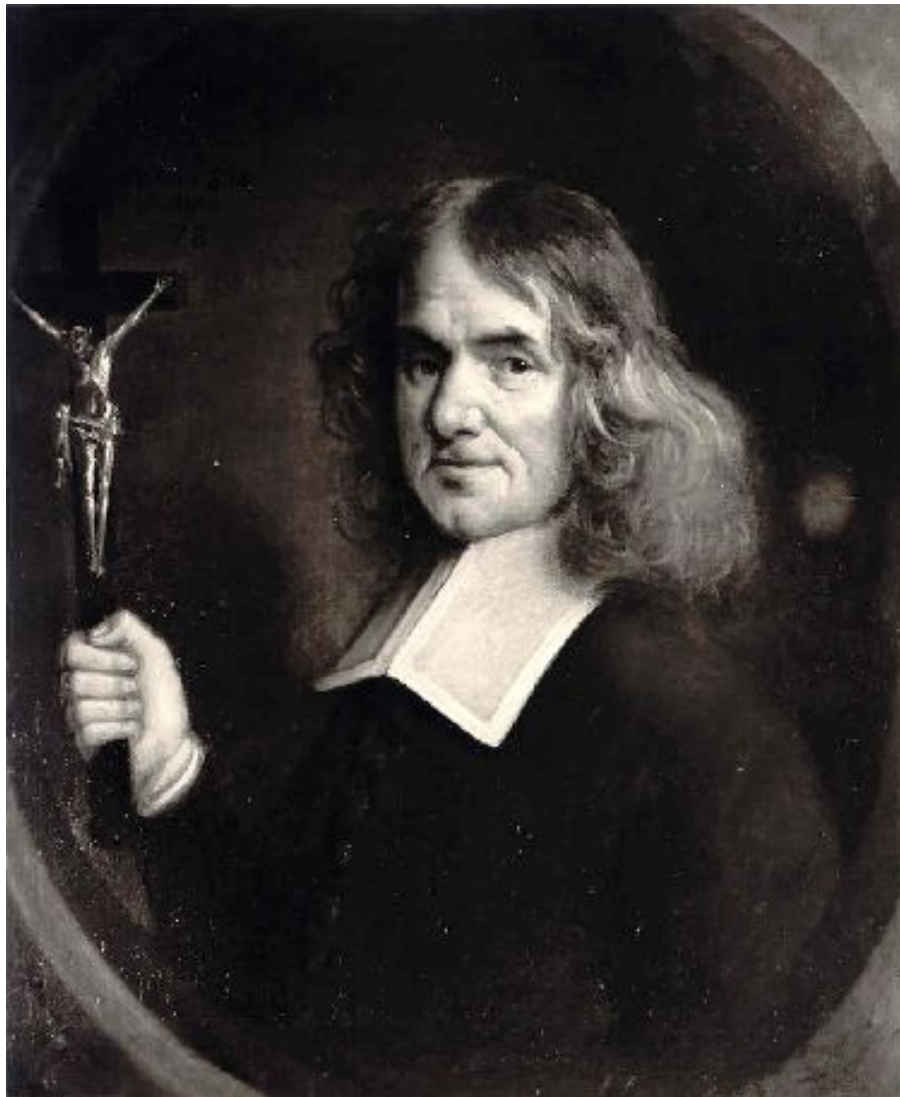


The Life and Times of Father John Dionysius (Denis) Huddleston OSB alias Josephson Sandford



by Annette Hudleston Harwood

John Hudleston was born April 15th. 1608, the second son and 4th. child of Joseph Hudleston of Faringdon, Lancashire and Eleanor Sisson, daughter of Cuthbert Sisson of Kirkbarrow, (formerly Thistlethwaite) at Barton, Westmorland, bought from Lady Anne Dacre, Countess of Arundel in 1583. A man of property and influence, he had been escheator for Westmorland in 1599. He died in 1609, having spent the last years of his life with John with Joseph and Eleanor and was buried at Greystoke.

John's paternal grandparents had been brought up at the court of Henry VIII and the

Princess Mary (later Queen). Andrew Hudleston (1532-1601) a younger son of Sir John Hudleston of Millom (d.1547) was instrumental in recommending to Mary a “safe” house Sawston, Cambridgeshire, owned by his cousin Sir John Hudleston, when she was fleeing from pursuit during the nine days reign of Lady Jane Grey in 1553. Andrew’s wife, Mary Hutton of Hutton John, was a goddaughter of Princess (later Queen) Mary, her mother Elizabeth (nee Bellingham) married to Cuthbert Hutton of Hutton John, and was “Mother of the Maids” to Katherine Parr, last wife of the King.

Joseph, his father, was born 1565 at Seaton, Cumberland, in a house belonging to his Aunt Bridget Pennington (widow Askew). Four of his uncles, Brian, William, Andrew and Richard were sent to Catholic Colleges at Douai, Valladolid and Seville on the Continent, William and Richard becoming priests. Andrew returned home, partly for reasons of health but also on account of his father’s death in 1601. Joseph succeeded to the estate at Faringdon, originally leased from the Sawston Huddlestons, finally buying it in 1609. (It was later sold to his relatives, the Penningtons of Muncaster in 1620/22.) All were devoted Catholics.

John’s maternal uncle, Thomas Hutton, was frequently in prison in London, probably for refusing to pay the recusant fines, so Cuthbert Sisson, his son-in-law Joseph Hudleston and Andrew Hudleston administered the Hutton John estates, in Cumberland, near Penrith. Joseph acquired the Hutton John estates in 1615.

Lancashire was a strongly Catholic county, while Cumberland was remote and difficult to access. The Hudlestons were frequently convicted and fined accordingly both in Lancashire and Cumberland. Marie Hudleston was described at Faringdon in 1595 “---living with her husband but not resident continuously-----the curate hath often conferred with her but no reformation had of her”. Joseph’s brother, Father William, served Mass at Faringdon on several occasions but was never prosecuted. Joseph and Eleanor travelled up and down to Hutton John, being “presented and excommunicated” for recusancy at Greystoke church 1609. It is probable that Andrew, Joseph’s brother, was left in charge at Hutton John after the death of Cuthbert Sisson, as his signature appears on several rental agreements and John, his nephew, was in his charge.

John was sent to Blencowe Grammar School Cumberland. In the “Responsa scholarum of the English College Rome” he says of himself “brought up at Hutton John Cumb. Son of noble parents impoverished by persecution and the care of eleven children, brothers and sisters all Catholics; has many Catholic and heretical kinsfolk. Studied at Blencow, Cumberland till 14 under a heretical teacher. Having completed his humanities in that school, was called home by his parents” (1622) Lived at home. In London and Yorkshire at his parents’ wish. When 19 went to St Omers (and Douai 1627) on the advice of his uncle (Father Richard

Huddleston) “ a priest educated in this college.....spent a year in the class of “ Syntax....healthy, apart from occasional headaches and fevers especially in spring and autumn. Always a Catholic, has come to Rome to study Philosophy and theology. Desire be an ecclesiastic”

His uncle (Dom Richard Huddleston) was a noted Benedictine missionary and priest, reconciling many lapsed Catholic families back to the Faith, serving in the dales of Yorkshire and Lancashire. It seems possible that John assisted his uncle on his travels and works in these Northern counties during the years 1622-1627.

John was admitted to the English College, Rome in 1632, where he spent the next seven years, being ordained priest in 1637. He had taken as his “aliases” the names “Josephson” and “Sandford” his father’s name and that of his maternal aunt Anne (Hutton) married to Thomas Sandford of Askham (widowed 1574) whose son Thomas and his wife, Martha, were convicted Catholic recusants. (Aliasesalmost every student ...assumed another nameto make matters more difficult for the spies , and protected in some way, English parents who were liable to heavy penalties for sending their children across seas to be educated.....The aliases were frequently connected with family history...”

In March 1639, he was sent to England on “ the mission”. His mother Eleanor died in October and was buried in Greystoke Church, as had been his grandmother, Marie “buried night...1623”. Joseph, his father was buried 1646, in the church, even though all three were Catholics.

He now became chaplain to John Preston of Furness Abbey (died 1643) probably again on the advice of his uncle Richard. According to traditions, he served at Selside and Wensleydale, though this may have been after 1651. The names in the “Obits” of his Mother give an indication of the close family ties of the Northern Catholics; Prestons, Salkeld, Tempest, Howard, Thornborough, Gascoigne. He also served the Ingleby family at Lawkland . John Preston’s son , described as “ a Papist in Arms”was created a baronet in 1644. Fatally wounded in a skirmish with Parliamentary forces at Lindal in Furness, he died of his wounds in 1645. Father John had apparently “come in with Sir John Preston under the Duke of Newcastle and was described as a gentleman volunteer” probably as a military chaplain for under his priestly vows, he was not allowed to bear arms. After Sir John was wounded in 1644 he served “under Colonel Ralph Pudsey at Newark”. Lady Preston (nee Jane Morgan) had died at York in 1644. Sir John’s estates were sequestered by a Parliamentary ordinance in 1646 to raise £10,000 to discharge the debts of the late John Pym. Young Sir John (the heir b.c.1642) had part of the estates released to him in 1653 providing he was brought up a Protestant, but by 1651 he was with the Catholic Whitgreave family of Moseley Hall, Wolverhampton, using the alias of “Jackson,”under the care of

Father John Huddleston.

The battle of Worcester on Sept. 3rd. 1651 was the last attempt by the Royalists to regain power. A complete rout, the King (Charles 2nd) was forced to flee. After several narrow escapes from the Parliamentary soldiers, he found relief and temporary refuge on 8th. September, at Moseley Hall with Thomas Whitgreave and his chaplain, Father John, who was acting as tutor for the little Sir John Preston, and Thomas Whitgreave's two nephews Francis Reynolds and Thomas Palin. Next to Father John's room and well concealed, was the priest's secret hiding place. This was prepared for a Royalist fugitive, but none of the household realised it would be the King. Almost unrecognisable, apart from his height of 5 ft. 2 in., face and skin dyed brown with walnut juice, hair roughly cut short, wearing borrowed woodman's clothes, ragged and worn boots, he must have presented a desperate sight. Smuggled upstairs by Father John, and after inspecting his new refuge, he revived somewhat with "a glass of sack and some biscuit". He sat on the bed, and "bled a little of his nose," (as was usual with him) and brought out a handkerchief "a la mode to his attire" - a "ragged clout" which Father John took, giving him a clean one. The "bloody clout", "being daubed with the King's Blood from his nose, Father Huddleston gave to a kinswoman of his, Mrs. Braithwaite, who kept it with great veneration, as a remedy for the King's Evil" (A century later, a tortoiseshell box with a "bloody clout" in it was sent to the then Andrew Huddleston of Hutton John by a relative from the Kentmere area. This box, bearing a silver medallion of the head of Charles 2nd. was exhibited at Carlisle in 1951.) The King's "noggin" shirt of the coarsest linen was changed for a fresh one that had been sent to Father John by Mrs. Morgan, grandmother to young Sir John Preston. (The old shirt was sent to Sherwood, later Abbot of Lamspring in Germany.) The King's feet, sore and inflamed, were bathed and fresh linen stockings, worsted stockings and a pair of new slippers of Mr. Whitgreave's were fitted. "His Majesty, finding himself more at ease, rose up and said he was then fit (sic) for a new March, and if it would please God ever to bless him but with 20,000 men.....resolved to fight, he should not doubt to drive the rogues out of this land..." The house servants, apart from the Catholic cook, had all been sent away and the three boys, John, Thomas and Francis set as "lookouts" in the garret windows overlooking all the roads around the house. There were several alarms of "soldiers" but Mr. Whitgreave calmly met the men and persuasively sent them on their way. One of the boys at dinner said "Eat hard boys, for we have been on life guard and hard duty this day" although they had no idea of the importance of their task. While the King waited for news of his next escape route, he asked Father John if he could see the oratory in the attic as "he knew he was a priest and he needed not fear to own it to him, for if it pleased God to restore him to his kingdom.....should never heed more privacies...who having seen it, said it was a very decent place..." He looked among Father John's books in the room and saw a manuscript written by Father Richard Huddleston, John's uncle, "A Short and Plain Way to the Faith and Church" which he read attentively and expressed his acceptance of its arguments."

A proclamation had been issued on 9th. September, threatening “death to all who should Charles Stuart, a long dark man, above 2 yards high” and offering a reward of £1000 to anyone who should betray him, but the King, on the run for six weeks, was never betrayed and finally escaped to France from Seaham, on the 15th. October 1651. He never forgot the loyal Catholics who had helped him during this dangerous time and rewarded them after Restoration.

There are no records of the career of Father John from 1651 until his reappearance at court in 1660. Sometime between 1651 and 1655 he became a Benedictine monk, probably professed by someone from the Abbey of Ss. Denis and Aloysius at Lamspring, near Hildesheim in Germany. The abbey had been given to the Benedictines in 1643 as a home for British Catholics fleeing persecution before and after the Civil War. He took the professed name of Dionysius (Denis) and was later given “nine years antiquity in the Hallon account of his great merit...” having passed his noviceship on the mission in England.

After the Restoration in 1660, the King appointed him chaplain to the Queen Dowager (Henrietta Maria) with quarters at Somerset House where he was immune from religious persecution. Thomas Whitgreave became a gentleman usher to Queen Catherine of Braganza, after her marriage in 1662. In 1661 John visited Douai where he was elected titular Benedictine prior of Worcester. On the death of Henrietta Maria in 1669, he was one of the chaplains to Queen Catherine of Braganza, having a salary and pension of £200. His name appears in the registers of the Catholic chapel Royal at St. James' 1664-71 and Somerset House 1671-78 officiating at marriages. It is not impossible, that during this time he visited his Catholic relatives in Cumbria now restored to their estates; his elder brother Andrew and his wife Dorothy Fleming, at Hutton John, where a chapel had been built in the new East wing, (the sacred heart windows still to be seen, defiantly proclaiming his faith although the chapel rooms were demolished in the 1750's) and perhaps his brother Captain William Hudleston at Hale Grange, Kirkby Thore.

In 1669 and 1671, he visited Oxford, staying with Father Vincent Sadler OSB, at Amsterdam Court, now part of Brasenose College, where he met Anthony a Wood the antiquarian, also Samuel Pepys, who wrote down his experiences of the escape of the King at Moseley.

An order was issued in council in 1674 that “all Catholic priests born within his Majesty's dominions, with the exception of Father Hudleston, to leave the kingdom before the 25th March next following and not to return.” During the anti-Catholic riots in 1678, there was a bill “exempting Father Hudleston and others who had helped the King, from the penalties of the laws against recusants....they should live as freely as any of his Majesty's Protestant

subjects...”

The court had long had powerful Catholic connections and inclinations; the King's brother James, Duke of York, whose first wife, Anne Hyde had become a Catholic on her death. His second wife, married in 1673, was the Italian Mary Beatrice of Modena. The King's mistress, Louise de Kerouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth, another Catholic, was defended Queen Catherine during the enquiries of the Test Act of 1678, and several members of the Court, Ambassadors and officials were sympathisers, in spite of anti Popery legislation.

In 1684, Father John gave £400 to the Abbey of Lamspring “ as a perpetual foundation in the name of one of his name...”

During the first week of February 1685 , Charles 2nd. was dying. It is not clear who first suggested that the King should receive a Catholic priest. He had declined the English communion from his chaplain, Thomas Ken, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, saying there was no hurry and he was too feeble to receive it “it was not yet time”. It was probably Louise Kerouaille who suggested to the Duke of York, that the King's sympathies were with the Catholic Faith. James asked the King in a whisper if he would like him to bring a priest, which the King assented. The difficulty was to find one who would not be recognised as Catholic. Quite by chance, the Portuguese Count of Castelmehor, found Father John in the Queen's apartments, accepted in Court circles for his part in the rescue of 1651. The Duke of York cleared the room of all the courtiers and clerics apart from the Earls of Bath and Feversham (groom of the stool and the Queen's chamberlain) who were completely loyal and discreet. Disguised in a wig and cassock, Father John was admitted by a back stair by Chiffinch, the King's confidential servant and valet. The King remembered him and said “You that saved my body are now come to save my soul”. ...Charles made his confession, received extreme unction, was anointed with oil and took the Catholic communion. Father John prayed with him for a while and holding a crucifix before the King gave him the blessing and then retired. Charles appeared to rally after the last rites, but finally died on the morning of Friday 6th. February. Aged 55 he was buried in Westminster Abbey. He was..... “very obscurely buried....because His Late Majesty dying in and His Present Majesty professing a different religion from that of his people.”---“ it was more prudent to do it in a more private manner” (John Evelyn)

Father John's portrait by Jacob Huysmans painted in 1685, when John was 77, shows a vigorous smiling face, with his own long greying hair, holding aloft a crucifix, was sent, after the death of the King, to his nephew Andrew, at Hutton John. A clock from the late King's collection was also sent, no doubt a gift from King James 2nd.

Father John remained in the household of the Queen Dowager, Catherine, and published

uncle Father Richard's book in 1688. Richard had died in 1655 at Stockeld Park, near Ill home of the Middleton family where he served as chaplain. Entitled "A Short and Plain to the Faith and Church composed many years since by that Eminent Divine Mr. Richard Hudleston of the English Congregation of the Order of Saint Benedict" it was dedicated the Queen Dowager. There were also papers found in the "closet" of the late King, copied by James 2nd., and a "Brief Account of what occurred at the happy death of our Late Sovereign Lord King Charles 2nd in regard to religion."

In 1688 Queen Mary Beatrice, the second wife of James 2nd, gave birth to a long awaited son, James Francis Edward. Although surrounded by Protestant ladies and courtiers, malicious rumours began to be circulated regarding his birth, probably at the instigation of James's two Protestant daughters, Mary and Anne. Anti Catholic feelings were at their height and the invasion of England by the Protestant Prince William of Orange, married Princess Mary, was imminent. Protestant conspirators included Andrew Hudleston of Huddleston, the nephew of Father John, who with Sir James Lowther, seized a ship at Wexford carrying arms and ammunition to King James's garrison at Carlisle. King James fled to France with his wife and infant son, and in February 1689, the Crown was offered to William and Mary, who were crowned as joint sovereigns in April 1689.

Father John stayed on as chaplain to the Queen Dowager at Somerset House, still receiving a special exemption from the Acts against Papacy. His pension continued to be paid by William 3rd. Catherine of Braganza returned to Portugal in 1692.

He wrote his will on January 30th. 1693/4 but was becoming more infirm and senile. He was under the protection of Lord Feversham, a naturalised Frenchman, who had been present at the deathbed of Charles 2nd. and had since converted to Catholicism. In 1694 he changed the endowment to Lamspring saying that "by his relatives he did not mean the Hutton Junior branch, but the Hudlestons of Sawston". Andrew his nephew, and his children were out of favour for their support of King William and Queen Mary, and their Protestantism, while the Hudlestons of Sawstons were firmly Catholic.

Andrew and his daughter Frances, visited him in 1697 incensed by the change of the endowment to the Sawston branch of the family, and in September made an inventory of his belongings. They were prevented by "Ellen Rigby, one of the servants...of the said Mr. Hudleston" from removing any items (many books, crucifix and an altar) Andrew petitioned for the custody of Father John, but Lord Feversham protested and obtained an order from Lord Chancellor to continue as John's guardian.

John died about 12th. September 1698 aged 90, when his will was proved at London, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, by Martin Pinkard his executor, of the Parish of St.

Clements Danes, who was bequeathed five pounds.

He left to his “Well beloved brother William Hudleston, one guinea to buy a mourning ring....”(This was William of Hale Grange near Kirkby Thore, a staunch Catholic whos daughter Mary had married William Thornburgh of Selside, and was the mother of Willi later President of Douai , and Francis, a Jacobite in 1715.) “to my dear sister Helen Skel five pounds as a token of my brotherly affection” (Helen/ Eleanor was the second wife o Richard Skelton of High House, Hesket in the Forest, whose elder brother Simon was a Catholic priest) “my nephew Andrew ...of Hutton John, one guinea for a mourning ring his eldest son, one guinea...” (not the inheritance they had hoped for) He gave all the re he possessed to “my well beloved friends Edward Burdet of Grayes Inn Esqre in the Co of Middlesex and Francis Canning of the Inner Temple London gentleman.” He was bur at St.Mary le Strand, also known as the Chapel of the Savoy, near Somerset House.

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Moseley Old Hall is now in the care of the National Trust

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