

St Joseph and St Etheldreda

In 1842 Rugeley's Catholics attended Mass in a house in Albion Street where Fr Thomas Green began plans to build a church. He purchased land known as Heron's Field from the Marquis of Anglesey on which to build a church, presbytery and school. The old school, later the parish hall, was built in 1847 and served as a church until 1851. Work on the church began in 1848. Designed by Joseph Hanson, the building stone was donated by Lord Anglesey from his Beaudesert estate. Joseph and Etheldreda Whitgreave met the construction costs while the Harris family and the vicar apostolic of the Central District, William Ullathorne, made generous contributions. The church was opened in August 1851 under the patronage of St Joseph and St Etheldreda. In 1868 the octagonal 160ft spire was added. The tower houses a 17cwt Lady bell cast in 1546 and in the confessional chapel an oak altar designed by A.W. Pugin, from Wolseley Hall.

Taken from *History of the Diocese of Birmingham, 1850-2000*

Reference to the parish website will show that the church interior possesses a wealth of beautiful features.

Colwich Abbey

St Mary's Abbey of English Benedictine nuns had its origins in 1623 at Cambrai in the Spanish Netherlands. By 1645, the Cambrai community had increased to 50 nuns, and was living in conditions of extreme poverty. In 1652, the community was established in Paris as the Priory of Our Lady of Good Hope under Dame Bridget More as their Prioress.

In the French Revolution, the abbey was suppressed and the nuns were imprisoned, first in the monastery and then in the Château de Vincennes. When released in 1795, they settled in England, first in Dorset and then at Cannington in Somerset. In 1836, they finally settled at Mount Pleasant, Colwich. In 1928, the St. Benedict's Priory was raised to the rank of an Abbey, and the house was renamed St Mary's Abbey. In May 2020, due to falling numbers in the community, the Holy See approved the affiliation of St Mary's Abbey, Colwich, with Stanbrook Abbey.

The abbey was first built around 1750 as a house, which was gradually enlarged. The main building is in Gothic Revival style. It is Grade II listed and the mortuary chapel in the grounds of the abbey is Grade I.

The property is now up for sale and so this is could be the last opportunity to visit this notable part of our Midlands Catholic heritage.