



Pope John Paul II has proclaimed that the year 2000 AD is to be celebrated as a Year of Jubilee.

With attention focused on the new millennium, an opportunity presents itself to look back on the past thousand years and to celebrate what has been achieved during that time by the Catholic people of Wales and Herefordshire. Pre-Reformation glories; the sufferings of penal times; the recusants; our Martyrs; the effects of Irish immigration, the growth of Catholic Education and the re-emergence of the Church, and its ultimate acceptance, as an important part of the national life of Wales and Herefordshire are just some of the topics worthy of celebration.

These short booklets have been and are being produced by individuals, parishes, historical study groups and schools in the Archdiocese as part of our contribution to the world-wide celebration of two thousand years of Christianity. I commend them to you and congratulate all who have taken part in this imaginative "Millennium" project.

+John Aloysius Ward

Archbishop of Cardiff.



ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

**CATHOLICS IN WALES AND HEREFORDSHIRE IN THE
SECOND MILLENNIUM**

Short Studies of Notable People, Places and Events 1000-2000 AD.

RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN HEREFORDSHIRE BEFORE AND AFTER THE REFORMATION

Herefordshire



No. 6

Wales



Millennium Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ,
Lord of time and eternity
prepare our minds to celebrate with faith
the Jubilee of the year 2000.
Fill our hearts with joy and wonder
as we recall that precious moment
when you were conceived
in the womb of the Virgin Mary,
that moment when you became our brother.

*Praise and glory to you, O Christ
today and forever.*

Lord Jesus bring us with you and your mother
on your journey to Bethlehem.
the place where you were born.
May we travel with you,
firm in the faith,
loyal to the truth,
obedient to the will of the Father,
along the one true path that leads to life.

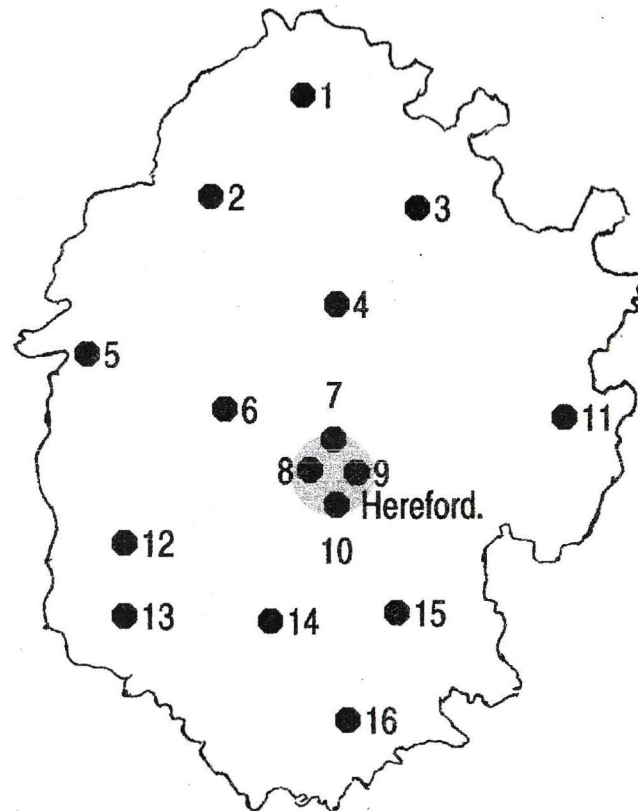
*Praise and glory to you, O Christ
today and forever.*

Jesus, at your birth the angels sang:
Glory to God in the highest
and peace to his people on earth.
Two thousand years later
we need to hear that song again.
We need to pray for peace
in our hearts,
in our families,
in our country,
in our sad and wonderful world..

RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN HEREFORDSHIRE BEFORE AND AFTER THE REFORMATION

**Researched and Written
by
Patrice King**

RELIGIOUS HOUSES IN HEREFORDSHIRE
BEFORE THE DISSOLUTION.



- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Wigmore Abbet (Augustinian) | 9. Hereford (Knights Hospitallers) |
| 2. Limebrook Priory (Augustinians) | 10. Hereford (Dominicans) |
| 3. Leominster Priory (Benedictine) | 11. Colwell (Benedictine) |
| 4. Dinmore (Knights Hospitallers) | 12. Abbey Dore (Cistercian) |
| 5. Clifford Priory (Cluniac) | 13. Ewyas Harold (Benedictine) |
| 6. Wormsley Priory (Agustinian) | 14. Kilpeck Priory (Benedictine) |
| 7. Hereford (Franciscans) | 15. Aconbury (Augustinian) |
| 8. Hereford St. Guthlac (Benedictine) | |

The Religious Orders in Herefordshire at the time of the Reformation

At the time of the dissolution of the monasteries during the Reformation, there were about 15 religious houses in Herefordshire. The exact number is not clear as some may have closed or been amalgamated before this date. Certainly there had been more, such as Kilpeck Priory and Ewyas Harold Priory, both Benedictine, which were small to start with and later closed as being uneconomic. There were also at least 3 Knight Templar foundations, but these disappeared, or were taken over by the Knights Hospitallers, when the order was dissolved by the Pope in 1312 after a scandal over their alleged involvement with black magic and witchcraft. More probably it was that their enormous wealth and influence was seen as a threat by secular rulers, particularly Philip II of France, who manufactured an excuse to have them discredited.

Of the known fifteen religious houses existing before the dissolution, four were in the city of Hereford itself. The largest, and probably the richest, of these was **St. Guthlac's Priory**. This was originally a community of Canons, founded by King Aethalbald, between 716 and 757 and was situated within what became the castle precincts. However, in 1144 it was joined with St. Peter's, another community of Canons, and moved to a fresh site outside the city walls, while St. Peter's became a parish church.

The new foundation became a regular Benedictine monastery and was situated where the bus station and County Hospital now are. Although there are no known remains, it was a prosperous foundation, with large stone buildings and a spacious garden and orchards. It also had holdings within the city, including houses, mills and shops. At the dissolution in 1538 it had an income of £121 a year. (It is very difficult to translate this into modern money but, for comparison, at about the same time Thomas More bought 27 acres of land in Chelsea for £30, while an upper servant in the king's household earned £5.40 a year.) As well as the

Benedictines of St Guthlac's, there were two religious houses for friars in Hereford. Unlike most of the monastic orders, the friars were not enclosed, but were itinerant preachers. This meant that their houses were generally smaller and were situated within the cities, where it was easier to carry out their vocation of preaching and working among the poor. In the early years after their foundation they recruited humble and illiterate adults, but later began to insist on a high degree of training. As they were anxious to compete with the secular clergy they had to have learning, as well as "being models of Christian behaviour." Such competition could cause problems, as was the case with the Dominican foundation in Hereford.

The presence of **The Grey Friars**, or Franciscans in Hereford, is evident today in the names of Greyfriars Avenue and Greyfriars Bridge. The Grey Friars may have reached the city as early as 1228 and by 1250 they had a friary and church completed. This was situated between Barton Road and the river. Although their very strict rules regarding poverty were gradually relaxed the friars did not have the extensive buildings and vast tracts of land that were owned by many monasteries.

At its dissolution in 1538 there were 14 Franciscan Friars in Hereford. Apart from a few stones, no remains of their friary have been found.

As with the Franciscans, Blackfriars Street is a reminder of the **Dominican** presence in Hereford. About 1246 a Dominican house, reputedly founded by William Cantelupe, was situated at Portfield, outside St. Owen's gate. However, their presence was opposed by the Cathedral Canons who sabotaged their building efforts. As already mentioned such opposition was not uncommon for the friars were seen as competition for various lucrative donations, such as grants of money for the saying of masses for the souls of the dead. In addition, the Black Friars in particular, were powerful preachers and part of their preaching was against the excessive luxury enjoyed by some of the clergy.

The dispute with the Cathedral Canons was resolved in 1319 when Edward II granted them a new site outside the Widemarsh Gate. Here they obviously prospered. Their importance and influence is demonstrated by the fact that at the dedication of their church in the reign of Edward III, not only the king, but also the Black Prince, three archbishops and one bishop were present.

At the dissolution in 1538 there were only eight friars, but earlier there had been as many as thirty. Their preaching cross, where they gave open-air sermons, still exists behind Coningsby Hospital in Widemarsh Street, while substantial remains of the friary can also be seen.

The fourth religious house in Hereford at the dissolution was that of **The Knights Hospitallers of St. John**. Although this was a knightly order, the members took the monastic vows. The order was originally devoted to the provision of a hospice at Jerusalem, but later became a fighting order and spread to all parts of Europe. With the decline of the crusades, the Hospitallers returned to running hospices. They were a wealthy order and became more so when they acquired much of the Templers' wealth, when that order was dissolved. They recruited largely from the landed gentry.

Their house in Hereford was where Coningsby Hospital now stands. It was small, having only two brothers, and was dependent on the much larger Hospitallers' preceptory at Dinmore. It was dissolved in 1540, but its chapel remains today as part of the hospital chapel.

Outside the city, in the Herefordshire countryside, the most substantial monasteries were those of Abbey Dore and Wigmore. **Abbey Dore** was a Cistercian house, founded on 26th April 1147, from Morimond Abbey in France. There were thirteen monks, which was the customary number. As well as the "choir monks" there were a number of lay brothers, who worked on the distant farms owned by the abbey. At least eight of these farms are known and they were mostly given over to sheep farming. By 1536 constant border raids

and some mismanagement had left the abbey “greatly in ruin and decay.” Its income had dwindled to £101 a year and as a consequence, it was one of the earlier monasteries to be dissolved in 1536. About half of the monastic church is still in use, while remains of the abbey can still be seen.

Wigmore Abbey was founded about 1131 at Shobdon. It moved near Aymestrey, then to Wigmore, Byton and Shobdon, before finally settling at Wigmore about 1172. It was a house of Augustinian Canons, originally from St. Victor’s Abbey near Paris, consisting of an abbot, prior and seventeen canons. The Mortimer family were benefactors of the foundation, and for several generations family members were buried there. Their support was probably influential in ensuring the prosperity of the monastery.

At its dissolution, in 1538, there were ten canons in residence and its income was £261 a year. The remains of the abbot’s lodging and the church can still be seen.

Another prosperous religious house at the time of the Reformation was **Leominster Priory**. This was originally an Anglo Saxon house, for both men and women, founded about 666. It was destroyed by the Danes and refounded as a Saxon Nunnery. However, after the scandal of the prioress’s behaviour, this was dissolved in 1046 and it became a Benedictine, or possibly Cluniac, monastery, dependent upon Reading Abbey. There were about ten monks, but it was obviously prosperous, as its income in 1535 was £448. It was dissolved in 1539. The remains of its beautiful church can still be seen.

Clifford Priory, a Cluniac house, was founded about 1129. It was a cell of Lewis Priory and at its foundation had a prior and eight monks. Because of continual raids by the Welsh, the priory relied for protection on the nearby castle. The route taken by the relief column is still known as Succour Lane. Although in 1450 it had eleven monks, it never seems to have been particularly rich and at the dissolution it had an income of only £57. It was thus

considered as one of the smaller houses, which were the first to be dissolved, closing in 1536. It is possible that some of the remains now form part of Priory Farm

Wormsley Priory was founded about 1216. The order was the Augustinians from St. Victor’s, and it seems to have consisted of about seven or eight canons. Although it received support from the Talbot family, it remained one of the smaller houses, having an income of £85 in 1535. Despite this Wormsley was not one of the earliest monasteries to be dissolved. This was due to the intercession of the Earl of Shrewsbury, who paid a fine of £200 on its behalf, in return for the priory being spared in “perpetuity”. “Perpetuity” turned out to last three years, and the priory was finally dissolved in 1539 and its four remaining canons pensioned off. There are no remains of the priory buildings, but its fish pools can still be seen.

Flanesford Priory founded in 1346, never flourished. It was a house of Augustinian Canons, but it seems there were never more than two or three canons there. Its failure to prosper was probably due to the Black Death hitting the house soon after its foundation, as well as to general hard times and mismanagement. It was one of the earliest to be dissolved, closing in 1536 with an income of only £14.

Of the remaining religious houses for men, there was a very small cell of the Benedictines of **Malvern priory** at **Colwall**, with only two monks; another Benedictine cell at **Livers Ocle**, originally dependent on Lyre Abbey in France and later given to Sheen priory, worth £7 in 1535; two houses of Knights Hospitallers at **Dinmore and Garway**, both of which had been leased out for £96 10s by 1535; and a college at **Bromyard**, which may have been monastic or secular canons. This had an income of £25 in 1535 and was not closed until after 1548.

In Herefordshire there were only two religious houses for women, both of which were Augustinian. One was **Linebrook Priory**, founded in 1189. In 1535 it had an income of £22 and when

it closed in 1539 there were six nuns in residence. As with both nuns and monks, many received pensions and it is recorded that in 1553 three nuns from Limebrook were still receiving pensions.

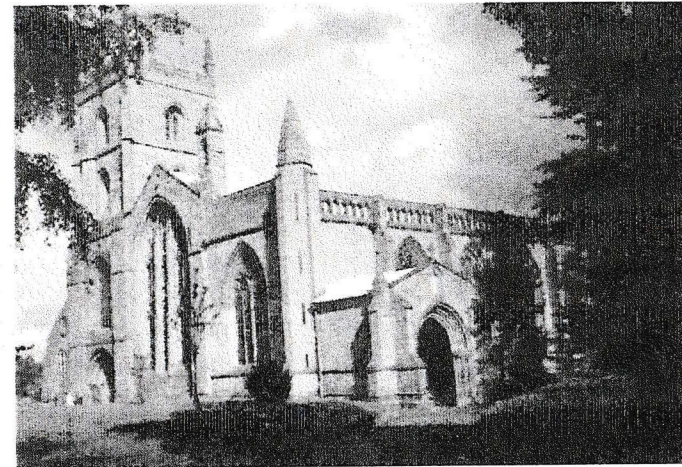
The other religious house for women was **Aconbury Priory**. This was founded in the reign of King John and was originally for Sisters of St. John of Jerusalem, but after 1237 became Augustinian. This priory, as Limebrook, was enriched by the Lacy and Mortimer families, some of whose female members entered as nuns. Nuns appear to have moved fairly freely between the two houses, both of which had a good reputation. Shortly before its dissolution it was acknowledged that there “women and children were brought up in virtue and learning.” In 1535 Aconbury Priory had an income of £67 and it was closed some time between 1538 and 39.

The small number of female religious houses in Herefordshire is probably due to the fact that it was a border county. Throughout the Middle Ages, particularly in the west, Hereford was subject to incursions by Welsh raiders. This meant that it was considered an unsuitable area for the foundations of nunneries.

After the dissolution the religious houses became a prime source of building material, so that today there are only a few scattered remains and some dry fishponds. However, many of them had important libraries and these do generally survive. The libraries of the Franciscans and the Cistercian of Abbey Dore are still in existence, as is the Chronicle of Wigmore and the manuscripts of Limebrook. Many can be found in Hereford’s Chained Library.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and apart from a short break under Mary Tudor, religious orders were illegal in England and Wales until the end of the 18th Century. Of course religious orders, such as the Jesuits, Benedictines and Franciscans, continued to work in England and Wales as missionaries, but this was necessarily undercover. There is also the example of the Bar Convent in York, founded by Mary Ward, which existed throughout the period and a Franciscan House in Hereford from 1684 to 1698, which then moved to an attic in Church Street. However, these were exceptional and remained secret.

While active persecution largely died out it was not until 1778 that a Roman Catholic priest ceased to be liable to life imprisonment if discovered in the country. A further Relief Act in 1791 made it legal to erect Roman Catholic churches and this enabled religious communities to return to England and Wales. The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 removed virtually all restrictions against Catholics, but it was not until 1850 that the Pope considered that the countries ready for the re-establishment of the hierarchy of bishops. England and Wales were divided into twelve dioceses, under Cardinal Wiseman, Archbishop of Westminster. Herefordshire was joined with Wales in the Diocese of Newport and Menevia whose first bishop was Dr. Brown, a Benedictine monk.



Leominster Priory as it is today.

THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN HEREFORD FROM 1800

BELMONT ABBEY

The abbey at Belmont is a Benedictine foundation. The Benedictine Order was founded by St Benedict who was born in 480. He founded an abbey at Monte Cassino and wrote a detailed rule for the monks of the community. This rule was adopted by many other monastic foundations and has earned him the title of "The Father of Monasticism."

The official opening of the monastery of St. Michael, at Belmont took place on November 21st 1859. The founding of a monastery in Hereford was largely due to Dr. Brown, a Benedictine, who was the first bishop of Newport and Menevia. He was in need of a Cathedral and wanted Benedictines to form the cathedral chapter. His needs coincided with an offer, from Mr. Francis Wegg Prosser, a recent convert to Catholicism, to build a large church on land he owned near Hereford. Hearing from Bishop Brown of his needs for a cathedral and a monastery, Mr. Wegg Prosser offered the church and seven acres of woodland to the Benedictines on a 999 year lease. In July 1854 the General Chapter of the English Benedictine Congregation (Douai, Ampleforth and Downside) agreed to the foundation of the new monastery.

The foundation stone for the church was laid in 1854 and the building, designed by Pugin, completed in the summer of 1857. Even before its completion a decree from Rome, made Belmont Church of St. Michael the Pro Cathedral of the diocese. In the same year as the completion of the church the contract between Mr. Wegg Prosser and the Benedictines was finally signed. Among the conditions laid down were that the church should act as the parish church; that the priests should work in the diocese; that there should be no school for boys who intended to follow secular professions; and that only Gregorian chant should be used as music at solemn

mass and liturgical services. Not all these conditions were welcomed by Bishop Brown and over the course of years changes were made.

Although the church opened in 1857 the monastery did not open for another two years. This was partly because the original start on the monastery buildings had to be pulled down as no damp course had been laid. However, by 1858 the actual building was largely finished and on November 21st 1859 the monastery opened. The cost of the monastery and church to this time was £45,000. Bishop Brown was largely responsible for raising this sum, but there were contributions from the Catholic laity and from the other Benedictine houses.

When the monastery opened in November 1859 it housed nineteen men. At the head was the prior, Fr. Norbert Sweeney, with three priests, three professed brothers, eight choir postulants and four lay brother postulants. As well as forming the Cathedral Chapter, St. Michael's was to provide priests for missionary work in Wales and Hereford and to be the common noviciate and house of studies for the English Benedictine order. Bishop Brown's hope that it would also be a seminary for clergy for the diocese was found to be unsuccessful.

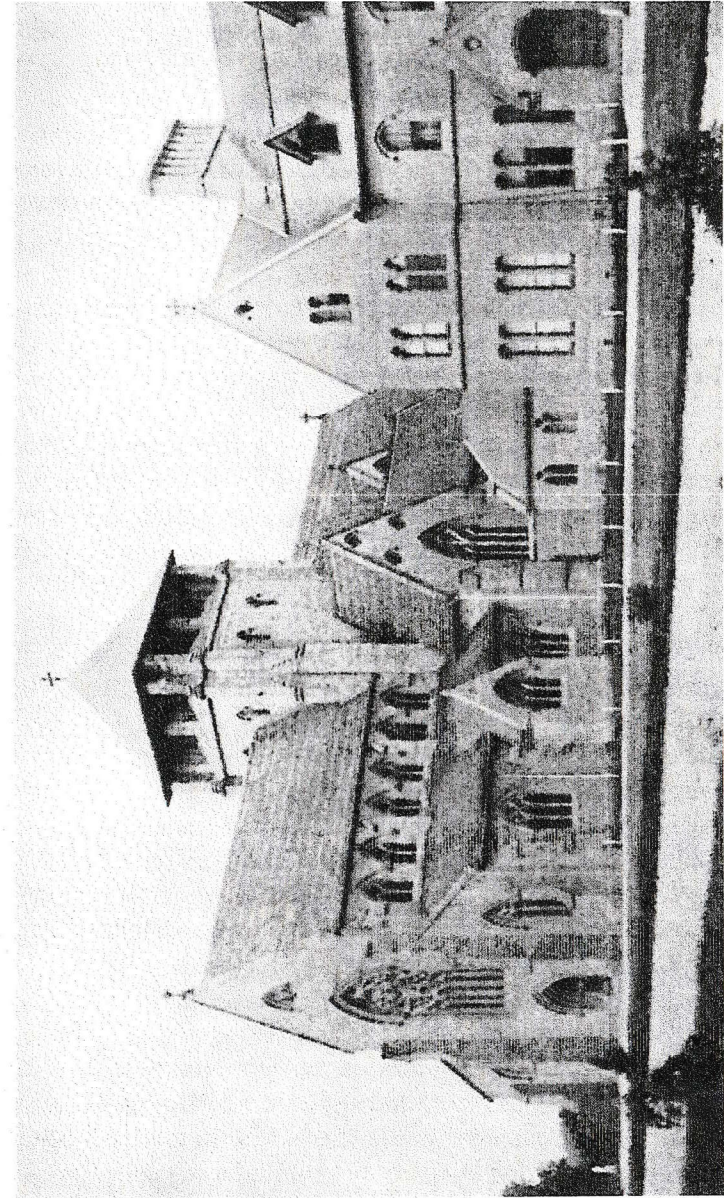
Life at the monastery was not easy, for there was little money available. There was no heating, food was basic and furniture and even cutlery in short supply. For example there were only two teaspoons for the stirring of the monastic tea. A timetable of about 1865 shows that the professed monks rose at 4.30 a.m. and spent from 5 a.m. until breakfast at 8a.m. in prayer. Dinner was at 12.30 p.m. and supper at 7p.m. Apart from about three quarters of an hour for recreation, the rest of the day was taken up by private and public prayer, lectures, and private study, with about forty minutes of manual labour.

Despite these hardships, St. Michael's continued to grow and became responsible for the parishes of Hereford, Weobley, Ledbury and, in 1934 Whitehaven, as well as taking services in the

various convents in the area and supplying chaplains. The monastic buildings were extended and a small prep school for boys with a monastic vocation was in existence between 1860 and 1874. However the common noviciate was not altogether popular with the other English Benedictine houses at Douai, Ampleforth and Downside. The numbers of novices from these houses began to decline and Downside sent no novices after 1907. As a priory St. Michael's was dependent on the other monasteries of the English Benedictine Congregation, but from 1914 there was increasing pressure for it to become an autonomous abbey.

Autonomy was granted in 1917, when the General Chapter of the Benedictines agreed that Belmont would officially cease to be the common noviciate and house of study. Its elevation to an abbey took longer and came about largely as a result of a re-organisation in the ecclesiastical government of Wales. In 1916 Cardiff was established as a new Archdiocese which included Herefordshire. There then arose the problem as to whether St. David's in Cardiff or St. Michael's at Belmont should be the cathedral church. Rome proposed that, as the Benedictines had contributed so much to the re-establishment of the Catholic Church in Wales, the new archbishop should have two cathedral churches, with two chapters, a secular one and a regular one of Benedictine monks. There were four years of discussion before it was finally accepted that such an arrangement was impractical. Rome decided that the cathedral should be in Cardiff, but that, in recognition of its work, Belmont should be raised to the status of an abbey. This was officially recognised on March 21st 1920 when Dom Aelred Kindersley, the former prior, became the first abbot of a community, which consisted of fourteen monks.

St. Michael's was now an autonomous abbey but it faced the challenge of becoming financially independent. Some income was received from serving mass centres and caring for parishes, but without the fees from the other abbeys of the congregation for educating their novices it did not have sufficient income to be self-supporting. Retreats, missions and supply work might provide extra income, but the obvious solution to the problem was to found a



St. Michael's Priory, Belmont in 1860. From 1857 until 1916 it was the pro-Cathedral of the Diocese of Newport and all the Canons were drawn from the community.

school. However, the founding of a general school for Catholic boys, as opposed to a junior seminary, was forbidden by the terms of the original contract made with Mr. Wegg Prosser.

In 1917 a school for boys with a possible vocation to the priesthood was opened, although it never had more than twenty pupils. During its nine years existence, seven of its pupils became professed monks, but although it was successful in this way, it was not really large enough to become profitable.

By 1922 there were over thirty monks in the abbey, which was popular to some because it did not have the distraction of school teaching. However, the increase in the number of monks, meant the need for additional occupations, Therefore, in 1926, Major John Wegg, the son of the original benefactor, was persuaded to agree to the setting up of a school for boys intended for secular professions. He originally stipulated that there should only be fifty boys, but this condition eventually lapsed. Thus in September of that year the school started with eleven pupils.

The foundation of the school as well as the expansion of the number of monks in the monastery (by 1938 there were fifty) meant new buildings were needed. In 1931 the new school building was completed and dedicated to St. John Kemble. By this time there were forty pupils. The war increased the number at the school for it was in a safe area, and by 1945 the numbers had risen to one hundred. In 1949 the preparatory school moved to Derbyshire and older boys took over the building, while the school continued to expand. In 1950 there were 150 boys at Belmont while a second prep school was opened in Monmouthshire.

Between 1958 and 1964 an entirely new school was built and the number of pupils increased to a maximum of 300. The Derbyshire prep school was closed and education for this age group concentrated at Monmouthshire. In 1966 the sixth form was opened to girl borders, but, for a variety of reasons, this was never fully successful and was abandoned in 1976. However some years later

girls again attended the school, but this time only as day pupils. During the 1970's numbers, first at the prep school and later at the senior school, began to decline. This was partly as a result of a falling birth rate and to the fact that the decline in Britain's military involvement abroad meant that armed service families no longer needed to send their children to boarding school. A change in educational theory at this time also occurred. This suggested that children, particularly young children, were better educated at day schools, while living at home. A down turn in the economy, coinciding with increased cost in providing good educational facilities further exacerbated the problem. In 1986 the fall in numbers was so serious that the prep school was closed, followed in 1994, by the senior school, where the decline came somewhat later.

With the closure of the schools, it became necessary to find other sources of revenue. In 1995 St. Michael's Court, a small residential unit, was built on the site of former farm buildings, while the boarding houses were leased to the Herefordshire Community Health Trust, and converted to offices. Various attempts were made to find a use for the teaching block, but when these failed the site was sold to a developer. It is intended that the land will be used for sheltered housing, although work has not yet started on the project.

Finding a single corporate source of income for the community has not been possible, but the monks have shown themselves to be versatile and willing to adapt and diversify. "Monksoft" was established as a limited company, whose chief activity is the running of Hedley lodge. Hedley Lodge is really a small hotel, which has a bar with a small dining area attached, and a large function room, once the school refectory. This is very suitable for wedding receptions, formal dinners, anniversary or office parties, or professional conferences. The food and service are both extremely good and the function room is attractively and recently decorated. Any Old Boy of the school, returning would have difficulty in recognizing it as his old school dining hall.

As well as Hedley Lodge, which is managed by one of the

monks, helped by an efficient lay staff, there is a retreat centre used by a variety of Christian groups, a desktop publishing enterprise, and a piety shop.

While the community is involved in these varied activities, their main work is pastoral. Benedictine priests are in charge of eight parishes, including one at Whitehaven in Cumbria, as well as university, military and convent chaplaincies. There is also a small missionary priory in Peru, founded in 1981, and for twenty years one of the monks has been working in Uganda. At the present the community numbers forty-five, all of the active members being fully employed. The role that the Benedictines play in the life of the church has clearly changed over the last millennium, but the basic monastic traditions still remain and hopefully will continue to do so.



Bartestree Convent the home of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity. It was occupied by them from 1863 until 1993.

CONVENT OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY AT BARTESTREE

The nuns at the convent at Bartestree were from the order of Our Lady of Charity. This order was founded in 1641 by St. John Eudes. Their mission was the care and rehabilitation of young women by providing them with accommodation and suitable employment, as well as religious training. The young women concerned were originally prostitutes, who wished to change their way of life, but needed help and support to do so. St. John did not intend to found a religious order, but during ten years of working with such women, decided that a religious order would be the most effective way to help. Thus the order of Our Lady of Charity came into being.

The presence of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity in Herefordshire came about as the result of a local girl, Elizabeth Buckley Phillipps, becoming a novice of their order at Caen in 1857. She was the daughter of a wealthy Herefordshire landowner, Robert Biddulph Phillipps, who had converted to Catholicism in 1851. She and her sister were his only children, but sadly, a year after Elizabeth entered the convent, her sister died. Elizabeth, now Sister Mary of St. Peter of Acantara, was her father's sole heir. Mr. Phillipps therefore decided to use his money to found a convent for the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity on his own land. This would enable his daughter to fulfill her wish of helping to spread of the Catholic religion in England, as well as allowing her to return to her own country. In his will Robert Phillipps also left a grant of £8000 to the convent in Caen, so that they should not feel deprived.

As one of the conditions of the gift, Mr. Phillipps laid down that his daughter was to be professed at the new English house, even if this meant a delay. However, in June 1859, Sister Mary was in fact professed at Caen, while it was not until April 1862 that the contract for building the convent at Bartestree was signed. Mr.

Phillipps advanced £7000 towards the building, designed by Edward Pugin, and by August 1863 the first nuns took up residence.

Robert Biddulph Phillipps died in May 1864, leaving an estate and lands worth £18,000 to the Bartestree convent. Of this £16,000 was invested in "good securities", producing an annual income of £834.

After his death the convent continued to thrive and in 1867 the convent church was opened. The following year the presbytery from Old Longworth was moved to the convent grounds and in 1859 the Longworth Chapel. This chapel, which may have belonged to an order of monks before the Reformation, had fallen into disrepair and had, for many years, been used as a barn. After his conversion to Catholicism Mr. Phillipps had begun restoring it and in September 1859 it opened for public worship. When the Chapel and the presbytery moved to Bartestree a Mass Centre for the Catholics of the area was formed. This developed into the Parish of St. Anne's, which for many years had its own resident priest, who was also the convent chaplain.

In 1868 Sister Mary of Saint Peter of Alcantra, the former Elizabeth Phillipps, returned to Caen where she remained, although the convent at Bartestree retained the property it had received under her father's will. The year before her departure there seems to have been difficulties within the community, but by 1869 these had been resolved.

The convent buildings at Bartestree were large and accommodated not only the nuns, but also a number of "Deprived Women". The original purpose for which the order had been founded had changed over time and by the time Bartestree Convent was founded it had turned to helping any women who was in need of support. Some of the women who came had been placed in orphanages and convents as babies because of the loss of parents or for other reasons. When they became adults they could no longer stay in these early homes and so came to Bartestree.

Others came, or were sent, for a variety of reasons and at one time there were one hundred residents. The number of sisters also increased from the original four at the foundation, to a maximum of about sixty. In 1932 for example there were fifty-four sisters in the convent.

In the early days of the convent many of the women who came were in need of some form of occupational therapy. Laundry was one of the occupations with which they could cope and over the course of time this developed into a paying industry, giving employment to some of the women. The work was highly valued in Hereford and the surrounding counties and provided a regular source of income.

While the laundry remained for many years the main source of income, it was not the only form of employment for both nuns and residents. Many of the sisters were from farms in Ireland, where they had learnt how to run a farm if the need arose. Land was available at Bartestree and these sisters came to be in charge of a self-supporting farm. They were helped by women living at the convent who needed outdoor work for health reasons. At one time the dairy farm not only provided the community with butter, milk, cheese and eggs, but also some of the less well off in the neighbourhood. These people also shared the meat when a pig was slaughtered. As well as running the farm, the sisters and residents were occupied in baking all the bread for the community and, as would be expected in Hereford, in making cider. There was too, the normal housework, which in a building the size of the convent, must have taken a considerable amount of time.

The Sisters of Our Lady of Charity have always sought to fulfill a social need and as these needs changed so did the work of the community. Over the years, first the dairy farm and then the chicken farm were closed. The laundry continued until 1974 when that also closed and the buildings were later demolished. At the same time as the closure of the laundry, the sisters obtained some light work for the Sun Valley chicken factory, which helped to tide them over financially until other remunerative work could be found. The

sisters never lacked employment and the buildings were also used as fully as possible. For example, part of the convent, known as Madonna House, was leased for twenty-one years to an association for the lonely and homeless adults, both men and women. Also part of the convent land, where a mill once stood, was given for the building of St. Michael's Hospice, which still serves the Hereford area. Their church too was shared with local Catholics and later became an integral part of the parish of St. Anne's.

In 1953 the sisters were approached by Hereford Social Services to help with the care of young people. This was an area of great need, where little help was then available. The work involved the care of teenagers from fifteen to eighteen, who mostly came from broken homes or failed foster home placements. They were in need of protection and a stable, caring environment. Originally there was a group of twelve girls, who were encouraged to develop their own talents and abilities. They were housed in a building which became known as St. Bernadette's Training Centre. Some of the girls were ready to start work for the first time, while others attended the local schools. Each day teachers came in to help the girls covering a wide range of subjects from cooking and typing to drama, dancing, music and art. The training centre lasted for twenty-three years, until government policy on residential care changed. During its existence two hundred girls were helped and its success can be judged from the fact that many of the girls still keep in contact with the sisters.

The closure of the training centre did not mean that the sisters were left without work, for a new social need was soon identified. This was the care of homeless mothers and babies, which began in 1983 and lasted until the convent itself closed ten years later. The building used for the training centre was adapted for this new work, which helped over two hundred adults and one hundred and twenty children during its lifetime. This number does not include those who only came for one or two nights. In addition to the mothers and babies at St. Bernadette's, the nuns also ran a residential home for the elderly in another part of the convent. However, by the early 1990's there were only fourteen sisters in the convent and it

was clear that the upkeep of the large Victorian building, now in need of considerable repair, was no longer viable.

A plan for a Care Village, with the convent buildings renovated and converted into flats, was drawn up, but unfortunately the bottom fell out of the housing market, leaving the sisters with large debts. Their creditors won a court order to acquire the property and sell it to pay the debts, which meant that sadly the convent at Bartestree had to close. The remaining ten sisters spent much of the last year at the convent re-settling their elderly residents into new homes and, early in 1993, the last of the Sisters of Charity left Herefordshire. Of course their work for the young and the elderly still continues in their other convents throughout the country, but for Herefordshire their going is a sad loss.

When the sisters left, the convent and surrounding land was acquired by Millbank Development of Liverpool. There is now a housing estate on part of it, but no work has been done on the convent, which is in great disrepair and, as a listed building, cannot be demolished. The historic Longworth Chapel is joined to the convent building, but belongs to the Archdiocese of Cardiff, This has caused considerable problems and it is still not clear how matters will be finally resolved.

THE POOR CLARES MONASTERY

The order of Poor Clares was founded by St. Clare in 1212. St. Clare was born in Assisi in 1193 and was influenced by St. Francis to found an order which followed his ideals. She renounced the world and dedicated her life to prayer, gathering round her a group of women who shared her vocation. The order was contemplative and remains so today in its monasteries throughout the world.

The order of Poor Clares came to Lower Bullingham, Herefordshire in November 1880. They came at the invitation of Charles Bodenham, the last of a distinguished local family, and his wife Countess Irene Lubenski, who was Polish by birth. Mr. and Mrs. Bodenham, having no children, decided to donate a portion of their estate to two religious orders, one active and one contemplative.

The active order was the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, who arrived soon after the first invitation in 1862. The arrival of the contemplative order was to be delayed for another eighteen years.

Originally the Bodenhams had wanted the contemplative order to be of Polish origin. However, Charles Bodenham apparently had a dream that no Polish order would settle in Bullingham until the poplar trees, which lined the road to Rotherwas, were felled. (The poplar trees in question were in fact felled during the Second World War, when it was considered they might lead enemy planes to the munitions factory at Rotherwas. Shortly after the war the Marian Fathers, a Polish order, settled in Bullingham.) He and his wife therefore decided to approach the Poor Clares in Notting Hill, London. The Abbess, Mother Seraphine, was unable to grant their request, as she did not have enough sisters in her own community.

Her suggestion that the Bodenhams should apply to the monastery in Bruges was followed, but Bishop Brown of Newport and Menevia did not feel that at the time, Herefordshire could support a contemplative order and therefore withheld his consent.

In 1880 Bishop Brown told Mr. and Mrs. Bodenham that he was now willing for the Poor Clares to come to Hereford. The Notting Hill monastery had by this time more than sufficient sisters to found a new community and, when approached, agreed that a number should come to Hereford. Bishop Brown had died by this time, but his successor was happy with the plan and, as he had now moved to Belmont near to his cathedral church, his old home, Manor House, was free for the nuns to stay in until their convent was built.

Although the Bodenhams had given the land, money would still have to be raised before the new monastery could be built.

Mother Angela was chosen as the foundress and first Abbess of Bullingham. In November 1880. On the feast of St. Clare, Mother Seraphine and three sisters left Paddington station for Herefordshire. There was little in the way of comfort when they reached the Manor House at Bullingham, although the Sisters of Charity lent the basic necessities. These included all that was needed for the saying of Mass, which they continued to provide until the Poor Clares were able to get their own. There were also no mats on the stone floors, which as the nuns went bare foot, must have been very cold. A further aggravation was the number of mice, which not only ate their food, but also the straw in the mattresses which had been made up and stored for future arrivals.

Things were hard, but despite this, once a priest had been found to say daily Mass, Mother Seraphine decided that the remaining five sisters waiting at Notting Hill could join the community. They came with two externs and early in the New Year, Mother Seraphine returned to London. The hard winter that year added to the community's difficulties. Once they were snowed in with no bread and only a few potatoes in the house. Their prayers for help were quickly answered however, for an old man, who worked for the Sisters of Charity, delivered a basket of bread. Gifts of food from the poorer people living in the area were always very welcome, as were the money donations, mainly from the better off, which eventually enabled the building of the new monastery.

The sisters were grateful for the use of the Manor House on their arrival, but it was not really suitable, particularly as it was subject to flooding which turned it and the area around into an island. Therefore, on the 8th of September 1885, the foundation stone of the Convent of Our Lady of the Angels was laid. The move to the new convent, which had room for thirty sisters, took place on August 23rd 1886. The size of the convent was partly determined by the fact that about thirty sisters was considered the maximum number for a community. When there were more than this, a new community was founded elsewhere if at all possible. The cloistered life was established and, with the passage of time, new buildings were added. The nuns also became involved in the making of altar bread. This was work which was compatible with their way of life and which, as orders from both Catholic and Anglican churches from many parts of the country came in, helped with the expenses of the growing community. Donations also came in, such as one from Miss Amy Rosalie Imrie, who later became Sister Clare in the Bullingham community, which paid for building a cottage as a home for the gardener and a place where priests and visitors could be welcomed. The gift of a large cake, rolls and sweets on major feast days from the Bishop of Hereford's wife were also appreciated. The fact that she could not sit in the nuns' stalls when she visited the convent, owing to the size of her skirts, did not detract from her admiration for the Poor Clares and their way of life.

In August 1913 Mother Angela, the foundress, who had been superior for thirty-two years, died and was succeeded by Mother Veronica Swarbreck. The community continued to expand and improvements such as the laying on of hot water pipes were made to the buildings. The opening of the Martyrs Shrine in the antechoir, for the relics of the English martyrs, which had been given to the community, was an occasion for rejoicing. The acquisition of a piece of land next to the monastery was also useful, as it enabled the sisters to grow their own potatoes.

The Second World War brought some changes in the life of the community, as, for example, the absence of the Angelus bells,

since in June 1940 the ringing of church bells had been forbidden. The provision of one hundred yards of blackout material for the choir windows also presented a problem, while the sister's midnight prayers were often interrupted by the need to go to the cellars for safety during air raids. One evening while there they were treated to a supper of fish and chips, a gift from a local Italian restaurant.

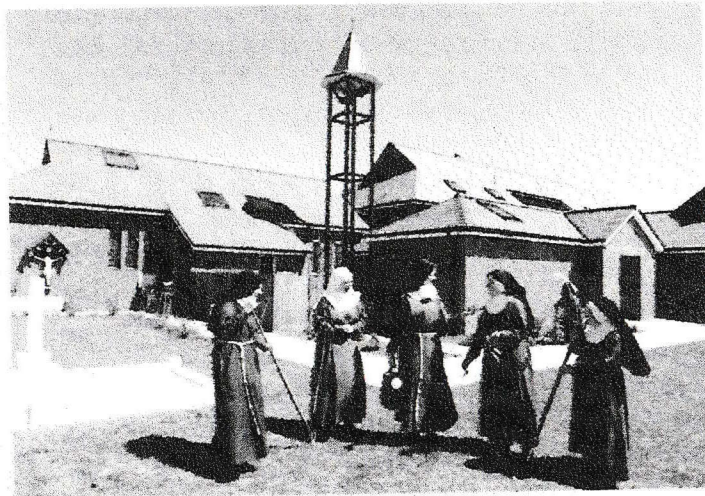
Although the Poor Clares have kept strictly to the spirit of the original foundation, they have also moved with the times. Since, as a community, they pray for the world, it was felt that they should keep in touch with world events. Therefore, first a wireless and later a television, were introduced, so that the sisters could follow the news programmes.

In 1966 changes were made to the sisters religious habits, their headdresses becoming smaller and more simple. In 1978, as a result of the Second Vatican Council, the grille, which separated the community from visitors, was removed as it was decided that this visible sign of enclosure was no longer appropriate or necessary. They also began to make use of the new technology in the form of computers and fax machines, while the making of altar breads was updated with the introduction of a new baking and cutting machine. Although not a teaching order, Sister Phillipa Clare, a former teacher from Hereford, was able to help the Marian Fathers by teaching English to some of the Polish refugees in their care.

In 1985, a legacy from Miss Agnes Humphrey, who was a member of the secular Franciscan order, enabled the Poor Clares to redesign their chapel. With the alterations that had taken place in the liturgy after Vatican II changes were needed to improve the celebrations of the religious services. Mr. Nigel Dees, a Hereford architect, oversaw the redesigning, which were completed in time to honour the Golden Jubilee of Sister Leonard. Besides providing better facilities for the liturgy, the renovated chapel also allowed those using the retreat facilities of the convent to be more fully involved in the services. That these now included Anglican clergymen was in line with the spirit of ecumenism.

Although, after its refit, the chapel was suitable for the modern liturgy, the same was not true of the rest of the monastery's suitability for life in the 1990's. In 1992, after much prayer and thought, it was decided that the Victorian building was no longer practical. After considering various options a site at Much Birch was chosen for the re-establishment of the monastery. The building was designed by Nigel Dees, who had overseen the alterations in the chapel at Bullingham. Planning permission was obtained and in 1995 the sisters moved into their new monastery. The original monastery has since been demolished and there is now a housing estate on the site.

The building, which is similar in size to that at Bullingham, is modern and practical. It does, however include some things from the old monastery, such as the front door, which have been fitted in to blend with their new surroundings. It stands in about nine acres of land with views over the beautiful Herefordshire countryside. The chapel, with its modern stained glass windows, is attractive and peaceful and has become a centre of worship for many local Catholics. At the present moment the Poor Clare community consists of thirteen sisters who are continuing to follow the ideals laid down by St. Clare nearly eight hundred years ago.



THE MARIAN FATHERS

The Marian Fathers were the first Polish Monastic order. Originally they were a contemplative order, whose main purpose was to combat alcoholism among the Polish peasants. Under the rule of Czarist Russia the order was seen as subversive and practically died out. In the 19th century, it was restored and reorganized by George Matulatis from Lithuania, who was Archbishop of Vilna and a papal legate. The Marian Fathers' habit was changed from white to black and they became an active rather than a contemplative order. They continued their work until the Second World War when they were expelled from Poland.

The Marian Fathers arrival in Bullingham took place in 1950. After their expulsion from Poland they went to Rome to seek advice from the Pope, as to the best way to continue with their religious vocation. The Pope advised them to pray to St. Raphael for guidance and to go to England to see what help they could give there. They first presented themselves to Cardinal Griffin, but, as he had no work for them to do, he sent them to Archbishop McGrath of Cardiff. Archbishop McGrath told them of a chapel and buildings at Bullingham in Herefordshire, which were vacant as the sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul (Vincentians), to whom they belonged had been evacuated during the war. The Marian Fathers then approached Fr. Sheedy, the superior of the Vincentians. Since the Sisters were unlikely to return to Bullingham, Fr. Sheedy agreed to the Marian Fathers going there. It was felt that their presence would be particularly helpful, as there was a large community of Polish refugees, who had come to the area during the war. The Marian Fathers also felt that settling at Bullingham was God's will for the chapel was named after St. Raphael, to whom they had prayed for guidance.

It was on the 22nd of June 1950 that the final conveyance of the Bullingham property from the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul to the Marian Fathers, took place. The property, which consisted

of a house, school buildings, outbuildings, and about three acres of land, was sold for £2000. The church should not have been included in the sale, but, owing to some confusion in the contract, it was. This was to cause problems in the future, as, in Civil Law the church belonged to the Marian Fathers, while, in Canon Law, it belonged to the Archdiocese of Cardiff with the Marian Fathers only being responsible for its upkeep.

Before the final conveyance took place a covenant was drawn up between the Marian Fathers and Michael McGrath, the Archbishop of Cardiff, which was signed on the 24th March 1950. This stated that there would be no new buildings within thirty feet of the church; the only purpose of the foundation was to train Polish boys for the priesthood who would then return to Poland; Mass would be provided on Sundays and Holy Days; services and confession would be held in Polish; if the order left Bullingham the church and priest's house would revert to the diocese; a training school for the lay apostolate would be provided for the archdiocese; and the diocese had no responsibility for any Bullingham student who was ordained to the priesthood.

Almost from the start of the Marian Fathers coming to Bullingham, the children of Polish refugees went there for religious instruction on Saturday mornings. In April 1951 the superior at Bullingham wrote to Archbishop McGrath asking for permission to establish an orphanage for Polish boys on the site. The understanding seems to have been that the boys would attend the local catholic schools until the Marian Fathers were able to establish their own school at Bullingham. However, by 1956 the Marian Fathers had still not established a school there and the local Catholic school no longer had room for the large number of Polish boys, from all over the country, who were resident at the Marian Fathers' establishment. In consequence, the boys were being sent to state schools, particularly the primary school at Hunderton, which was against the policy of the Roman Catholic Church at the time. When Archbishop McGrath wrote to the superior of the Marian Fathers at Bullingham, objecting to their sending boys to the state schools, he received no

satisfactory explanation. Further, increasingly robust, correspondence took place, until, in 1959, thirty-eight Polish boys were sent back to their own homes throughout the country.

However, matters did not end here for information was given to a Polish Newspaper, which then printed an article highly critical of Archbishop McGrath's behaviour. The Archbishop's reply to this was equally critical, containing such phrases as the "height of perfidy and falsehood" and such words as "duplicity" and "chicanery". He felt that the Marian Fathers were not carrying out their stated aim of training Polish boys as priests for the Polish Mission, and that their failure to found a school was due to their unwillingness to pay the necessary teachers. The Marian fathers, on their part, pleaded they had not sufficient funds for such a venture. However, whatever the rights and wrongs of the argument, the end result was that the boys hostel was disbanded.

The disagreement about the education of the Polish boys was not the only source of friction between Archbishop McGrath and the Marian Fathers. The Marian Fathers, or the superior at the time, laid claim to the church of Bullingham, as well as referring to the area it served as a parish. In Civil Law the church did belong to the order, but canonically it belonged to the Archdiocese of Cardiff, and the Archbishop made it very plain that in no sense was it a parish or the Marian Fathers parish priests. He did not approve either of the change of name from St. Raphael's to St. Stanislaus. The church at Bullingham had been used as a mass centre for the new parish of Our Lady's, until its own church could be built, but the parish priest was Fr. Costello. The church of Our Lady's was completed in October 1954 but Fr. Costello still said the occasional English mass at Bullingham, which remained part of his parish.

After the boys left Bullingham, the Marian Fathers, under Fr. Gurgal, became responsible for setting up a residential home for homeless Polish exiles. This was almost entirely for men, although there were some women at one time. In addition they became active in spreading the devotion of the "Apostolate of Divine Mercy",

which had been started by Sister Faustina, as well as continuing to serve the Polish community in the area. The residential home lasted until the Marian Fathers left Bullingham in 1999. The site is at present unused, but it is hoped that it will be possible to let out the buildings eventually.

The last Marian Father working in the Cardiff Archdiocese is Father Edward Rytko who was associated with the early years of the foundation at Bullingham

During his preparation for the priesthood in Rome he met and studied with a young Polish priest - Karol Wojtyla who was to be Pope John Paul II in 1978.

In 1999, the indefatigable Father Edward, a man of boundless energy, celebrated his Golden Jubilee as a priest by paying a return visit to Rome, where he had been ordained.

CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF ANNECY AT ROSS

The congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph was founded by a French Jesuit priest, Fr. Jean-Pierre Medaille, in 1650. In the course of his work as a priest he had come across young women who wished to enter the religious life. However, since they could neither read nor write and had no dowry they were not acceptable as novices in the social conditions of the time.

Encouraged by the Bishop of Le Puy, Fr. Medaille organised these young women into a congregation of sisters. They were not enclosed, as was the custom for nuns at the time, but were to work in the countryside with the poor and the most neglected. In 1650 six sisters took their first vows which were received by the Bishop of Puy. The order spread rapidly throughout France until the French Revolution, when it was forced to go underground. In 1808 it was re-founded by Mother St. Job Fontbonne at Lyons, and in 1837 a foundation was made in Annecy. It was from this foundation that the community at Ross is descended.

The Sisters of St. John of Annecy first came to England in 1864, at the invitation of an English officer, Captain Charles Dowell, who later became a Jesuit priest. They settled in Devizes and later, at the invitation of Fr. Michael Bailey founded a house in Newport in 1873. In 1882 the English Mission of the order was raised to the level of Province, which gave them greater autonomy and facilitated their spread throughout England and Wales.

However, it was not until May 1934 that the sisters arrived in Ross and received the keys of Green Heys, Walford Road. The house was intended as a holiday home for the sisters in the beautiful Herefordshire countryside, but the parish priest, Fr. Jeremiah McCarthy was concerned about the lack of Catholic education in the area. He approached the sisters, who taught in schools as well as administering to the poor, and they agreed to his request to open a

school. The stables attached to the house were converted into classrooms and, on the 23rd of January 1935, St. Joseph's Convent School opened as an independent day school. The school, which was staffed by the sisters, had only four pupils at first, but grew rapidly. From September 1935 boarders helped to increase the numbers further so that the school was soon able to cater for all age groups.

As happened elsewhere, the war years brought changes to St. Joseph's convent at Ross. The area was considered safe from bombing and the sisters welcomed many refugees from London. This cannot always have been easy, not only due to finding space for the new arrivals, but also to the problems attached to settling in children, who might be homesick and were unused to living in the countryside.

After the war the refugees returned to their homes and the school ceased to take older pupils, concentrating on those of infant and junior age. Boys were now admitted as day pupils and the sisters' priority was to provide a good education for all the Catholic children of the area. The sisters were not willing to refuse admission to any children, even those who could not afford the fees. This meant that they made considerable sacrifices in order to run the school and pay the teachers, however, by the mid 1960's it became obvious that they could not continue to do so much longer without some form of economic assistance.

The diocese and the parish, as well as the sisters, were all anxious that Catholic education in Ross should continue. Therefore negotiations began between them and the Education Authority to obtain maintained status for the school. This was not easy to obtain and it was nine years before agreement was finally reached. The result was that a new school, having state aid, was to be built in the grounds of the convent. In 1975 the present voluntary aided primary school was established, taking children of all denominations if a place was available. The policy of taking children of all denominations was not new, but had been in place from the start. St. Joseph's Convent School practiced ecumenism long before the Second Vatican Council made it popular.

St. Joseph's school at Ross is not the only school in Herefordshire with which the sisters have been connected. They have also taught at St. Mary's R.C. High School at Lugwardine. Sister Alice was on the staff for a number of years and will be remembered by old pupils of the school. At the present Sister Margaret, also from St. Joseph's, is at St. Mary's as one of the deputy heads of the school, so the connection continues.

On their first arrival at Ross, the sisters of St. Joseph experienced some problems with the local residents and were not totally accepted. However, over the years their work in education and their shopping and trading in the town made them more widely known, while their quiet, friendly and helpful manner made them greatly respected. At present there are five sisters in the community, three working in education, one in Canon Law and one a retired social worker. The great contribution of the sisters to the work of the Church in the area will always be recognized and remembered.



**Some of the Sisters of the present Ross community
enjoying a day out on a windswept hillside.**

THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

The order of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul was founded by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marrillac. St. Vincent de Paul combined his apostolate among the rich and titled with a desire to help the poor and neglected. At the time he met St. Louise, who had been widowed in 1625, he was organising devout wealthy ladies in helping the poor and sick, often in appalling conditions. It became clear to him that these ladies were not suited to the practical work of nursing and caring for neglected children, but would be better employed in raising money and dealing with any correspondence. Recognising in Louise de Marrillac, courage, endurance and organising skills, together with real humility, he chose her to train and organise girls, mainly from peasant, artisan classes, to care for the poor and sick. In 1633 four candidates began work from Louise's home in Paris and out of this grew the order of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

St. Vincent de Paul had no intention of founding an order, and until 1642 the sisters took no vows at all. From then to the present vows are only taken for a year, although many sisters renew them annually for the rest of their lives. The original reason for this was that at the time of St. Vincent de Paul, nuns within the Catholic Church, were all in enclosed convents. The Daughters of Charity, as a lay order, were free to work wherever they were needed. Rich upper-class ladies were also able to join the order and do charitable work for a short time. This would not otherwise have been possible for them. The title of "Daughter" rather than "Sister" was meant to underline their lay status, but now, although they put the initials D.C. after their names, the two terms seem to be interchangeable. The order spread rapidly and its work included nursing, running hospitals, orphanages and schools.

The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul came to Hereford in the second half of the nineteenth century. There were two separate communities, which worked autonomously, but which both made an enormous contribution to the development of the Catholic Church in the county particularly with regard to education.

The first of the communities of the sisters to arrive came to Bullingham in 1861. They came at the invitation of Mr. de Barre Bodenham and his Polish wife, Countess Lubienski. The Countess had herself been a Sister of Charity in Poland, which must have been part of the reason for inviting this particular order. The Countess is also said to have seen three Sisters of Charity standing outside a cottage in Bullingham. Their grey wool habit and large headdress, or *cornette*, of white linen, which was the usual dress for a Breton peasant at the time the order was founded, made them distinctive and easily recognised. When she was told that no Sisters of Charity were in Hereford, she believed that her vision meant they were to have the sisters on their estate

Mr. Bodenham then contacted the convent of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Paris, which was their main centre. He asked if some sisters could be spared to found a new community in Hereford. On the 20th of April 1861 three sisters came to Bullingham. They were Sister Cody, Sister Prid'homme, and Sister Gabriel Chatelain. As there was no convent, they stayed with the Bodenhams at Rotherwas Mansions, until a suitable property could be found for them. The first that became available was the cottage the Countess had seen in her vision. It was not ideal, having only four small rooms, but it was adequate for the sisters' needs. One ground floor room was used as a kitchen and general living room, while the other was used for the first Catholic school in the neighbourhood. Above these rooms was the sisters' dormitory and the oratory, where Mass was said once a fortnight. In the earliest days the sisters walked two miles each way to daily Mass at Belmont Abbey, but later the position was reversed. It became the monks who made the journey, starting out at 6 a.m., and often, in the winter, having to contend with deep snow and floods across the roads. This



Mr. Charles de Barre Bodenham and his wife, Countess Lubinski of Rotherwas, who were responsible for bringing the Sisters of Charity to Herefordshire. He was a Catholic layman of national repute. At the laying of the foundation stone of St. Francis Xavier's, Hereford, in 1837, he presented to the Provincial of the Jesuits an ancient illuminated manuscript, which had belonged to King Louis XI of France, as a mark of the gratitude of the Catholics of the City of Hereford.

connection between the Sisters of Charity and the Benedictine Monks lasted for many years.

Towards the end of 1861 the sisters were given a larger house, *The Moorlands*. And moved there while still retaining the cottage. Two more sisters joined the community in 1862 and the sisters also took in three orphan girls. The demand for Catholic education was increasing and this was partly the reason for the sisters' move, in 1867, to a large farmhouse. This was St. Elizabeth's at Bullingham and for three-quarters of a century it was the home of the community. Under Sister Cody the community grew and developed. Children, both boys and girls, from all over the county came to the school, as before the 1870 Education Act, little Catholic education was available.

The enlargement of the community and the school meant that a church was necessary to cater for the religious needs of the area. As was usually the case, money was in short supply, but, only three weeks after the need for a church was recognised, the convent received a legacy of £2000 from the will of a Miss Eyston. This enabled the building to go ahead and the following year the Church of St. Raphael was opened at Bullingham, by Bishop Hedley.

The outbreak of war in 1939, brought changes for the community of the Sisters of Charity at Bullingham. The boys' orphanage, which had been subject to flooding, had already closed, and now the school and the convent had to be evacuated, because of its proximity to the munitions factory at Rotherwas. The sisters moved to Croft Castle, near Leominster, where they were unable to continue with the boys' school. They remained here until 1946 when they moved to Broxwood and then in 1954 they settled at Lugwardine Court, in a large house, adjacent to the present St. Mary's School. The house, with 38 acres of land had been bought by the sisters in 1947, but it was not until planning permission for a school house could be obtained that the nuns were able to move. Both at Croft and at Broxwood they had run a school for girls and when they came to Lugwardine, two long wooden buildings were

transported with them, one of which was used for "housecraft" and the other for art and needlework. The school opened for girls aged eleven to eighteen, with two hundred pupils, only twenty-five of whom could be boarders owing to lack of accommodation. Sister Catherine was the head teacher until 1972 and the school expanded, eventually becoming co-educational. The original buildings were no longer large enough, so a new school was built on the land next to the convent. In 1984 the sisters withdrew from Lugwardine and the school was handed over to lay management, while Lugwardine Court was sold as a nursing home. In September 1999 the nursing home closed and it is possible that Lugwardine Court may again be part of St. Mary's School.

There is an interesting account of life at St. Mary's (then St. Elizabeth's House at Bullingham) written by an anonymous pupil, sometime between 1923 and 1938, which throws a light on the character of the nuns. At the time Ma Soeur Arundel, a relative of the Duke of Norfolk, was headmistress. The boy, who was obviously not a model pupil writes: "I can remember numerous occasions when I was sent to her as a delinquent, clutching in a trembling hand, a note of condemnation from one of the sisters, who considered my crime too serious for her to deal with. I would be accompanied by Sister Vincent. Ma Soeur Arundel would read the note in stony silence, then, waving Sister Vincent out of the room, she would go to a glass cabinet containing an imposing array of canes, of varying thickness. Taking one down, she would give me a severe 'dressing down', meanwhile bringing the cane down heavily on a chair cushion, to emphasise certain points. Outside the door Sister Vincent, who loved all children, especially naughty ones, would be wringing her hands in anguish." The boy concludes that he hated being sent to Soeur Arundel in case she might really use the cane. This was especially the case when he saw what she did to the chair cushion, despite her apparent frailty. This story is not only amusing, but illustrates the warm hearts of the sisters, often hidden behind a somewhat severe exterior.

The second community of the Sisters of Charity of St.

Vincent de Paul arrived in Hereford in 1875. They came at the invitation of Canon Dolman, Dom. J. C. Smith and a Miss Mary Gillow, a rich and charitable lady. They all felt that an active order, such as The Sisters of Charity, was needed to help with the work of the Church in Hereford, particularly in the area of education. The sisters first settled in a house in Berrington Street, procured by Miss Gillow. By the time of their arrival, the presence of religious orders in Hereford was becoming more accepted and they did not have to face such fierce hostility as that encountered by a group of Sisters of Charity in 1863, who were stoned in the streets by a small group of extremists. Nevertheless, they did face some opposition until their work and their Christian attitudes gradually won peoples' respect.

The house Miss Gillow provided for the sisters had been used by her to care for a group of about twelve orphan boys. When the sisters arrived, these boys were settled in other establishments, while a new orphanage was built, which would house thirty girls. This was known as St. Vincent's Orphanage and later developed into a boarding school for the area.

As the number of Catholics in Hereford increased, so did the demand for Catholic education, and the school at Berrington Street began to take both boys and girls as day pupils, although only to the age of eleven. The school was popular and over subscribed, a fact that caused trouble for the Marian Fathers, who were unable to send their Polish boys there owing to lack of room. After leaving Berrington Street, the girls were able to attend St. Mary's Roman Catholic School, also run by the Sisters of Charity. However, the boys who did not pass the Eleven Plus went to Poole House, next door to the present Our Lady's Church, where the facilities were rather poor. It was not until 1966 that they too were able to attend St. Mary's.

The school in Berrington Street continued to prosper, and the sisters adapted to the new educational policies. They were also among the first after Vatican II, to modify their religious habits. The *cornettes*, which had made them so easily identifiable, disappeared

and their habits were shortened slightly. After 1967 more changes became necessary, although these had nothing to do with what the sisters wore. It was in this year that the construction of Inner Relief Road and the New Bridge began. This separated the school classrooms from what had been used as the school hall. To get to the hall, which was used for P.E., as well as for a dining hall, it was necessary to take the children across a wide and very busy road, several times a day. This was clearly impossible in the long term, and so it was decided that a new school must be built. After some debate, a site on Venns Lane was decided upon and by 1972 the new school, St. Francis Xavier, was completed. The school was at first under the headship of Sister Cecilia Roper, the only nun left on the teaching staff. When she left to take up a post in Darlington, the school was handed over to lay management.

Before the sisters left Berrington Street, there was a mixture of nuns and lay staff at the school. This created something of a problem, since the Sisters of Charity had a rule which forbade their taking refreshment with anyone except their fellow sisters. At St. Marys there was room for two staff rooms, but this was not the case at Berrington Street. To overcome the problem the sisters sometimes had to retire to the Wendy house, which enabled them to conform to the rule, although it cannot have been very comfortable. The rule seems strange nowadays but it almost certainly arose from the sisters' original work among the very poor and the destitute. Such people could ill afford to offer refreshments to the sisters when they visited and the presence of the rule saved embarrassment on both sides.

After the sisters, who had moved from Berrington Street to Belmont Road in 1969, withdrew from the school they were occupied with parish work, visiting the sick and helping out where they were needed. Lack of vocations, which was a problem for most religious orders in Britain, meant that the number of active sisters was not sufficient to maintain a community in Hereford, and in 1989 the last of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul left the city.

Although there are no longer Sisters of Charity in Hereford,

their work continues. It is through their efforts that Catholic education became firmly established in the city and this, as well as their other charitable work, will ensure that they will always be remembered.



Part of a photograph of sisters, lay staff and girls of St. Mary's School, taken in 1960. In 1964 the distinctive head-dress (cornettes), by which the Sisters of Charity were readily recognised, were to disappear

THE MILL HILL MISSIONARIES AT COURTFIELD

The Mill Hill Missionaries were founded by Herbert Alfred Vaughan in 1866. Herbert Vaughan was the son of an Old Catholic family, who lived at Courtfield Manor, in Herefordshire. At the age of sixteen he decided he was called to the priesthood and, in 1851, went to Rome to complete his studies. He was ordained in 1854 at the age of twenty-two. Although there was a great deal of work to be done in Britain to re-establish Catholicism, Herbert Vaughan felt that the country should be doing missionary work among its subjects in the British Empire. He formed the idea of starting a missionary college in England, to train missionaries to work overseas. He presented his plan to Cardinal Wiseman, and was surprised to get his immediate support.

Herbert Vaughan's next problem was to obtain sufficient funds to launch his project. The Catholic Church in England was still too poor and weak to give much help, so he went on a begging tour of the United States. This was successful enough for him, on his return to England, to purchase Hulcome House in Mill Hill, London. On the nineteenth of March 1866 St. Joseph's Foreign Missionary Society was founded, with one student and one professor. From this small beginning the Mill Hill Fathers and Brothers spread to work throughout the World. In his own lifetime Herbert Vaughan saw them leave for Africa, India, Borneo, Afghanistan and New Zealand. He himself remained superior of the Society, but on his appointment as Bishop of Salford, also had other responsibilities. In March 1892 he became Archbishop of Westminster and, the following year, was made a Cardinal.

Although the Mill Hill Fathers had an association with Courtfield, through their founder, it was not until the early nineteen fifties that they founded a community there. Courtfield, which was

originally called Greenfield Farm, had its name changed and became a manor, when the future King Henry V, spent his childhood there. It had belonged to the Vaughan family since the sixteenth century, but about 1950 they wished to sell it, together with fifty acres of land. Wishing this ancient Catholic property to remain in Catholic hands, the bishops of England and Wales persuaded the Mill Hill Fathers to buy this family home of their founder. Originally it was intended as a retirement home for Mill Hill Missionaries, but, although it was set in beautiful countryside, it was felt to be too isolated for this purpose.

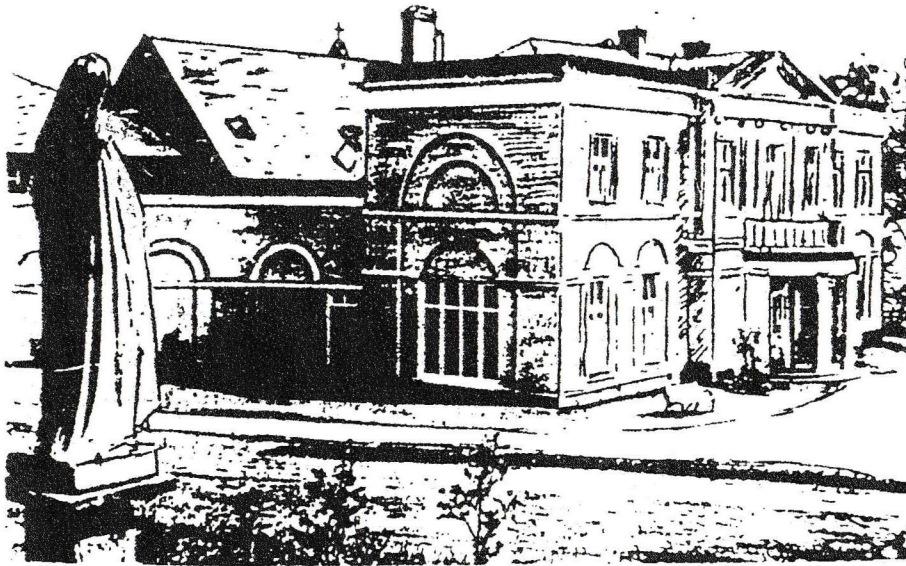
However, when Cardinal Vaughan had founded the order, he had considered that its members should be able to offer practical, as well as spiritual help. It was therefore necessary to train the brothers as mechanics, builders and carpenters, as well as equipping them with other skills. Courtfield proved ideal for this purpose and, in the early sixties, became a training centre for Brother candidates. Workshops were built, machinery installed and, with the help of a local architect, the brothers were able to build themselves a large accommodation block. At one stage there were thirty brothers training at Courtfield and the skills learned there have been used throughout the Mill Hill Missionary communities.

By the nineteen seventies the Brothers' training was transferred, so a new use had to be found for Courtfield. The accommodation block was converted into a retreat centre, which accommodates forty people. While nine weekends in the year are reserved for the spiritual renewal of the Mill Hill Missionary Promoters, the rest of the year it accommodates a wide variety of people, from parish and youth groups, to individuals wishing a period for recollection. The responsibility for the care of the retreat centre belongs to Fr. Fox, who is also considering various ways of making full use of the land and buildings. Among his ideas is the possibility of using the workshops for specialised courses in pottery and antique furniture restoration, as well as utilising the walled gardens for growing organic vegetables.

Courtfield, now St. Joseph's Retreat Centre, is set in

extensive grounds, with views over the Wye Valley. There are twenty-two single rooms, nine twin rooms and a self-catering annexe. As well as a beautiful church attached to the Centre, there is an oratory in the building itself. It was here that Eliza Vaughan, the mother of Cardinal Vaughan, prayed daily for vocations. Her prayers were clearly answered, for six of her eight sons became priests and four of her five daughters became nuns. In 1954 the Archbishop of Cardiff dedicated a shrine to Our Lady of Vocations here, in recognition of her piety.

The work of the Mill Hill Fathers and Brothers has mainly been in Third World Countries, supported, to a large extent, by the contents from the red mission collection boxes, found in so many Catholic homes. Their present work in Hereford is somewhat different, but equally valuable. The presence of a Centre, where people can receive spiritual renewal and review their lives in peace, is a great blessing in a world where the pace of life seems increasingly frantic.



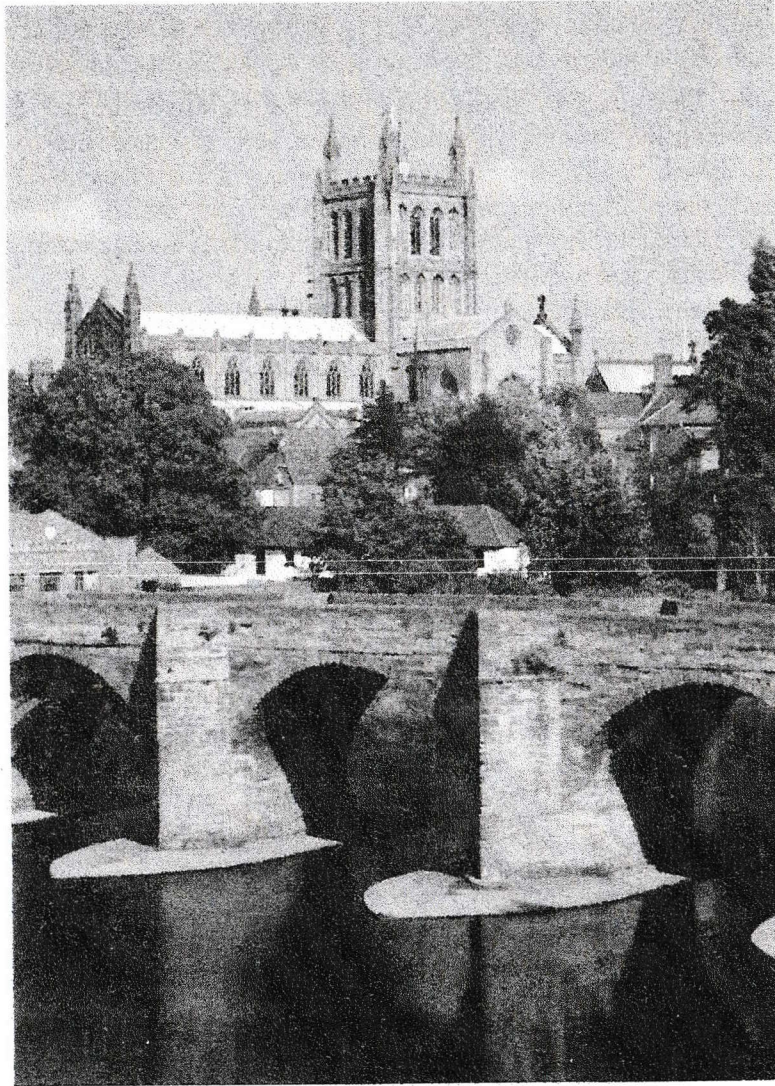
CONCLUSION

The religious orders that came to Herefordshire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were not, generally, those that had been there before the Reformation. In fact many of the orders had not been founded then, but came into being to serve the changing needs of the Church in later times. The exception to this is the Benedictine Order, which had had several foundations in the county, and the Poor Clares, who, although not present in Hereford before the Reformation, had been founded in the twelfth century.

Religious orders for men had often been involved in missionary work in the middle ages, but before the Reformation the women's orders in England, as elsewhere, had mainly been strictly enclosed. This changed in the following centuries, with orders of nuns being founded specifically to help with the social and educational needs of the church at the time. They became involved in work which took them outside their convents. Some of these orders came to Hereford and many of the Catholic schools in the area are a direct result of their work. Their work among the poor and socially deprived was also influential in spreading the Catholic faith.

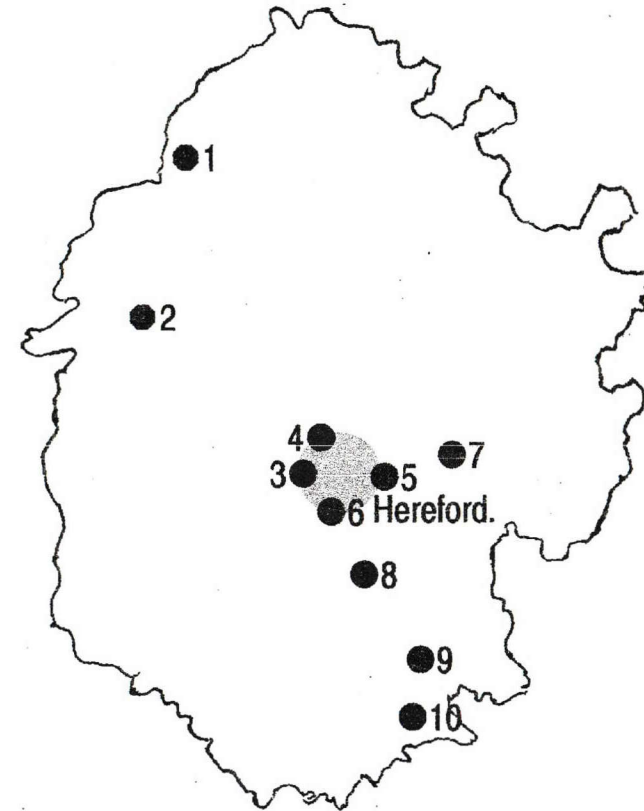
While this book has concentrated on the practical establishment and work of the religious orders, it must not be forgotten that their main purpose is the worship of God. Prayer remains a fundamental part of their lives and its power should not be underestimated.

Sadly the number of religious orders in Herefordshire has decreased in recent years. However, evidence of their work remains and perhaps, in the future, the situation may be reversed.



A view of Hereford Cathedral which was the centre of Catholic worship in the area before the Reformation. In early penal times it became the headquarters of "priest hunters" and recusant informants. Happily in these more enlightened, ecumenical days relationships, good-will and co-operation between Anglicans and Catholics are now excellent.

RELIGIOUS HOUSES IN HEREFORDSHIRE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.



1. Croft Castle (Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul - 1939-46)
2. Broxwood (Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul - 1946-54)
3. Belmont Abbey.
4. Hereford. (Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul - Until 1989)
5. Lugwardine. (Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul - 1954-84)
6. Bullingham. (Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul - Until 1939. Poor Clares - Until 1995. Marian Fathers - Until 1999.)
7. Bartestree Convent (Sisters of Our Lady of Charity- Until 1995).
8. Much Birch (Poor Clares)
9. Ross on Wye (Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy).
10. Courtfield (Mill Hill Missionaries).

About the Series

- No.1 *The Life and Times of Bishop Thomas Joseph Brown (1798-1880)*
No.2 *A Short History of St. David's Cathedral, Cardiff*
No.3 *The Catholic Church in Cardiff First Annual Report 1879*
No.4 *"The Old Catholic Families – The Vaughans of Courtfield"*
No.5 *John Cuthbert Hedley (1837-1915) - The last Bishop of Newport*

Back Numbers available from the CTS Bookshop Cardiff

In Preparation

A History of St. Peter's Parish, Cardiff
Catholic Cardiff and the Marquesses of Bute
A History of St. Mary's Newport
Franciscan Missions in Pontypool and District
The Church and Irish Immigration in 1800s

The layout and printing of this booklet by Brian Passey

Pictures edited and enhanced by Damian Chidgey

Have you joined the Wales and the Marches Catholic History Society ?

Further Information on the Society and its Newsletter, "The Old Faith" can be obtained from:-

The Secretary, Archive/History Group, Pastoral Resources Centre,
910 Newport Road, Rumney, Cardiff CF3 4LL
Tel. 029 2036 0044 E-mail: darch@mcmail.com

Printed and published by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff
October 2000
Registered Charity No.242380

*Praise and glory to you, O Christ
today and forever.*

With the shepherds from Bethlehem
and the wise men from the east,
we kneel before your manger, Lord Jesus.
We commit ourselves once again
to the great missionary work of bringing you
to those who have never heard your name.
And we reach out the hand of friendship
to those who are worshipping you in different
churches and searching for Christian unity.

*Praise and glory to you, O Christ
today and forever.*

Lord, your mother Mary kept all these things
and treasured them in her heart.
Open our hearts to the richness of
our faith.
Open our minds to its meaning.
We adore you and bless you as our Lord
and Saviour,
Son of God and son of woman,
the way, the truth and the life,
the one mediator between us and God.

*Praise and glory to you, O Christ
today and forever.*

