leeds**

**Parish Priest of Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Ilkley**

Those who chose The Briery site for a retreat centre were truly inspired in their choice of this piece of "heavenly real estate". People have visited this place, surrounded by trees and hills, to find God over the past sixty years, just as the people of the Near East, who gave us the Bible, went into the desert in their day to experience more powerfully the presence of God.

Those who have come here have been warmly welcomed into a home away from home. Here they have experienced 'Sabbath rest' from the busyness of life. Here, surrounded by the beauty of God's creation, they have had the opportunity to think about the meaning of life and about how the hand of providence guides their lives.

Within these walls the sense of vocation has been deepened; the resolve to follow Christ more closely strengthened. In this sacred place the superficial



has been exposed; the consequential revealed. Spiritual growth has been encouraged: conversion facilitated.

In this holy place, Jacob's New Testament children of all denominations, awake from sleep with the thought "surely the Lord is in this place" (cf. Gen. 28.16) and many depart from here with a renewed conviction of their need of God and of his need of them.

Warmest congratulations to you Sisters of the Cross and Passion on your inspirational Briery ministry over the past sixty years, and may you have the resources to continue to serve the church in this wonderful way far into the future.

**Fr. Bede Leach O.S.B., monk of Ampleforth**

"Seek God, not where God is..." - a saying of the Desert Fathers, the first monks of the Egyptian Desert - and a reminder to us, through them, that the person, rather than the place, is where (in whom) we find God.

So too, at The Briery, which is a wonderfully placid sacred space, a place of genuine warmth & hospitality. However, it is in the welcoming hospitality of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion that Christ himself is personified.

In his Rule, St Benedict encourages his monks to welcome each and every guest "as if Christ himself", and there can be no finer tribute to the work of all at The Briery, that we each and all feel that sense of special welcome, reverence and service.

We are privileged to pray for them for their continuing apostolate, and in thanksgiving for all they have given to and, received from, so many through their discipleship.

**Rt. Rev. Nick Baines, Bishop of Bradford**

The Briery is a gem, an unbelievably tranquil oasis in a busy world. Many have appreciated the comfortable warm hospitality and the quiet space to meet, listen, reflect and pray. It's a great place to step aside from the rush of life, with others or alone. I send my good wishes and prayers on the Diamond Jubilee of The Briery, a gracious gift to us all. Thanks be to God.

**Rt. Rev. John Packer, Bishop of Ripon and Leeds**

We have found The Briery Retreat Centre and its team to be an admirable setting for reflection and thought before ordinations.



The church leaders of the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council meet there annually. Again, we have appreciated the warm welcome we receive, the spirituality of the Chapel and the opportunity to pray and discuss.

**Beverley Seward and Staff of Parcevall Hall**

We would like to send our warmest congratulations from all at Parcevall Hall to everyone at the Briery Retreat Centre on reaching their 60<sup>th</sup> year.

We are sure you will continue, with your caring and prayerful ministries, to help people to get away from the hustle and bustle of today's busy world.

**Rev. Clive Barrett, West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council**

Senior church leaders across the denominations in West Yorkshire have developed an Ash Wednesday tradition in recent years of shared public witness, linked either with an act of penitence or a prophetic pronouncement. There have been expressions of solidarity with asylum seekers, people facing debt, people who are unemployed...

Such expressions of the unity of the churches in shared mission do not happen in a vacuum. Invariably, they have followed an autumn residential of church leaders in the comfortable surroundings of The Briery. Here it has been possible for Bishops and Moderators, Chairs and Regional Ministers, to relax, think and pray together, to compare experiences, share ideas and plan for the future.

Without the care and facilities provided at The Briery, the mission and unity of the churches would be impaired. We give thanks for the ways in which the mission of The Briery better enables the mission of the churches.

**Rev. Stephen Burgess – Chair, York & Hull Methodist District**

The Briery has always offered such a warm and gentle welcome – especially to Methodists! At our Probationer Ministers' Retreat and, more lately, our retreat for those in their early years in ordained ministry, we have found The Briery to provide just the right atmosphere. We appreciate the deep spirituality of the Community, the homely environment, the peace and welcome, the facilities, and the wonderful home cooking.

We wish you God's blessing in your Jubilee year.



**Rev. Peter Whittaker, Former Chair, West Yorkshire Methodist District**

The Briery Retreat Centre is supremely a place of warm, open and generous hospitality. It is always a place of welcome. It is therefore a great pleasure to offer greetings for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Centre.

The Briery has made a significant contribution to the ecumenical life of West Yorkshire. The relaxed and homely atmosphere has always encouraged open sharing between Church Leaders and Ecumenical Officers.

In the mid 1990's those Church Leaders of the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council (WYEC) met, as they often did, at The Briery. On that occasion they were encouraged by Bishop David Konstant (then the Roman Catholic Bishop of Leeds) to examine the newly published Papal Encyclical "*Ut Unum Sint*" – "On commitment to Ecumenism," and to make a response to it, as a group representing many different traditions within the Christian family. I can still see, in my mind's eye, the group sitting and discussing in the lounge at The Briery.

Methodist ministers based in Yorkshire, in their first years of active work, have reason to be grateful to The Briery Retreat Centre. Year after year they have met in retreat gaining much from those who led them, from each other and from the atmosphere within The Briery. Generations of ministers will remember the Centre and the people who staff it with affection and warmth.

We give thanks to God for the work and witness of The Briery Retreat Centre.  
To God be the Glory!

**Ruth Jones, on behalf of Churches Together in Ilkley.**

Churches Together in Ilkley send warm greetings to The Briery at this special time. The Briery provides a special place where Christians of different denominations can spend time together in reflection, prayer and fellowship. The events held here have drawn local Christians together, contributing to the warm ecumenism that exists in Ilkley. We pray that The Briery will be blessed in its work for many years to come, as it continues to bless the people of Ilkley.

**Sue Giuntoni, Christian Meditation, Yorkshire**

Who can forget the sinking into the peace at The Briery the minute you walk in the door, the warm welcome of all the staff, the good food and homely atmosphere? The Sisters, their faces shining with the love of Christ, always available to turn to for advice or simply a good humoured chat; and His



tangible presence throughout the house, particularly in the Chapel and the little prayer room.

We at Christian Meditation Yorkshire send our best wishes and love to everyone at The Briery in its Diamond Jubilee Year.

**Sr. Cecilia Goodman C.J., Director, St Bede's Pastoral Centre, York**

Over the years of visiting The Briery at Ilkley for retreats, courses and days apart, one thing always remains the same and that is the welcome. Somehow Sisters Anne, Pat and Marie, to say nothing of Josy and all the other helpers there, create a sense of peace that is tangible. Nothing seems to be too much trouble and almost everything seems to be thought of in advance, whether it's protective sheeting for the inevitable candle spills or the special diet for a visiting retreatant. Most of all though, it is the atmosphere of the place that stays with me: 60 years of hospitality, prayer and concern for others has woven itself into the fabric of the place and makes The Briery such a unique and restorative place to come away to.

**Rev. Dr. Malcolm Rothwell, Chair of Retreat Association**

Many congratulations to The Briery retreat centre on reaching your Diamond Jubilee. This is a significant milestone. I wonder how many people have passed through your doors and been helped on the journey by the ministry that you have to offer! In these busy times it is a wonderful gift to be able to offer time and space for people to reconnect with themselves and with God. Long may your doors remain open.

On behalf of the Retreat Association I wish you joy and peace and every blessing as you celebrate and give thanks for the last 60 years.

**Judith Lampard, Chair of *Reflect***

Congratulations from *Reflect*, the Methodist retreats and spirituality network, to The Briery Retreat Centre, on celebrating 60 years of retreat ministry.

Last October the *Reflect* Northern retreat was held at The Briery. Its peaceful and welcoming environment was much appreciated by all the retreatants. This has also been the experience of those who have enjoyed their visits to The Briery over the last six decades.



We thank God for the way in which your hospitality and prayer life have contributed to the spiritual nurture of those who have stayed with you, and we send our good wishes for the future.

**Fr. David Birchall S.J., Director, St Beuno's Ignatian Spirituality Centre**

Congratulations to the Sisters of the Cross and Passion in their 60 years of service to God in The Briery. Let us pray that the work of offering people a place of prayerful reflection to encounter God will long continue. Best wishes and prayers.

### **A FUTURE NOT OUR OWN**

*It helps, now and then, to step back  
And take the long view.  
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
It is beyond our vision.*

*We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of  
The magnificent enterprise that is God's work.  
Nothing we do is complete,  
Which is another way of saying  
That the kingdom always lies beyond us.*

*No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection...  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.*

*This is what we are about:  
We plant seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted,  
Knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.*

*We cannot do everything  
And there is a sense of liberation realizing that.  
This enables us to do something,  
And to do it very well.  
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,  
An opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest.*

*We may never see the end results...  
We are prophets of a future not our own.*

**Archbishop Oscar Romero (1917-1980)**



## PAGE NUMBERS OF CONTRIBUTORS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

### Foreword

Sister Máire O'Sullivan, C.P.

### MEMORIES AND APPRECIATION

- 4. Sister Antonia I.B.V.M.
- 8. Sister Monica Byrne C.P.
- 1. Sister Pat Carney C.P.
- 8. Sister Mary Curtin C.P.
- 9. Father Daniel Donovan C.P.
- 7. Sister Anne Hammersley C.P.
- 9. Father John Kearns C.P.
- 5. Sister Catherine Laboure C.P.
- 3. Sister Moya O'Cleary C.P.
- 2. Sister Patricia Redgrave C.P.
- 6. Sister Dominic Savio C.P.
- 7. Sister Cecilia Wilkinson C.P.
- 10. Father David Williams C.P.

\*       \*       \*

- 16. Joan Banks
- 12. Florence Begley
- 15. Margaret Chambers
- 12. Katharine Cheney
- 10. Audrey Cohen
- 13. Janet Daniel
- 15. Revd Hilary Ewing
- 17. Margaret James
- 14. Revd. Cathy Nightingale
- 15. Deacon Hannah Smith
- 12. Deacon Jean Stephenson
- 11. Madeleine Swann
- 15. Joan Wager
- 17. Worsborough Parish Group
- 18. Wythenshaw Parish Group



## MESSAGES OF GREETING

- 20. Rt. Rev. Nick Baines
- 21. Rev. Clive Barrett
- 24. Fr. David Birchall S.J.
- 21. Rev. Stephen Burgess
- 22. Sue Giuntoni
- 23. Sr. Cecilia Goodman C.J.
- 19. Rev. Mgr. Kieran Heskin
- 22. Ruth Jones
- 23. Judith Lampard
- 20. Fr Bede Leach O.S.B.
- 20. Rt. Rev. John Packer
- 23. Rev. Dr. Malcolm Rothwell
- 21. Beverley Seward
- 22. Rev. Peter Whittaker

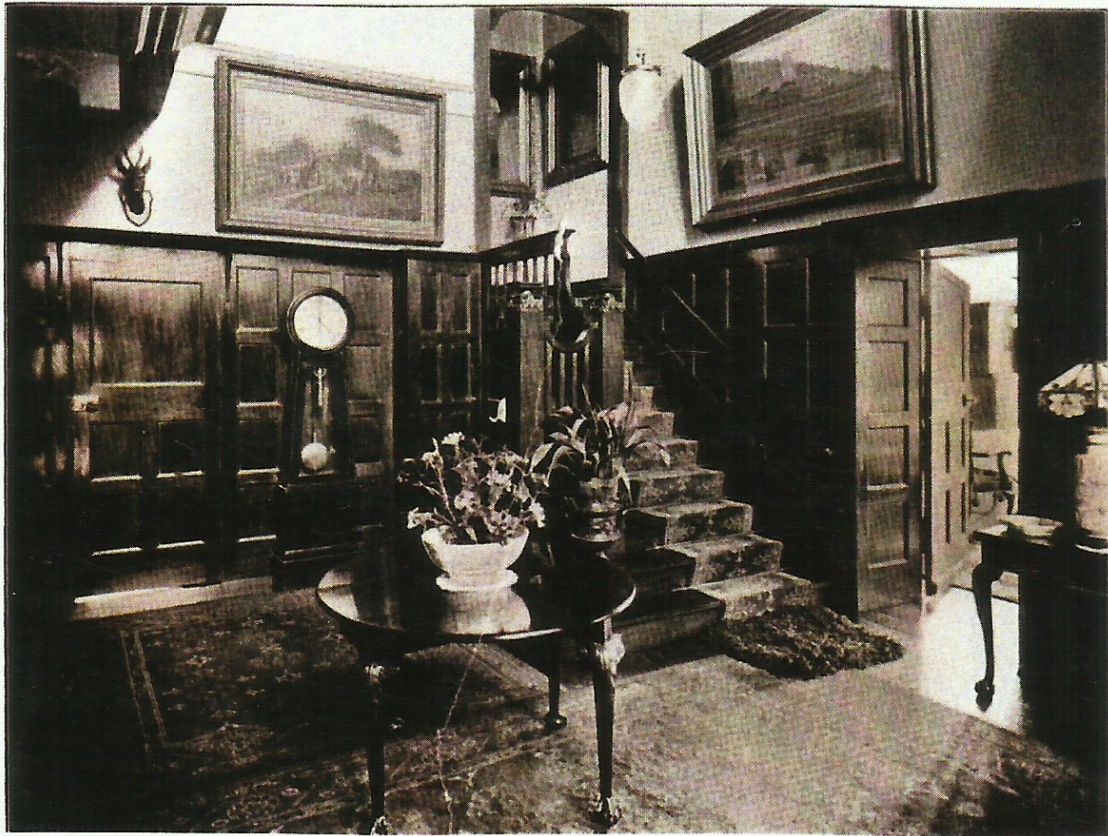


*Edited and compiled by Katharine Cheney*

*Printed by John Mason Printers  
Park Avenue, Skipton, BD23 1PN*



## Entrance Hall in 1925



## Garage, Entrance and Lodge



Briery Retreat Centre,  
38, Victoria Avenue, Ilkley, W.Yorks. LS29 9BW  
Email: [briery@btconnect.com](mailto:briery@btconnect.com)  
Website: <http://www.briery.org.uk>  
Tel: 01943607287 Fax: 01943 604449