

# HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION

*The eagerly awaited Centenary History of the Association was launched at the Centenary Conference to great acclaim.*

*Written by James Hagerty of Manchester 1, Bradford and Wharfedale Circles, the History is a remarkable work of scholarship which accurately reflects the growth of the Association over one hundred years.*

*Included in this Section is a review of the History by Past Grand President Gerald Soane.*

## A Review

### The Catenian Association – A Centenary History: 1908 to 2008

by Dr James Hagerty

Many readers will be familiar with Peter Lane's history, *The Catenian Association – 1908 to 1983*. Though copies did emerge from time to time from the recesses of the Association's former offices at Chesham Place, mostly to be presented to brothers on their enrolment, it has been out of print for many years.

For an organisation such as the Catenians it is important to have available a comprehensive and up to date record of its life story. What we are rests on our past; ordinary members and others want to read about it, while those charged with the direction and strategy of the Association have an even greater need to understand what went before.

As the Association moved towards its centenary Grand Council initially considered asking an historian to write a sequel to Lane's work to cover just the quarter century to 2008. Fortunately Dr Hagerty preferred to write a history of the entire hundred years. A former head teacher in Bradford and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, he had written a number of historical books and articles with a Catholic theme.

It would be invidious to compare the two works here. However, compiling this review I did refer to Lane's book from time to time, as I suspect more than a few readers of this history will; it was a very competent work. Unlike Lane's history, which had a thesis, 'A Microcosm of the Development of the Catholic Middle Class' and which Dr Hagerty credits as an indispensable source of information, Dr Hagerty's book is intentionally a straightforward work of record.

#### An Enjoyable Read

What has emerged is not something that has to be read dutifully but simply an enjoyable read.

While tracing the ups and downs of the Association's development in its first hundred years in the UK and elsewhere, which he does thoroughly, there are various major events that need to be recounted or explained, such as the founding of the Chums, the Beda College Appeal, Plater College, the Sword and the Spirit Movement or the Chaplaincies Scheme. There is also a great catalogue of lesser things that an historian must include in his work for the sake of completeness, such as when this and that circle was founded and who followed whom in office.

A writer might find it relatively easy to give lucid and interesting accounts of the former but harder to set out the more routine events without it reading like the *Book of Numbers*. Dr Hagerty has the knack of interspersing his lists of circles and people with interesting narrative detail that makes for an easy read.

In this respect he uses appendices to good effect: they run to nearly 30 pages, including sections on Catenian regalia, the different Church honours, sodalities and knightly orders and a history of Catenian Benevolence. In one of these he quotes our founder, John O'Donnell who stated that '...many of the phrases used (in our ritual) particularly in the Obligation, were taken ...from documents used in the Catholic Merchant Guilds of the Middle Ages', rejecting any idea that its ritual was inspired by Freemasonry. Elsewhere

he tells us that the Chums advertised for members in the Catholic press: so much for secrecy.

#### Two World Wars

It is often in such details that this book holds our attention. For example, in writing about the effects on the Association of the two World Wars he lists all those killed in action in WWI and tells of the valorous deeds of some who served in WWII; I shall never again hear the name Thomas Poole in my circle's memoriam list without thinking of 'Captain T F A Poole... a former regular soldier who had been recalled for duty, (who) died on active service in 1940', something I never knew until now. Another example is an explanation of how Catenians came to say the prayer for the Pope at the start of their meals so as not to conflict with the loyal toast.

Dr Hagerty also reminds us of the great service rendered by many members in the Church or in the public sphere and the honours bestowed on them, again without it reading like a catalogue.

In tracing the development of the Association the author tells us how, from its initial, modest aims, it quite soon became something that would be fairly recognisable to today's members and he highlights the role of Catena in spreading good practice and innovation, such as presidents' Sundays or the saying of the *De Profundis* at circle meetings; early meetings had no prayers.

## The Old and the New

During the Conference weekend a presentation was made to the Manchester Central Library of the “old” history by Peter Lane and the “new” history by James Hagerty. The library was also given the book on Bishop Casartelli by Martin Bradley.



The magazine developed in 1917 from a local initiative by its first editor, Richard Brosch of Birmingham Circle.

While emphasising the proudly Catholic nature of the Association and its members and their commitment to the faith and to the Church, the author shows us the continual dynamic tension between calls to Catholic action and the determination to remain true to the Association’s guiding social principles. In truth, one can see that there has been a lot of Catholic action over the years, mostly by individual circles or provinces, but some at the initiative of Grand Council. The same goes for politics and the belief that the Association cannot always remain silent in the face of attacks on the Church that spawned it. It might have been different if clergy had been able to join the Chums but considering their mundane initial aims that would hardly have been appropriate and by its being defined as a lay organisation priests would presumably have been barred from joining by Canon Law.

Dr Hagerty is more than just a chronicler of past events; he is a perceptive observer, able to analyse cogently what he sees around him in contemporary society, and his book is right up to date. Members will be grateful to him for the professional expertise, hard work and time that he put into writing this history and for his great generosity in doing so.

After a break of 25 years the Association at last has something to offer members and others who are interested to read its life story. The initial print run of 2000 copies will sell out very quickly.

Gerald Soane, 13th February 2008

Pictured left to right are: Grand President David Taylor; Steve Willis from the library; and James Hagerty of Manchester, Bradford, and Wharfedale Circles.

The exhibition in the background was put together by John Woodhouse of Rochdale and Manchester No 1 Circles.

## — HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION —

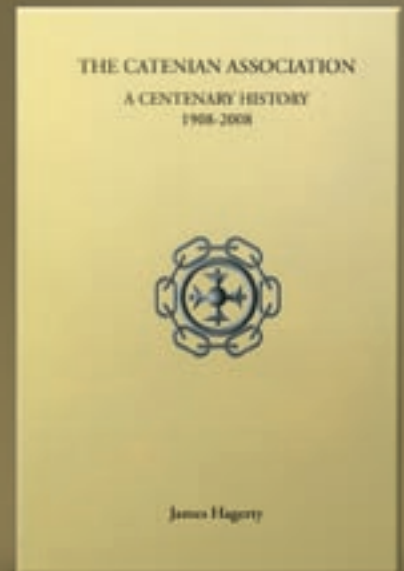
The Catenian Association: A Centenary History 1908 – 2008

**In this new book by James Hagerty, will be found a very well written account of the first 100 years of the Catenian Association. Brother James has made an enormous amount of details and facts about the Association so very readable. You will find it very difficult to put down this beautifully produced hardback – a real ‘must’ for every Catenian.**

In this specially commissioned centenary history, James Hagerty traces the growth and development of the Catenian Association from its origins in the Catholic heartland of Lancashire to its present international status.

Society has changed tremendously since John O’Donnell and the Chums first met in Manchester in 1908. From the seminal period before the Great War, the Association spread rapidly across the British Isles and then into Australia, Africa, Malta and Hong Kong. The book deals with all of these aspects in detail and also considers the responses of the Association to the many secular and ecclesiastical challenges it has faced.

Centenaries are momentous occasions, and the production of this history is a way of recording the achievements of the Association and respectfully remembering the contributions made by so many Catenians to their Catholic and civic communities during the past century.



*Sir,*

In the letters on p19 of April’s Catena I noticed a letter from Tom Lomas of Macclesfield Circle and Peter Lomas of City of Leeds Circle speaking about their grandfather John Lomas, Founder Secretary of Liverpool No 4 in 1910. His son, Frank, who is the father of Tom and Peter, was enrolled in Stockport Circle and became the Founder President of Macclesfield Circle and also Province 17.

The prime movers in the formation of Ashton under Lyne Circle No 172 were Grand Director Jack Politi and Past Grand President Frank Lomas together with a new brother John Smith. Ashton Circle should have been in Province 1 but at that time Frank Lomas was the Provincial President of the newly formed Province 17 so the circle was put in Province 17.

This information is from notes left by Austin Fleming, a founder member of 172, in 1983.

So, Tom and Peter, we are proud of your father too.

When my husband, Harry Beddard, was Ashton President in 1964 we attended Ladies Evenings and met both Frank and his dear wife....yes, that makes me very old, doesn’t it?

*Thora Beddard*

Widow of Founder Member Harry Beddard, 172