

The Benedictine Connection

The English Reformation destroyed monastic life in England and Wales but in the seventeenth century English and Welsh Catholics who wished to follow a monastic vocation went into exile and later restored the English Benedictine Congregation in monasteries on the Continent of Europe. It was this Congregation which founded Belmont in 1859 with monies gifted from the Wegg-Prosser family and others, as the common House of Studies for the existing English monasteries at Downside and Ampleforth and later Douai and as the Cathedral Monastery for the newly formed Roman Catholic Diocese of Newport and Menevia (the whole of Wales and Herefordshire).

For the first fifty years of its life the church at Belmont was a cathedral and the senior resident monks were monastic canons and professors in the House of Studies. In 1917, the General Chapter of the Congregation declared Belmont to be an independent priory and on March 21, 1920, the Holy See raised it to the rank of an Abbey by the Papal Bull '*Praeclara Gesta*'. Dom Aelred Kindersley, a monk of Downside Abbey had been appointed as the last Cathedral Prior in 1915 and it was he whom the young Community elected as their first Abbot in 1920. Abbot Kindersley led the new Community for fourteen more years until his death in 1934 and saw the number of brethren and the variety and scope of work greatly increase including the running of a school which sadly closed in 1994. Today the community, living under the fatherly direction of the Abbot, undertakes numerous works including the pastoral care of the local Herefordshire Catholics, parishes further afield in Wales, Cumbria and Peru and various chaplaincies. A foundation, the Monastery of the Incarnation, was made in Peru in 1981. The Belmont Community numbers about 40 monks, about eighteen monks living at Belmont and others living and working outside Belmont on other parish or missionary commitments.