

THE WALDENSIAN REVIEW



No. 132 Summer 2018

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From the Editor

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Thank you for your continuing interest and help, with feedback, enquiries, purchases from our website, letters, thoughts, prayers and donations. Please keep looking at our website for updates and new items:

www.waldensian.org.uk

register to receive the *Waldensian Review* by email and, if you are on the mailing list, please notify us of any changes in names or addresses.

This year we do not have a Waldensian Day on the agenda, due to various reasons, mainly ill health. Everything is better now, thank God and therefore we hope to make it up in the near future.

Congratulations to **Daniele Pevarello** who is now Assistant Professor in Early Christian History at Trinity College, Dublin and Research Director and member of the Council of the New School of Religion.

Congratulations to **Jean-David Eynard** (ex-student of **Collegio Valdese!**) for obtaining a distinction for his Master's dissertation at Oxford and a fully funded doctoral place (with an extra scholarship from the Italian Government) at Pembroke College, Cambridge. All this in English Literature!



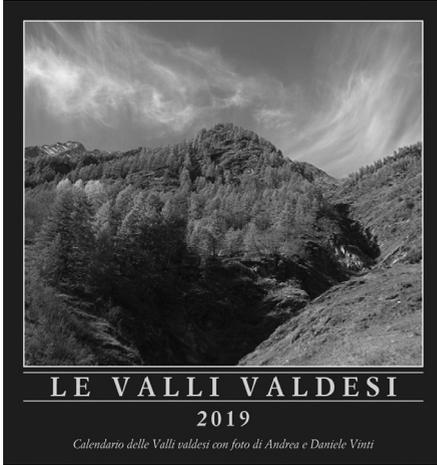
Prescot Stephens, Paolo Ricca and Erica Scoppo.

Stephens ... and, of course, he knew our Treasurer Mark as a boy ... (but all this came to light later ...)

We got married in 1979 and after three years (and two babies) in Cambridge, we went to Torre Pellice for six years. In 1987, after Cressida's birth, I spent some time in Cambridge; my friends from Radio Beckwith – of which I was a founder and the first Director – asked me to thank the Waldensian Church Mission for a donation they had received, which I did. Rosemary Farrer, then Editor of this review, came and interviewed me. Having said that we were coming back to Cambridge by Autumn 1988, when the Committee was looking for a new Executive Secretary I was asked to stand for the post. I now know that

Cover: The open-air service at Chanforan, 21 August 2017.

WALDENSIAN CALENDARS 2019



Beautiful as ever, with pictures of the Valleys and Bible verses also in English. Available from the beginning of October. Please order via the website or send a cheque for **£12.50** (payable to *Waldensian Church Mission*) to:

Milvia Walker,
19 Forest Approach,
Woodford Green
IG8 9BW

Prescot and Peggy Stephens were my strongest supporters; they liked the fact that I was born and brought up in the Waldensian Valleys, but my father was from Riesi, in Sicily, and, a lay preacher himself, had various pastors among his relatives. They thought that, as a journalist, I would be a good communicator, and Prescot was fascinated by the fact that my parents were friends with Primo Levi and that I had known the great Italian writer and Holocaust survivor for most of my life. Obviously Prescot had read my articles in the weekly of the Waldensian Church, which he regularly scrutinised.

A few years later I also started editing the *Waldensian Review*; so many events with great speakers have been organised, I have met amazing people, some have sadly passed away, but younger generations are coming up. Awaydays, books, calendars, Waldensian ordinands spending their year abroad in Cambridge, exchanges and friendship at various levels, all equally valuable. Very few people have met me in the past 30 years without learning that a) I was Italian, not very difficult to spot but not automatic; and b) that I am a Waldensian: what it is, what it means and so on and on and on. This also works the other way round: in the Waldensian-Methodist Church, if and when people need help or want to know something to do with this country – especially Church-related, but not only – they first ask me. This is what Prescot Stephens had hoped for, when he thought I would be a good ‘go-between’ between Churches, countries, people, cultures.

I find that all this binds perfectly with the story that I am going to tell you about my family and how it fits, once again, with the big picture and at this point I start wondering if it is all really *‘by chance’* ...

Erica Scropo Newbury, Editor

Waldensian Day 2017

It was a lovely day in the beautiful setting of Wesley Church, Cambridge. Unfortunately, the speaker from Italy was in poor health and I ended up doing more or less everything ... which on the whole worked all right.

The 1924 silent film *Waldensians* was a good introduction to the story of my father (From Sicily to the Waldensian Valleys: the remarkable life of *Filippo Scropo* (1910–1993), artist, critic, cultural organiser, teacher, preacher and third generation Protestant) and his family.

Faithful for Centuries



*From the Waldensian film:
Peter Waldo teaching.*

The film was the idea of a Waldensian film director from Turin (where the film industry was born!), Nino Martinengo, embraced with enthusiasm by pastor Paolo Bosio, a very active organiser involved with foreign missions such as ours, and a few other people. The script – about 800 years of Waldensian history – was supervised by Ernesto Comba, Professor of Church History at the Faculty of Theology in Rome and judged of good quality for the purpose. Thanks to the previous activities of the director and his connections, the film crew managed to access unbelievable places, such as the studios of Cinecittà in Rome and even

the Vatican (since he had shot a documentary on the Pope and still had his passes, and the Guards knew him anyway). The actors were professional and the only places true to life were the Waldensian Valleys, with extras provided by the Waldensian Youth Clubs and dramatic shots in Massello, Prali, Bobbio, Rorà, Angrogna. Normal people from everyday life were also filmed in the many churches in the Valleys and all around Italy, the south and Sicily included, that they visited in order to portray life in the twentieth century. Unfortunately, Mussolini (in power since 1922) was preparing the *Concordate* (the 1929 Pact with the Roman Catholic Church that gave the State to the Fascist regime in exchange for all Church business being confined to the Vatican) and changing the Statuto Albertino in order to abolish the freedom of the press, and much more. The 'Giacomo Matteotti Affair' – the MP disappeared after a speech against the violence and illegalities during the elections of 1924 (to be the last until 1946!) – had made everything more difficult. Little by little the film was hindered, restricted to members of the Waldensian church and then banned. It was never officially launched as Bosio had hoped, and it eventually became just a means for clandestine publicity and fund raising abroad! It was even given a secret name: *Phoebe!*

Phoebe was successfully shown in many places in England by our Committee in 1927, but returning back to Italy pastor Bosio risked going to prison. Another copy was sent to the US with great caution. Its beginning and ending were changed, it passed through different hands, underwent brutal cuts and the reels were at various times lost and found. Eventually it disappeared until it was 'found' at the bottom of a cupboard of the American Waldensian Society in 1981. *Faithful for Centuries/Phoebe* was eventually shown in 1982 in the Church of Torre Pellice, so crammed that one could hardly breathe. The footage of the contemporary congregations had all been cut and lost, apart from a few, and Riesi was one of them. My father was delighted at seeing his mother and aunts (all teachers in the Waldensian schools) and dozens and dozens of Sunday School children happily singing away.

At the time of the shooting of the film, the pastor of Riesi was Arturo Mingardi. As a young ex-Modernist priest, in turmoil one Sunday evening he had walked past the beautiful church in piazza Cavour in Rome that in those days was opened for 'Services of Evangelisation'. The great music and the persuasive words captivated him and he went in. He was warmly welcomed ... so much so that he decided to attend the church, becoming a Waldensian and eventually studying Theology at the Faculty round the corner. Once ordained, he asked to be sent where nobody wanted to go. He chose Riesi, which had a flourishing and enthusiastic congregation, but where the living conditions had cost various ministers, particularly their families, their health and even their lives. Malaria, cholera, smallpox and other diseases now associated with developing countries were more or less routine. Riesi was a poor town of miners and peasants with a small, but active, middle class of Liberals and Free Masons. Since Garibaldi's landing in Sicily, Waldensian preachers and distributors of Bibles and Protestant literature had visited most parts of the island, which was superstitious and more pagan than Christian. In Riesi, though, it was the Liberal Mayor who, annoyed with



Chiesa Valdese (by Bonci & Rudelli, 1914), Piazza Cavour, Rome.



Pastor Mingardi with Sunday School children.

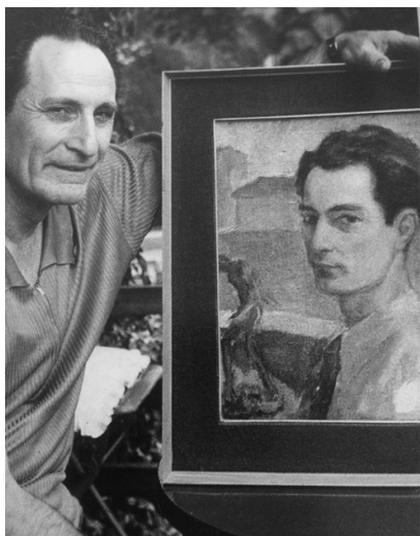
the obscurantism of the priest and his followers, invited a Waldensian pastor to talk and preach, even offering him a Catholic church no longer in use. In the Autumn of 1871, Augusto Malan talked during a week to an audience of 300–400 every night and on the last day 700 attended! Waldensian schools followed (new building 1897) and then the church in 1898. In the census of 1911, half of the population (of 12,000 people) declared themselves Waldensian! Which was not really true, but showed how popular the Church was. In those 40 years many people had learnt to read and write and had progressed socially, and the Church had now a mixed congregation with a growing middle class. My family is typical also in the way women were treated. My great grandfather, one of the founders, had five daughters and a son, and they all studied to become teachers. One of them would become Headmistress of the Waldensian schools, so good that everyone, the Prince and the Head of the Police included, would send their children there.

Among many active and promising youngsters, the new pastor found a very gifted little Filippo Scropo, whose aunt he later married. Born in 1910, Filippo was intellectually adopted by the pastor-uncle, who offered him the use of his vast library and prepared him for the equivalent of O and A level exams. In those days Riesi did not have Secondary schools.

Very early on, Filippo showed a talent for painting, but could also play music, write, act and had a very profound faith and a drive to share it. After all, his forebears had started the Waldensian Churches in Riesi and Piazza Armerina in an environment that was not exactly easy nor friendly. Pastor

Mingardi was particularly keen on Evangelisation, organising excursions and trips to nearby villages and towns with the large young people's group. New Testaments and musical instruments were always copious. The means of transport, one must not forget, were mules and donkeys. Out of this group came at least three pastors and various lay preachers, including a woman, a relative of my father.

When it was time for Military service, Filippo asked to be sent to Florence, and there he spent his free time visiting museums and galleries and admiring the Italian Renaissance. Not sure about what to choose at University, he decided to study for a Primary school teaching diploma in Vittoria where his uncle was now pastor. He was, meanwhile, always painting, preaching and

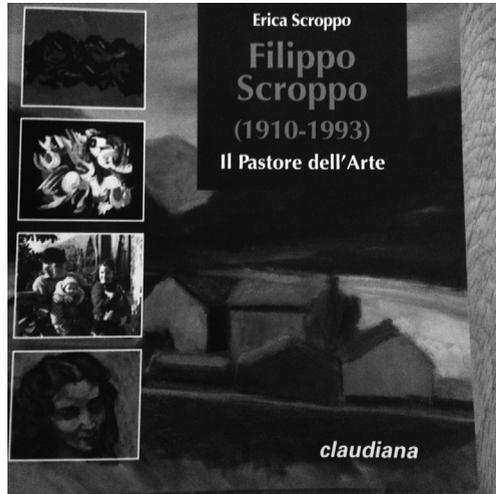


Filippo Scropo holding a portrait of his 16-year-old self.

teaching the many illiterate people who approached the Church. In 1934 he was sent to the Waldensian Valleys to be Riesi's representative to a Conference of the young people's groups. He also attended Synod and, once there, he felt he was in his real homeland. He sent a letter to the Church reporting on the meeting and the Synod and one to his family telling them that he would not come back.

He then spent the next 59 years between Turin and the Valleys. He enrolled in Turin University to study Italian Literature and was very active in all aspects of Church life: Sunday School, music, plays, youth groups ... Despite his increased activity as a painter, in 1939 he asked to enrol at the Faculty of Theology. After a good first year he was recalled to the Army and eventually gave up his Theological studies.

After the war he was very active in organising and promoting Art events, became Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Turin, took part in the Biennale of Venice four times, and was also an art critic! In 1949 a tutor of Collegio Valdese in Torre Pellice asked him to explain contemporary art to the students; Filippo opted for an improvised show with the latest avant-garde production, and carried on with these Contemporary Art exhibitions in Torre Pellice during Synod time for the next 40 years! He also had a private school and his generous attitude towards his neighbour, especially young new artists, made the Art critic of *La Stampa* call him 'the Pastor of Arts'. Two of his self-portraits are in the Corridoio Vasariano at the Uffizi. On his tomb he designed an ascendant abstract arrow with the inscription: IN TENEBRIS LUX (in the darkness light).



ES

From the 2017 Waldensian Synod Delegate's Report

The 2017 Synod marked the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. The opening Sermon from the Dean of the Theological College in Rome, Fulvio Ferrario, took Luther's first Thesis as his text from Mark 1: verses 14 & 15: Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the



From left: Francesco Marfè, Noemi Falla, Stefano Giannatempo, Ilenya Goss, Stanislao Calati.

Gospel and saying the time is fulfilled. And the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel. 'It may be offensive to our modern secular Christianity, which may be our alibi, nevertheless Jesus insists on permanent repentance. This is our alibi. However, we must imitate Jesus.'

2017 also marks 50 years since the first three women ministers were ordained. Now women pastors represent 40 per cent of the ordained ministry.

2017 is also notable in seeing an exceptional five Candidates being ordained: two women and three men. Indeed, all three of the latter come from the Catholic world; one is an ex-seminarist.

Ilenya Goss hails from Luserna San Giovanni and studied Philosophy and Medicine and also Music. This eclectic background brought her to teach Medical Ethics and History of Medicine at Turin University. She eventually felt a strong call to study Theology through distance learning via the Waldensian Faculty in Rome. Already a lay preacher, after spending her year abroad in Strasbourg she did a probationary year in Genoa.

Our Committee knows **Noemi Falla** from Scicli in Sicily well, since she spent her year abroad in Cambridge. A Methodist, originally she was studying to be an Art Teacher, but her widowed mother and her Pastor John Hobbins encouraged her vocation, which also entailed studying Latin, Greek and Hebrew. After serving in Bologna, she is now in Parma. 'For me female clergy are an enrichment for the Church since a woman is able to bring a different approach and sensibility also in the interpretation of the Bible.'



The WCM delegate in the Synod procession.

Stanislao Calati was born into a Catholic family and grew up in Como and in the Po Valley around Vercelli. After losing his faith, he even embraced anarchism. He returned, however, to Bible studies and became a lay preacher; being a teacher and having a family, it took him a while to finish his studies in Theology and now he is about to start a PhD alongside being a Pastor. 'For me neither age nor sex should be a bar to preaching the Word'.

Neapolitan **Francesco Marfè** discovered Protestantism through his studies in a Catholic Seminary, and he was brought to Protestantism by a Lutheran woman Pastor in Naples. His Pentecostal uncle was also influential in his formative years. He likes the Reformed idea of the Pastor as the minister of the Word. What he promises to be is a servant of the Word.

Stefano Giannatempo was born in Turin, where he was attracted by his experience of the Waldensian Church there. He did his year abroad at Princeton University. His three main passions are working with young people, liturgy and ecumenism. He loves the concept underlined by

Jesus when he chose the 12 Apostles so that they would stay with him and at the same time they would be sent to preach to the world.

The Sunday Service of Synod was held in the open air at Chanforan with its spectacular view over Val d'Angrogna. Here, in 1532 at Chanforan, the Waldensian Synod voted to join the Genevan Reformation, but also commissioned (and paid 1500 gold ecus) Calvin's cousin the Hebrew scholar Olivetan to translate the Old Testament into French and revise Le Fevre's New Testament. This became the official translation for Francophones, and also the 'pure Genevan', hence in its English version the Bible for 'Puritans'. Meeting again at Chanforan was to celebrate the publication of a new modern translation of the New Testament this year.

It was Olivetan's Bible that the Pope in the Waldensian Church in Turin accepted as a gift and kissed. It now holds a place of honour in the Vatican Library. Indeed, the Pope sent a notably friendly letter to the Synod, beginning:

Dear brothers and sisters. On the occasion of the opening of your Synod, I wish to express the closeness of the Catholic Church and my own. I salute you fraternally and with much cordiality I assure you that I remember you in my prayers ...

And signing off with:

It is with fraternal affection that I thank you and ask you please to not forget to pray for me and for all of us, your brothers and sisters.

There were true debates on many controversial issues such as intercultural integration within the church, and also how to integrate the new models of being a 'married' couple and indeed a family and a nation. Synod voted that all children born in Italy should automatically be Italian nationals. Moreover they voted for the extension of the 'Humanitarian Corridors' on which a great deal of the 8/1000 has been spent on. Debates followed also on 'What is a family?' and 'What is a life?' and on the bounds of palliative care/euthanasia. During his speech at the end of the Synod, at which he had been re-elected as Moderator, Eugenio Bernardini reported that the 8/1000 tax contribution had risen to €35 million.

Richard Newbury

News from Parma



During an earthquake in 1983, the roof of the Methodist church collapsed, destroying most of its furniture. Last year, as a gift for Noemi Falla's ordination, our Committee decided to help the church in restoring the pews that another church had donated.

Meanwhile we had gladly learnt that the writer and friend Tobias

Jones (*The Dark Heart of Italy* and many more) and his family were going to live in Parma. This is what Noemi writes:

The Jones family have proved a joyous addition to our community. From the moment they arrived they immediately began getting in contact with many members and sympathisers of the community, inviting them to dine with them at home, getting to know them and making friends. Together with a young woman of the Protestant community the Jones' have organised monthly activities with the youngsters of the Parma Church [Italians] and also those of my other parish of Mezzani [Ghanaians] getting them to get to know each other thus encouraging reciprocal integration, while also helping them learn a bit of English, given that the Ghanaian children speak in Italian and also in Twi [a Ghanaian dialect]. The Jones' also teach Bible stories through arts and craft, games, movies, music and sport.

The Jones' also participate in a Prayer Group [in Parma] held bi-monthly followed by a supper, and on occasions Tobias has also led the group.

Tobias has also organised a table soccer tournament between young Ghanaians from Mezzani and Casalmaggiore [the other church of which I am the Pastor] and some from Parma, always with the aim of encouraging integration and mutual understanding. We hope that there will be other matches in the future.

Tobias' wife Francesca, a native of Parma, is now employed as a social worker in the Humanitarian Corridor Project of the FCEI [the Italian Evangelical Churches Federation], the Waldensian and Methodist Church and the Catholic community of St Egidio. In practice it is a legal entity to enable the most vulnerable refugees to arrive in Italy. [Nowadays this means mostly Syrians coming from Lebanon]. In fact on Tuesday 26 June a Syrian family arrived who now live in the old Manse above the Waldensian Church in Mezzani. Francesca's job to aid the integration of the family in the Mezzani-

Parma area, help them find work, to learn Italian, to chivvy along the various bureaucratic hurdles and to mediate between the family and the Ghanaian community who worship and pray in the same building.

The Jones' three children have had the effect of lowering the average age of the Parma group.

Collegio Valdese and the Leys School



In college with the Chaplain.

In the last three years, thanks to the Chaplain, Rev Clifford Meharry, six students of Collegio Valdese, the only Protestant Grammar School in Italy – built with the money raised by our Committee under the guidance of Canon Stephen Gilly – have been able to spend two weeks at the Leys School (Methodist) in Cambridge. It was full immersion into famous public-school life plus, thanks to Clifford, cultural and tourists visits to Cambridge, London and Ely, where, as well as the splendid cathedral, a great attraction was Oliver Cromwell's House.

Jacopo Grogardi and Kyle Rivoira came in 2016; Monica Colombo and Chiara Gisondi were the 2017 guests, and this year there were Beatrice Congiu and Arianna

Veglio. Everything was a great success. Rev. Meharry and his wife Lynda hope to visit Collegio Valdese and the Valleys next year.

ESN



*A trip to London:
Trafalgar Square.*

Elena Bertin (1922–2018)

In February we lost Elena Bertin, good friend of the Waldensian Church Mission and sister of Albert, former member of our Committee. She was 95 and had just recently celebrated 90 years attending the same church: the Swiss Church in London. Albert wrote the story of their family, a Waldensian family settled in London, for the Review in several instalments ... Maybe we should make a booklet of it? This photo portrays Elena aged 12 and Albert aged 9 at a Carnival party organised by the Ambassador for the Italian schools in London in 1935.



Anthony Earl (1942–2016)

With great sadness we learned of Anthony's death at the end of 2016. In September Anthony had surgery for a heart condition. He was readmitted to hospital before Christmas and those who saw him then remarked on his frailty.

At Cambridge he studied French and Spanish, but Italian became his real love. He had a successful career as a teacher (Italian and French) and became Head of Modern Languages at Eltham College. Here he encouraged pupils to take part in exchanges, took groups to Italy and France and did all he could in many ways to encourage young people to achieve their potential. He also worked for closer cooperation between the schools which have formal and long-standing connections with the United Reformed Church. Friendships he had made at Cambridge were lifelong. Though he himself never married, he took a keen interest in the children of his friends.

In his retirement Anthony became a valuable member of the URC Waldensian Fellowship. He served the Committee for many years as well as leading several group visits to Italy. His knowledge of Italy and Italian culture was much appreciated, both for the enrichment of our understanding and for the good deals he was able to strike on our behalf in restaurants.

He made annual visits to the Collegio Valdese in Torre Pellice (the only Protestant grammar school in Italy), where he gave English lessons to the students across the 14–18 age range on a theme chosen each year by the school.

With Lucetta Geymonat, he also judged an English speaking competition in the school, for which the URC Waldensian Fellowship provides the prizes. Students choose a passage from Shakespeare, from either play or sonnet, which they learn by heart.

He also translated Lucetta's book on the Collegio into English and produced an English translation of the Torre Pellice Waldensian Church's website for them. For the URCWF Newsletter he contributed insightful articles and book reviews.

Several members of the Fellowship attended his funeral in Ashford, as did Lucetta Geymonat from Torre Pellice, bringing condolences from the staff and former Headmaster of the Collegio, Elio Canale. Very well attended also was the Memorial Service in Cambridge, conducted at Emmanuel United Reformed Church by his life-long friend the Revd Professor David Thompson. Tributes from family and friends gave testimony to the great affection and esteem in which they held him.

*Kate Grand
[edited]*



Tony Earl and Ruth Cowhig.

Ruth Cowhig 1915–2016 **A life spent in the service of God's justice**

Ruth Cowhig, who died at the age of 100 years and seven months, was a 'unique' person. Born in London, she had roots in the Presbyterian Church in England. She studied English Literature at Girton College, Cambridge, and was recognised as one of the top students at the University of Cambridge; but in the 1930s graduation was not permitted for women and Ruth had to wait until later to receive her degree.

Ruth was much affected by the crisis of the 1930s. She became a member of the Communist Party, and after finishing her studies she worked for the Workers' Educational Association, promoting the education of the working classes. We believe it was at one such meeting that she met William Cowhig, a young scientist. They married.

The Second World War saw a deepening of Ruth's commitment to justice and peace. Returning to the Presbyterian Church, she strongly linked social issues to her faith. She was very interested in the role of the Churches during the 'Cold War' and for 10 years she served as Convenor of the Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church. After the union of the PCE and the

Congregational Church in England and Wales, in 1972, to form the United Reformed Church, she continued to serve with the equivalent committee in the new Church.

Ruth and Bill moved to Sale, near Manchester, and during the 1970s Ruth took up studying again. Her interests in literature and social justice led her to write a thesis on Othello and the use of African characters in Renaissance theatre. This was not simply a 'theoretical discussion': these were the years of Apartheid. Ruth represented the URC at the meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Ottawa in 1982, and she was scandalised by the fact that the 'White Churches' would not accept the presidency of a 'Coloured or Black' person at the Lord's Supper. She spoke in front of the entire gathering ('The speech of my life', she was later to call it) and received an ovation. Then she left the hall, followed by many others. The Assembly decided to suspend the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa from the Alliance.

In 1980, the URC decided to renew its relationships with the Reformed Churches in Europe. Ruth was asked to go to Italy, to meet with the Waldensian Church. She was greatly struck by the social activity of the small Italian Church in which she felt 'at home'. Returning to England, her enthusiasm communicated to others and the 'URC Waldensian Fellowship' was founded.

Ruth and Bill threw themselves into this new project 100 per cent. From 1983 onwards, almost every year has seen groups travelling either from Britain to Italy or from Italy to Britain. And many people, young and not so young, have been helped to spend periods of time working and learning the languages in both countries.

In thanking God for Ruth (and Bill!), let us renew our own commitment to the justice of God and to fellowship between all peoples, especially among the churches.

*John S. Bremner
[edited]*

**WALDENSIAN CHURCH MISSIONS, VAUDOIS PASTORS FUND
& CANON ARMSTRONG BEQUEST - SUMMARY ACCOUNTS**

INCOME	2016		2017
Individual Donations	830.36		750.92
Fundraising			
Tax Refund	211.25		88.75
		1041.61	839.67
Vaudois Clergy Trust	1430.09		1574.80
Publications	441.00		966.50
Dividend & Interest	3817.51		3908.83
		<u>5688.60</u>	<u>6450.13</u>
TOTAL		<u>6730.21</u>	<u>7289.80</u>
 EXPENDITURE			
Payments to Italy		0.00	
Parma			1000.00
			1000.00
Review	442.00		442.00
Sec/Post/Stationery	2579.15		2411.96
Publications	372.19		120.00
Sundries	4.00		17.00
		<u>3397.34</u>	<u>2990.96</u>
TOTAL		<u>3397.34</u>	<u>3990.96</u>
 NET INCOME			
		3332.87	3298.84
Opening Bank Balance	9410.57		12743.24
Income	6730.21		7289.80
Expenditure	<u>-3397.54</u>		<u>-3990.96</u>
Closing Bank Balance	12743.24		16042.08

NOTES

Increase in publications income due to on line sales

Payment for 2018 calendars made in 2018

Funds held in Bank saved to fund student in 2018

Government gives to Waldenses

Too good to be true? No! For every donation which you make to the Waldensian Church Missions, the Government will add a further 25%, providing you are a tax-payer.

Since 5 April 2000 the new Gift Aid scheme has replaced Deeds of Covenant and the process is much simpler. This applies to all donations of any size or frequency. Thus a gift of only £1 made once will be increased by 28% as will a monthly donation of £100.

All that is required is for the donor to complete a simple declaration in the form given below and to forward this to the Treasurer whose address is on the inside of the back page. Once this form has been completed it covers all future donations by the same person. Unlike Deeds of Covenant, you are not committed to regular giving for a number of years.

Some of you have already completed such a form, but for those who have not, I would urge you to consider seriously this opportunity for the Waldensian Church Missions to benefit from the Government's generosity, but more importantly, to enable our giving to our friends in Italy to be increased.



WALDENSIAN CHURCH MISSIONS Registered Charity No. 277255

GIFT AID DECLARATION

To: **Waldensian Church Missions, 5 Woodgate Close, Woodgate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO20 3TA**

I (title) (name)

(address)

Postcode Tel. no.

would like all donations I make to Waldensian Church Missions from the date of this declaration to be treated as Gift Aid donations. I understand I must be paying income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the amount being reclaimed by the Missions. I understand that I can cancel this Gift Aid declaration at any time.

Signature of donor Date

The Waldensian Church

It is the native Protestant Church of Italy whose origins pre-date the Reformation. It arose from an evangelical movement founded in the 12th century by Waldo, a rich merchant from Lyon, who was to inspire St Francis: he gave all away to the poor and started preaching the Gospel in the vernacular, which caused conflict with the Papacy. Travelling in pairs the Waldensian itinerant preachers, having learnt the Scriptures by heart, set off to found underground communities from Sicily to Russia. The ensuing persecution by the Inquisition drove them into their mountain fastness in the Alpine Valleys of northwest Italy, where they remain in what are still called the Waldensian Valleys. At their Synod in 1532 they voted to join the Genevan Reformation, a decision that brought even more persecution upon this exposed outpost of Protestantism. Their sufferings were recorded in Milton's famous sonnet "On The Late Massacre in Piedmont". Their survival down to the present has been a remarkable testament of faith.

The Waldensian community was emancipated in 1848, but did not reach full freedom until 1984. Since the Italian unification in 1860 they have established churches throughout Italy and, following emigration, in the USA, Argentina and Uruguay. In 1979 the Italian Methodist Church combined with them and they hold a common annual Synod, which is the controlling authority of the Church and takes place in Torre Pellice. The Churches of Rio de la Plata have their own Synod, Board and Moderator.

The 60 parishes have founded 120 outreach activities ranging from schools, hospitals, children's and old people's homes, radio stations, and ecumenical community centres, often catering for the needs of the most deprived and mafia-ridden parts of Italy, especially the disadvantaged South and the new immigrant communities.

The Waldensian Church has a theological college in Rome, a publishing house, Claudiana, and a weekly paper, *Riforma*.

The English Committee of the Waldensian Church Missions

This was founded in 1825 as a support group for the Waldensian Church in Italy. Since 1979 its finances, together with those of the Vaudois Pastors Fund, have been administered by Trustees under the terms of the Scheme drawn up by the Charity Commission and dated 18 January that year.

The Committee seek to arouse interest and financial support in England and Wales for the Waldensian Church. Twice yearly we publish a *Waldensian Review* and occasionally other literature. We also arrange meetings for Waldensian pastors visiting this country and support students of Theology who want to spend the compulsory 'year abroad' studying in this country.

There are similar Waldensian support groups in Scotland, Ireland, USA and in various European countries.

The English Committee in aid of the Waldensian Church Missions
Established 1825

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The Waldensian Review is sent twice a year to those who are interested in the Waldensian church in Italy, its history and present-day work and witness.

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