

Sr Goedele, a Guide to the Photos on this Page

Born on 20 August 1935 at Antwerp, Sr Goedele was the eldest of four children—‘Baby Magda’ (‘Belgium’ photo gallery) is easily recognisable in the photo! There is also a family photo taken at her Golden Jubilee in 2012 in the ‘Turvey’ photo gallery.

She entered the Priorij ‘Regina Pacis’ at Schotenhof, Antwerp, making her first profession there on 13 May 1962, the same day that her cousin, Sr Hadewych, also a nun at Schotenhof, made her final profession. (In the chapel photos, Sr Hadewych can be seen at the prie-dieu)

Sr Goedele moved to Cockfosters, London, making her final profession at the Church of Christ the King in 1965. The community was living, school and all, upstairs in the parish building. After long delays caused by problems with the builders, the community moved into their new building in 1966.

At Cockfosters Sr Goedele taught the reception class at the Vita et Pax school, run by the nuns. Some of the people she taught remained in contact with her until the end of her life. A person of many and varied interests, Sr Goedele was a keen bee-keeper and the community enjoyed home-produced honey. She also learned some pottery skills—a vase made by her is often in use now in the chapel.

In 1981 the community moved from Cockfosters to Turvey—the bees moved as well. Throughout 1980 and most of 1981, ‘work parties’ travelled to Turvey to work at the Abbey and Sr Goedele took part in them—there is a photo of the members of a work party, including Sr Goedele, having their lunch outside Ravenswood House. By September 1981 everyone was resident at Turvey, and life slowly settled into a familiar monastic routine.

The move to Turvey Abbey meant that Sr Goedele, who loved children, no longer had her job as a teacher, but, in the 1990’s, ‘Mothers’ Days’ were held at the Abbey. They gave mothers of small children an opportunity to have a quiet day while Sr Goedele looked after the children, a job that she loved to do. Children and toys spread out in the new library, the big room that had formerly served as our chapel. She had an amazing memory for children’s birthdays—if you couldn’t remember the birthday of a young member of your family, Sr Goedele could always tell you. Her interest in children extended to all the children in the English, Belgian and Dutch royal families! ‘Information Science’ would have been just the job for her, often guests were pleasantly surprised to discover that she had remembered their preferences (without the aid of a computer). She is remembered by many for her kindness and smile.

For a long time Sr Goedele handled the mailing list for the Catholic scripture magazine ‘The Word Amongst Us’, when it was being done manually, and was almost always able to solve problems created by incomplete addresses etc.

As well as singing and playing the organ in the chapel, she was very fond of music, Sr Goedele took part in all the ordinary jobs that need to be done to run a big household. Always interested in recycling, for many years she was in charge of the orange bins and was a great collector of items to put in them.

I hope this helps to make some sense of the photos. I’m sure I have missed out all sorts of things that could be said about Sr Goedele, but, what ever she did or didn’t do, one thing is certain, she lived as a professed nun for just under sixty years, and that in itself is surely a great achievement!

May she rest in peace.

Sr Benedict
Turvey Abbey