



# Benedictine Cultures

Downside Abbey  
27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2016



#### THURSDAY 27TH OCTOBER 2016

14.00	Registration/Coffee
14.15	Welcome and Introduction
14.30	Keynote Lecture Dom Aidan BELLENGER: <i>The Monk as Historian</i>
PANEL 1:	Chair: Tim Hopkinson-Ball
15.45 – 17.00	Bobby ANDERSON: <i>Nuns at War: the Benedictines at East Bergholt</i> Steve PARSONS: <i>Dom Stephen Rawlinson: Benedictine Monk at War.</i>
17.00 – 18.00	Dom Leo MAIDLOW DAVIS

#### FRIDAY 28TH OCTOBER 2016

PANEL 2:	Chair: Steve Parsons
8.30	Mass in the Abbey for those who wish to join the Community
9.30 – 10.45	Sean MCGLYNN: <i>A Biased and Bellicose Benedictine? Roger of Wendover on Bad King John and the Magna Carta War</i> Katherine HARVEY: <i>Medicine, Bodies and Bishops in the Writings of William of Malmesbury</i>
10.45 – 11.15	BREAK
PANEL 3:	Chair: Frances Bircher
11.15 – 12.30	Cormac BEGADON: <i>English Benedictine intellectual cultures in the Age of Enlightenment</i> Paul ARBLASTER: <i>'nous nous fixons au sens littéral': A Benedictine Biblical Scholar in the Age of Enlightenment</i>
12.30 – 13.45	LUNCH
PANEL 4:	Chair: Bobby Anderson
13.45 – 15.00	Kate JORDAN: <i>To Revive and to Invent: Architectural Innovation and the Monks of Caldey Island</i> Tim HOPKINSON-BALL: <i>Tumulus Sanctorum: Pilgrimage and the Cult of Saints at Glastonbury Abbey in the Late Middle Ages.</i>
15.00 – 15.30	BREAK

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<b>PANEL 5:</b>	<b>Chair: Tim Hopkinson-Ball</b>
<b>15.30 – 17.00</b>	Louise ANDERSON: <i>Clues between the covers: material culture in Downside Abbey Library</i> Sara PRETTO: <i>The manuscripts of the Abbey of Saint-Sépulcre in the XV century: an example of a Benedictine late medieval library</i> [This paper will be read by Bobby Anderson]
<b>17.00 – 18.00</b>	Guided tour of the Abbey
<b>18.00</b>	Vespers in the Abbey, if you wish to join the Community, please do.
<b>19.00 – 21.00</b>	Conference dinner in the Refectory
<b>SATURDAY 29TH OCTOBER 2016</b>	
<b>8.30</b>	Mass in the Abbey for those who wish to join the Community
<b>PANEL 6:</b>	<b>Chair: Steve Parsons</b>
<b>9.30 – 11.15</b>	Simon JOHNSON: <i>Dom David Knowles: a cloistered life</i> Elizabeth PATTON: <i>Reflections on authorship: Dorothy Arundell's perspective on England from the Benedictine Monastery of the Glorious Assumption.</i> Hannah THOMAS: <i>From exile to integration: the English Benedictines and the English Sepulchrines, 1794-1829</i>
<b>11.15 – 11.45</b>	<b>BREAK</b>
<b>PANEL 7:</b>	<b>Chair: Bobby Anderson</b>
<b>11.45 – 13.00</b>	James KELLY: <i>Benedictine Cultures of Martyrdom: the execution of George Gervase in 1608 and the establishment of the English Benedictine Mission</i> Maria ROTTLE: <i>Roman Zirngibl, Benedictine in St. Emmeram, historian and archivist</i>
<b>13.00 – 14.30</b>	Closing remarks followed by LUNCH



## ABSTRACTS

**Keynote: Dominic Aidan BELLENGER, Downside Abbey**  
*The Monk as Historian*

The study of the past underlines the importance of tradition for the monk. Across the centuries monks have chronicled and interpreted the past. Frequently they have been inspired by a radical view of the monastic quest and its culture. Propaganda has always coexisted with scholarship.

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**Louise ANDERSON, Downside Abbey Archive and Library,**  
*Clues between the covers: material culture in Downside Abbey Library*

Benedictines and learning have always gone hand-in-hand. From the inclusion of reading in the daily cycle prescribed by the Rule of St Benedict, to the great post-Reformation Benedictine Colleges of the Continent, it has long been prized. The extraordinary and encompassing library at Downside Abbey can provide an insight into the historic reading and collecting habits of the English Benedictines. This paper will track the development of the Downside collection, from before the Monks even settled at the Somerset site, through to the late 20th century.

Volumes in the collection carry provenance markings that can tell us how first they came into the Downside collection, but other aspects can tell us more; inscriptions, bindings, annotations, and grangerising can all contribute to our understanding of previous treatments of the objects and texts. This will be illustrated using volumes from the Lamspringe Abbey, Teignmouth Abbey, Recusant, David Rogers, and Joseph Gillow collections, amongst others.

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**Roberta ANDERSON, Bath Spa University**  
*Nuns at War: the Benedictines at East Bergholt*

The beginnings of this story are staged on the continent in Brussels, to which English Catholic women who believed they had a vocation, retired out of necessity, as English law made it impossible to follow their hearts at home. For two centuries their exile was prolonged, with many anxieties and occasional privations, until the French Revolution forced them to leave Brussels, under their twelfth Abbess (1794), and after fifty years at Winchester, to make their next settlement at East Bergholt in 1857 and finally at Haslemere in 1945, before closing in 1975.

The part of the history of the English Benedictines of the Monastery of the Glorious Assumption of Our Blessed Lady I wish to talk about today, begins with the coming of war in 1914, when the Community were firmly established at Old Hall in the village of East Bergholt in Suffolk. It ends in 1945 with a necessary move to Haslemere.

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**Paul ARBLASTER, Université Saint-Louis, Brussels**  
*'nous nous fixons au sens littéral': A Benedictine Biblical Scholar in the Age of Enlightenment*

Dom Augustin Calmet (1672-1757), Abbot of Senones (Lorraine) and twice Abbot General of the Benedictine Congregation of St Vanne, is best known in the current literature of intellectual history for two things: his treatise on Hungarian vampires (discussed, for example, in Ulrich Lehner's recent *Catholic Enlightenment*), and his influence on Voltaire's biblical knowledge. This paper will consider neither of these angles on his career, but examine on its own terms his project to popularise knowledge of Sacred Scripture through his 26-volume *Commentaires sur l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament*, and the two-volume *Dictionnaire historique et critique de la Bible* abstracted from it. Written in French, these works of reference engaged with Jewish, Protestant and Enlightenment scholarship, making a wide variety of readings widely available. The paper will focus on Calmet's approach to Old Testament animals that were often rendered in 16th and 17th-century vernacular translations with the names of fantastic beasts (such as dragons, unicorns, satyrs, mermaids, and basilisks) and that were often glossed as metaphors—symbols of powerful persecutors, of brute strength or animal majesty, or of tempting or terrifying demons. Calmet insisted on eschewing metaphorical readings to identify the animal underlying the image.

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**Cormac BEGADON, Durham University**  
*English Benedictine intellectual cultures in the Age of Enlightenment*

The ultimate success of the Protestant Reformation in England and Wales effectively brought to an end centuries of monastic life. For the Benedictines, the largest of the male monastic orders at the time of the Suppression, hope of survival lay with reforming on the Continent. However, having fled the hostile environment of sixteenth century England, they would go on to face the equally perilous situation brought about by the French Revolution.

At the outbreak of revolution there existed in France three working monasteries belonging to the English Benedictine Congregation: St Edmund's, Paris; St Lawrence's in Dieulouard; and the largest, St Gregory's, Douai. The French Revolution presented the English monasteries with a very real and tangible threat to their existence and securities. From 1789 monasteries and convents were forbidden from accepting new members, while in 1790 religious houses were formally suppressed. Examining themes of intellectual cultures and radicalism, this paper will illustrate the complex nature of the monks' culture during the late eighteenth century. During this period they faced not only external threats from the Revolutionary government, but also the equally fascinating, but often overlooked, internal issues from within the respective communities, who in some instances had been infiltrated by radicalism, masking as so-called 'enlightenment thought'.

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**Katherine HARVEY, Birkbeck, UCL**  
*Medicine, Bodies and Bishops in the Writings of William of Malmesbury*

The Benedictine monk William of Malmesbury wrote extensively about the bishops of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman England, most notably in his *Gesta Pontificum* and in a series of *vitae* of saintly bishops. These texts include a considerable amount of information about bishops' bodies, and their interactions with medical treatments, personnel and knowledge. This material has considerable significance for our understanding of medieval bishops, and also for our comprehension of the place of medical knowledge in medieval English monasticism. This paper will consider questions including: What did William of Malmesbury know about medicine, and where did he acquire this knowledge? What was the value of such learning for a twelfth-century monastic chronicler? How does Malmesbury use material about episcopal bodies, in combination with medical knowledge, to shape the reader's opinion of individuals, and to comment on contemporary issues, in particular the question of clerical celibacy? The paper aims to enhance our understanding of William of Malmesbury and his work, in particular his significance as a hagiographer and chronicler of clerical life. It will also shed new light on the role of medical knowledge and the relationship between religion and medicine in medieval Benedictine culture.

**Tim HOPKINSON-BALL, Downside Abbey Archive and Library**  
*Tumulus Sanctorum: Pilgrimage and the Cult of Saints at Glastonbury Abbey in the Late Middle Ages*

It is a commonplace to state that the Benedictine Abbey of St Mary, Glastonbury, was a renowned pilgrimage destination throughout the middle ages. The faithful, we are told, flocked to King Arthur's Avalon, to view his tomb, Joseph of Arimathea's holy thorn tree and other wonders. Much modern writing, both popular and scholarly, has given undue emphasis to 'legendary' Glastonbury, fuelled by the Arthurian enthusiasms of the 1970s, and in so doing has unwittingly upheld a distorted and largely romantic view of the abbey's spiritual role and thus prevented its positioning in the medieval Catholic mainstream.

In this paper I briefly summarise what is known of the character of pre-Reformation devotion at, and pilgrimage to, Glastonbury Abbey. For much of the middle ages pilgrimage aroused relatively little theological or theoretical concern and although accepted as meritorious it was not an obligatory practice. Evidence of pilgrimage is therefore not particularly plentiful. Combined with the ferocity of Glastonbury's Suppression, we are left with little from which to work. Notwithstanding these caveats, enough survives for a reconstruction to be attempted with a reasonable degree of clarity.

**Simon JOHNSON, Downside Abbey Archive and Library**  
*Dom David Knowles: a cloistered life*

Dom David Knowles was a monk of the English abbey of St Gregory the Great, better known as 'Downside' near the city of Bath. He was a divisive figure for the Monastic Community; his journey was one through excommunication, excommunication and ended with a return to the Church and the obedience. A distant and self-isolating figure he became known as the nation's leading

expert on Monastic history with his *The Monastic Order* which claimed him the ultimate prize of Regius Professor of History at Cambridge. Knowles' majestic three volume *Religious Orders* earned him the respect and admiration of the Academy. His view of man (poignantly not woman) was that of actors on a stage judged for their moral failings and their moral virtues. The *Religious Orders* were reflective of his own monastic dealings – he was particularly critical of abbots who failed to be visionary – representative of his own disastrous relations with his monastic superiors. Where the Whigs had seen 'progress' having miraculously commenced in 1688 with the usurpation of James II Knowles, though he would not like to have admitted it, had more in common with Marc Bloch than Gibbons or Macaulay. This essay intends to deconstruct the myth, to deconstruct the man; to imitate his own historical craftsmanship: to praise where praise is due and to draw due attention to where it is not.

**Kate JORDAN, University of Westminster**  
*To Revive and to Invent: Architectural Innovation and the Monks of Caldey Island*

In a speech given to the Benedictine community at St John's Abbey, Minnesota in 1953, Father Cloud Meinberg celebrated monastic innovation by claiming that 'Benedictines have a tradition of inventive architecture...refusing to be bound by the accomplishments of the past'. Architectural historians have argued, however, that the revival of monasticism in Britain was accompanied by a backward looking emphasis in architecture on the medieval monastic plan—a style forcefully promoted by the gothic-revivalist A.W.N. Pugin who strove only, according to his own treatises, to 'revive rather than invent'. Among enclosed orders, one of the first significant departures from medievalism was Caldey Island Abbey, commissioned by a newly formed community of Anglican Benedictines and completed in 1910 to designs by the architect, John Coates Carter. This large complex of buildings, blended Arts and Crafts and Italianate styles to produce a monastic architecture that had no stylistic precedent and emphatically refused to 'be bound by the accomplishments of the past'. And yet, despite architectural appearances, the monks of Caldey Island were far from radical in their theological outlook. This aesthetically innovative site raises, then, a number of questions: why did the monks select a relatively inexperienced and little-known Welsh architect to design such an ambitious project? What were the references, who suggested these and what messages did the monks wish to convey about their religious culture? Is it relevant that the Caldey monks were (initially) an Anglican order? And are there identifiable Benedictine notes in the stylistic design and planning? This paper considers these questions in an analysis of the cultural and religious conditions that produced Caldey Abbey.

**James E. KELLY, Durham University**  
*Benedictine Cultures of Martyrdom: the execution of George Gervase in 1608 and the establishment of the English Benedictine Mission*

From the beginning of the seventeenth century, English Benedictine monks began to return to their homeland. Until that point, the Catholic mission to England had been manned by secular clergy and Jesuits, relationships between the two clerical parties having grown increasingly fraught over issues of how the

nation's Catholics should relate to a state that indulged in periodic outbursts of bloody persecution against them. The arrival of Benedictines from monasteries situated in mainland Europe saw the offering of a 'third way' to England's proscribed Catholics. Yet, with the various missions dependent on lay Catholic resources and support, both in England and in mainland Europe, it was necessary for the Benedictines to justify their presence in this often fraught environment. As such, they joined in the 'martyr grab' developing in the opening decades of the seventeenth century, forcefully advertising contemporary English Benedictine martyrs and asserting them against rival claims by other clergy groups. This paper will explore the case of George Gervase, executed in 1608. It will be argued that his martyrdom and the monks' subsequent promotion of him to a mainland European audience was vital to the establishment of the English Benedictine mission and shows the monks engaging directly in contemporary politico-theological debates.

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**Sean MCGLYNN, Plymouth University at Strode**  
*A Biased and Bellicose Benedictine? Roger of Wendover on Bad King John and the Magna Carta War*

Roger of Wendover (d.1236), a monk of St Albans' Benedictine Abbey, was the precursor to the more famous Matthew Paris, who incorporated huge chunks of Roger's chronicle, *Flores Historiarum* (*Flowers of History*) into his own. Roger has been much traduced by historians as a source on King John's reign and the Magna Carta war of 1215-17. However, this paper, based on published research, argues that Roger is an excellent and much under-valued commentator on these historic events, and that he is especially important on the subject of the Magna Carta War and the consequent, though largely, forgotten, French invasion of England (1216-17) in which Prince Louis of France ruled much of England for over a year. The paper will explore why Roger is such an important writer on the conflict of the time. Why has he been mistrusted by historians? To what extent did his animosity towards King John weaken his work? And what did a Benedictine monk know about the realities of warfare anyway? (The conference coincides with 800th anniversary of King John's death in October 2016.)

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**Steve PARSONS, Downside Abbey Library and Archive**  
*Dom Stephen Rawlinson: Benedictine Monk at War.*

Moving from the cloister to the battlefield was an individual choice for many monks and none more so than Dom Stephen Rawlinson. Resigning his position as teacher at Downside School, he sought permission to become a Military Chaplain in the Boer War, in 1900.

Fourteen years later, he volunteered again as chaplain in the Great War, rising to become Principal Catholic Chaplain and Assistant Principal Chaplain on the Western Front. In 1939, aged 74, he volunteered to serve a third time. Due to his age, he was refused a War Office position, instead becoming an unofficial chaplain to HMS Impregnable at Devonport.

This paper will examine the unique experiences of a Benedictine Monk during three conflicts, and show how this monk all but ran the Chaplain's Department on The Western Front during the Great War. It will also show how Dom Stephen's religion helped him

through some of the most difficult periods of the twentieth century. One of the larger assemblages in the Downside Abbey Archives, Dom Stephen's collections are a rare and unique insight into one of the more specialised areas of twentieth century conflict.

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**Elizabeth PATTON, Johns Hopkins University**  
*Reflections on authorship: Dorothy Arundell's perspective on England from the Benedictine Monastery of the Glorious Assumption.*

Dorothy Arundell, who is today regarded by Benedictine nuns at Kylemore Abbey as a founding member of their order, wrote two accounts of the life and martyrdom of her spiritual mentor, John Cornelius, SJ, executed in Dorchester in July 1594. She wrote the first account anonymously in England within six weeks of his execution, under circumstances of great personal danger, and although it was published during her lifetime in Spanish translation (*Historia Particular*, 1599) it has never been attributed to her. She wrote the second and much longer narrative, which remains extant in a single contemporary Italian translation, after entering the Brussels Monastery of the Glorious Assumption as a founding member in 1598. In this second account, she not only acknowledges her role as author but reflects on her changed authorial perspective: rather than writing 'temerariamente'—under the pressure of time and circumstance—she is now writing 'con matura consideratione'. In this talk I attempt to locate this process of 'mature reflection'—for which she provides a highly textured context incorporating elements of both narratives—in relation to the Benedictine and Jesuit cultures that both informed and complicated the early years of this new institution.

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**Sara PRETTO, University of Namur,**  
*The manuscripts of the Abbey of Saint-Sépulcre in the XV century: an example of a Benedictine late medieval library*

Saint-Sépulcre is a Benedictine abbey in Cambrai, North of France, founded in 1054 AD, corresponding to today's Cathedral. Its library group is the second in importance of the collections conserved in Cambrai: the homogeneity of its manuscripts is surprising and it is the concrete sign of a real *scriptorium* activity. In particular, it is interesting to note that, in the XV century, when the *scriptoria* had already passed its golden age, this abbey lives a moment of resurrection: we have more than 80 volumes, many more than the library group of the Cathedral at the same time.

In XIV-XV centuries the monastic world lives a wide trend of renewal, such as the movement called 'the observance' and others. Many Benedictine abbeys were touched by these trends: the aim for all of them was a better application of traditional standards of monastic life but they also revised the role of meditation and silent reading in the monk's life.

Starting from manuscripts, we study the library of the Abbey in the XV century, which reflects the interests of the community and how the new trends of reform change its spirituality; we will try to draw a general panorama of the book manuscript culture inside the monastery and to bring to light the activity of its *scriptorium* in this period of great changes within the religious orders.

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**Maria ROTTLER, University of Vienna**

*Roman Zirngibl, Benedictine in St. Emmeram, historian and archivist*

The Imperial Abbey of St. Emmeram was gradually developed into a centre of learned studies during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century under its last prince-abbots, especially under Frobenius Forster (1762–1791). Forster invested heavily into the education of his convent members and the abbey's collections; he also fostered individual members and supported them in their interests.

One of them was Father Roman Zirngibl (1740–1816), a historian and successful member of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences. His diaries and letters form an essential source for St. Emmeram covering the final decades of its existence; likewise they give a fascinating insight into Zirngibl's day-to-day activities as a prior, as a *Propst*, but also as an archivist. He expressed his concerns and fears in regard to the increasing criticism of monastic life, the glut of anti-monastic treatises, a long phase of insecurity extending over nearly one and a half decades, and the secularisation in Bavaria at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1812, after Regensburg had come under Bavarian rule, he also had to leave St. Emmeram – after 53 years as a Benedictine. He continued to work as an archivist in several former monasteries, including St. Emmeram. He was one of the convent members who managed the abbey collections on behalf of the state after their appropriation.

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**Hannah THOMAS, Durham University**

*From exile to integration: the English Benedictines and the English Sepulchres, 1794–1829*

This paper will discuss the liturgical lives of the English Benedictines, founded in exile in Brussels in 1596; and the English Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre, founded in Liège in 1642. Both communities of English women religious flourished in their adopted Belgian homes, until the political situation on the continent forced them to flee across the Channel and re-establish themselves in England in 1794, settling in Winchester and Essex respectively. Both communities successfully transplanted themselves in England, despite arriving some 30 years before the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829.

From evidence within both archives, this paper will consider the impact that these journeys from exile into integration had upon their faith, customs and liturgy. Focusing on the changes surrounding death and burial practices, this paper will draw attention to a hitherto unexplored angle of the experiences of communities in exile, incorporating evidence from before, during and after the communities migration from Brussels and Liege, adding significantly to our understanding of convents and other religious communities in the penal period.

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