

asked for questions Jack Woolford, quick as ever, asked if we could start the wine tasting from the beginning again. Having this request very politely ignored we then had time to visit the shop which, apart from wine, sold a wide selection of country produce and gourmet goodies including an English lager named Curious Brut and a Victorian style lemonade.



*The Vineyard shop*

Also on site is a Bistro, a Vino Beauty Salon, a plant base which has over 1,100 different plants and last but not least a pets' corner. This, according to my eleven year old daughter, was the best part of the vineyard trip as she was allowed in the pen to play with the rabbits.



*Denise with a rabbit*

It was then time to board the coach for the return journey with the sun still shining and very warm. Once again 'well done Joan' for coming up with yet another different day out.

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## The St Edmund of Abingdon Memorial Trust

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### Chapel of St. Edmund of Abingdon and Canterbury

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Fr. Peter Sherred

In his booklet *St. Edmund's Chapel Dover Land its Restoration* Fr. Terence Edmund Tanner wrote "St. Edmund's Chapel is unique". He believed it to be "the first Chapel consecrated to St. Edmund", and claimed it to be "the only Chapel still standing consecrated by an English canonised Saint to the honour of an English canonised Saint. St. Edmund and St. Richard were the first two scholars of the University of Oxford to be canonised". In a *Life of St Richard*, published in the 13th Century, it was written, "In the course of preaching (the Crusade), Richard came to the famous Kent port called Dover, and he stayed in the Maison Dieu in that town. He was asked by the Master and Brethren of this hospice to consecrate a chapel to the honour of St. Edmund,

Archbishop of Canterbury (who died at Soisy on the 16th November 1240 and had been buried in Pontigny Abbey), his former master and patron, which they had just built in their Cemetery for the Poor. His face (indeed his whole body) lit up with joy, and he gladly agreed to their request (he had been St. Edmund's Chancellor and was accompanying him on his journey to Rome when Edmund died). He went to the Chapel and solemnly consecrated it with great devotion".

The day was 30th March 1253 and St. Edmund's Chapel, Dover came into recorded history on that date. Apparently the people of Dover gathered round the chapel and in his sermon (which was noted as being 'a model of brevity'), St. Richard said:

"Dearly beloved: I ask you to bless and praise the Lord with me for allowing me to be present at this consecration, to His honour and the honour of our beloved Father, St. Edmund. Ever since I was consecrated Bishop, it has been my deepest wish - something I have prayed for with all my strength - that before my death, I should consecrate at least one Church to his memory. From the very depth of my heart, I thank God that He has not cheated me of my heart's desire. And now, brethren, I know that I am shortly to die and I commend myself to your prayers".

Sadly this was St. Richard of Chichester's last sermon and mass, for the following day, 3rd April 1253, he fell sick and died in the Maison Dieu. His bowels, it is believed, were buried in the chapel while his body was to be buried in his cathedral church at Chichester, where his shrine became one of the most famous in England. In the 15th century regulations had to be introduced to regulate the flow of pilgrims. After the dissolution of the monasteries, Thomas Cromwell's men were ordered to raze to the ground Richard's shrine, which they did by working at night for fear of being attacked by the people. What became of his body is not recorded.

After Richard's death, and especially after his canonisation in 1262, St. Edmund's Chapel, as well as being the Chapel for the Cemetery of the Poor became a place of pilgrimage. In the 16th Century the Master and Brethren of the Maison Dieu surrendered the Chapel and the Maison Dieu and all other property to King Henry VIII. Thereafter, the building was so hemmed in by other buildings that it was lost to view and it was used for a variety of secular purposes, usually for trade,

being a blacksmith's workshop for a time. It seems to have been 'rediscovered' following the destruction of surrounding property by shell fire in the Second World War. In 1964 when restoration was envisaged the Anglican Rural Dean of Dover, Canon T Ewart Roberts, Vicar of St. Mary's, Dover wrote to Fr. T Tanner, a former Roman Catholic Priest of Dover, in the following terms, "In the first instance we envisage the Chapel restored as a Chapel of Unity, with the possibility of making it in due course an ecumenical centre with a hostel attached; but this, of course, must await further developments, although we must be ready for any possible purchase of adjacent properties".

A Trust was set up by deed on 5th November 1973 by Fr. T Tanner. This followed his purchase of the Chapel in 1965 when it was the headquarters of the Buckland Branch of Tbc H. The original Trust Deed recorded that the Chapel was consecrated by St. Richard of Chichester on the 30th March 1253 as a Chapel of the Poor but over time it fell into disuse and was used for secular purposes after the Reformation until it was acquired by Fr. Tanner. The Chapel was re-consecrated as a place of Roman Catholic Worship by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Southwark on the 27th May 1968. Fr. Tanner oversaw the restoration of the Chapel which took place under the auspices of Anthony Swaine, a present Trustee and a well known architect. R. J. Barwick and Sons Limited were the contractors for the restoration after which Fr. Tanner transferred ownership of the Chapel to the Trustees.

Over a passage of some thirty years the Trust provisions of 1973 became obsolete and the



Trustees in 2002 appointed me as Acting Clerk with a brief to widen the object of the trust and to prepare new rules for the administration of it. That process has now been completed. The Charity Commissioners for England and Wales made a scheme in September 2005 to widen the object of the trust and in January 2006 the Trustees adopted new Rules for the administration of it. Trustee Peter Mee said "After consultation with all the Christian denominations locally and unanimous



*St Edmund's chapel, Priory Street, Dover*

agreement for the Trustees' proposals, the Charity Commission has made a Scheme whereby the Trustees are required to permit the chapel to be used as an Ecumenical worship and meeting centre by such Christian denominations as the Trustees in their absolute discretion from time to time authorise and permit, including the holding of Christian religious services of a sacramental and non-sacramental nature by such Christian denominations. The previous restricted object of the trust has, therefore, been superseded by the new Scheme". It is hoped by the Trustees, with the new rules now in place, that the chapel will become a greater focus of interest for the people of Dover and visitors alike. It is hoped that it will be opened on a regular basis, subject to finding appropriate caretaking facilities for the building and general supervisory requirements. The Trustees, who comprise representatives from both the towns of Dover and Abingdon, (St. Edmund was born at Abingdon near Oxford about 1175 and was known as Edmund of Abingdon), are now considering ways in which the chapel can be made more accessible to people with physical and other disabilities and have

asked Mr Swaine to consider implications arising from this. Hopefully they also wish to promote the chapel with pamphlets and the sale of post-cards. Local Christian denominations have been notified of the change of Object of the Chapel and an approach has been made to both the Town Council and the Dover Society with a view to assisting the Trust in its next goal of increasing the aware-

ness of the public to the existence of the chapel and to secure its greater use. There is currently a regular Mass said by the Roman Catholic Priest of Dover, Father Peter Madden, here on a Saturday morning.

It is to be hoped that the securing of the new scheme and the provision of rules for the administration of the Trust will enable wider use of the chapel, one of the precious historic jewels of the town, by all Christian denominations for the benefit of everyone and where barriers, boundaries and restrictions, are significant by their absence.

Forty years later, in the year 2005, by virtue of the scheme of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales, the Ecumenical worship centre and meeting place envisaged by Canon Roberts in 1964 was instituted.

In 2005 a 30 year link with Abingdon Town Council was severed when it decided to withdraw from the Trust for fear of potential financial liabilities over the maintenance of the chapel. Nevertheless Abingdon's representation continues on the Trust and it is hoped to continue to hold occasional meetings of the Trustees in Abingdon as well as in Dover.