

THE ISLE OF WIGHT ABBEYS

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It would not be appropriate to have a section on Isle of Wight Hymnwriter without mentioning the two places where religious works are beautifully performed.

ST CECELIA ABBEY



St

Cecilia's, Ryde is an abbey of Benedictine nuns under the Patronage of the Sacred Heart. Founded in 1882 and dedicated to the Peace of the Heart of Jesus, it is under the patronage of the Solesmes Congregation of Dom Prosper Guéranger. The nuns live a traditional monastic life of prayer, work and study in accordance with the ancient Rule of St Benedict.

As one of the institutes devoted entirely to divine worship in the contemplative life and following the tradition of Solesmes, St Cecilia's Abbey lays principal emphasis on the solemn celebration of the liturgy, with Mass and the Divine Office sung daily in Gregorian chant.

Because of the anti-clerical laws of 1901, the nuns of the Abbey of Ste-Cécile de Solesmes had been obliged to leave France. They found a temporary home at Northwood, Cowes. When it became clear that there would be no speedy end to the exile, the French nuns had to think of a more permanent home. They bought Appley House near Ryde. The Solesmes nuns erected cloisters and a church. The Church was solemnly dedicated to St Cecilia on 12 October 1907.

On the return of the nuns of Ste-Cécile to France in 1922 after 20 years of exile, the community of Pax Cordis Jesu at Ventnor acquired the vacant property at Appley that came to be known as St Cecilia's Abbey, Ryde. In 1950,

after more than half a century of close contact with that congregation, St Cecilia's Abbey itself became part of the Solesmes Congregation.

The Community supports itself mainly through its production of altar breads, as well as in intellectual and artistic work (calligraphy, candles, etc.). Other manual work includes garden, orchard, and beekeeping.

In 1974, Pope Paul VI issued *Jubilate Deo*, a selection of plainchant pieces, to every bishop in the Church to encourage the singing of Simple Gregorian melodies in parishes. The Community recorded the chant to support this endeavour, in what was the first recording of nuns in the UK. They have continued to regularly record and broadcast since.

Below are some of their recordings:

1. Corpus Christi – in honour of the Eucharist
- 2 Gaudete – selections from the liturgical year
- 3 Magnificat – in honour of Our Lady
- 4 In Dulci Iubilo – Christmas Chant
- 5 Venite ad me – in honour of the Sacred Heart
- 6 Cantus Ecclesiae – selections from the liturgical year
- 7 Easter cassette £6.60
- 8 Spiritus Domini – the whole Mass of Pentecost
- 9 Adorate Deum – selections from the liturgical

For other more recent additions and the opportunity to visit and hear the choir or make a retreat the reader should see the Abbey's website.

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QUARR ABBEY



Quarr Abbey lies between the villages of Binstead and Fisbourne. It belongs to the Catholic Order of St Benedict. The monastic buildings and church, completed in 1912, are considered some of the most important twentieth

century religious structures in the United Kingdom. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner described the Abbey as "among the most daring and successful church buildings of the early 20th century in England".^[1] They were constructed from Belgian brick in a style combining French, Byzantine and Moorish architectural elements. In the vicinity are remains of the original twelfth-century abbey.

The name Quarr comes from 'quarry', because of stone quarry in the neighbourhood. The original title of the monastery was the Abbey of our Lady of the Quarry. Stone from the quarry was used in the Middle Ages for both ecclesiastical and military buildings, for example for parts of the Tower of London. This site became valuable and productive and because of this the abbot warden of the island. The prevalence of piracy in the area led to the granting in 1340 of special permission to fortify the area against attack. A stone wall, sea gate and portcullis were constructed. The ruins of these defences are still visible at the old site. The original St. Mary's Abbey at Quarr was part of the Cistercian Order and was founded in 1132 by Baldwin de Redvers, fourth Lord of the Isle of Wight.^[2] The founder was buried in the Abbey in 1155 and still lies on the site of the mediaeval monastery. The medieval abbey ended its life with the Henry VIII destruction of religious houses in 1536.

A nineteenth-century French law banned religious orders except by special dispensation, though its application varied with changes of government. As a precaution, Abbot Paul Delatte (1848–1937) of the Benedictine Solesmes Abbey had sent a monk to England to look for a house to shelter the community. A crisis came in 1880, when congregations were ordered to apply for authorisation within three months. On 1st July 1901, however, tolerance towards religious communities came to an end with the passing of a new law. The founder of Solesmes, Prosper Guéranger, had originally thought of England as a possible place of refuge should the community have to go into exile.

Finally, at the end of July what seemed to meet the requirements of the monks was Appuldurcombe House. The house was viewed and accepted with a lease contract signed on 19 August 1901 – it is on a former religious site. The monks wasted no time in beginning their transfer from Solesmes to the Isle of Wight and, on Saturday 21 September 1901, practically the entire community of Solesmes reached Appuldurcombe.

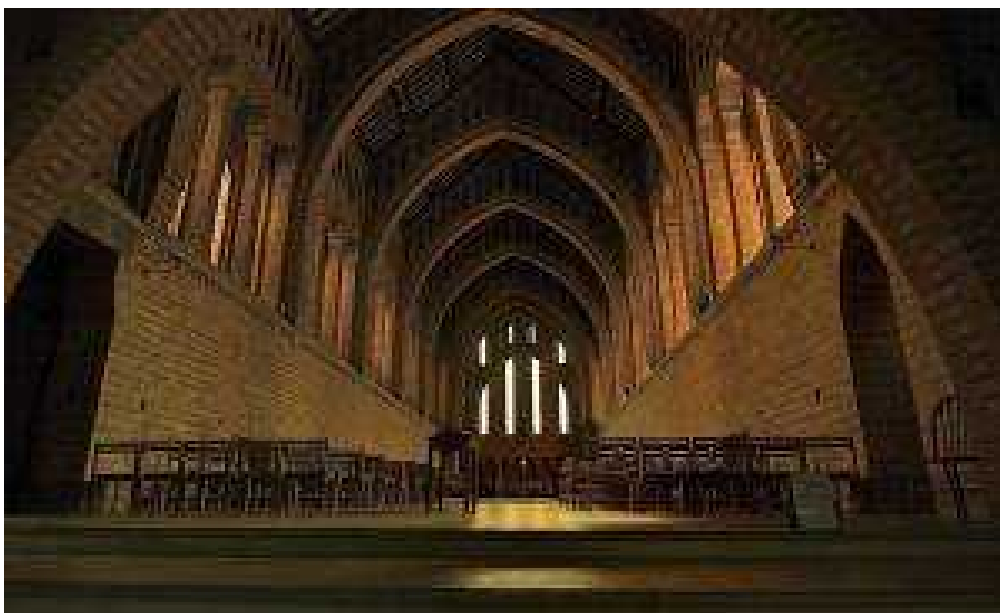
Soon they were able to obtain the land to the west of the old monastery. The first monks arrived at the existing Quarr Abbey House on 25 June 1907 to prepare the grounds and the beginnings of a kitchen garden. They also put up fencing round the property, established a chicken farm, and planted an orchard. One of the monks, Dom Paul Bellot, aged 31, was an architect. He designed and draughted plans for the new abbey, incorporating and extending Quarr Abbey House. 300 workers from the Isle of Wight, accustomed to building only dwelling-houses, raised a building whose design and workmanship is admired by all who visit the Abbey. The building of the refectory and three sides of the cloister began in 1907 and was completed inside one year. The rest of the monks came from Appuldurcombe and, in April 1911, work began on the Abbey church which was quickly completed and consecrated on 12 October 1912. It was built with tall pointed towers of

glowing Flemish brick, adding a touch of Byzantium to the skyline. The monastic buildings, considered some of the most important twentieth-century religious structures in the United Kingdom.^[2]

In 1922, after World War I, the community of Solesmes returned to France. A small community of monks was left at Quarr which, from being a priory of Solesmes, became in 1937 an independent abbey, with English monks recruited to the community.

In July 2013 the Abbey hosted a Chant Forum, a five-day course on early polyphony and Gregorian Chant. Despite the small number of monks the standard is still extremely high in both fields.

The abbey has an excellent website and is open all year to visitors; the music alone is worth a visit as too are the gardens, walks, café and exhibitions.



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[Biography and Further Information](#)