

Révéler, dissimuler, façonner :

**la fabrique de l'histoire des
bénédictines anglaises.**

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1791 - Catholic Relief Act : la pratique de la foi catholique est désormais tolérée dans le royaume

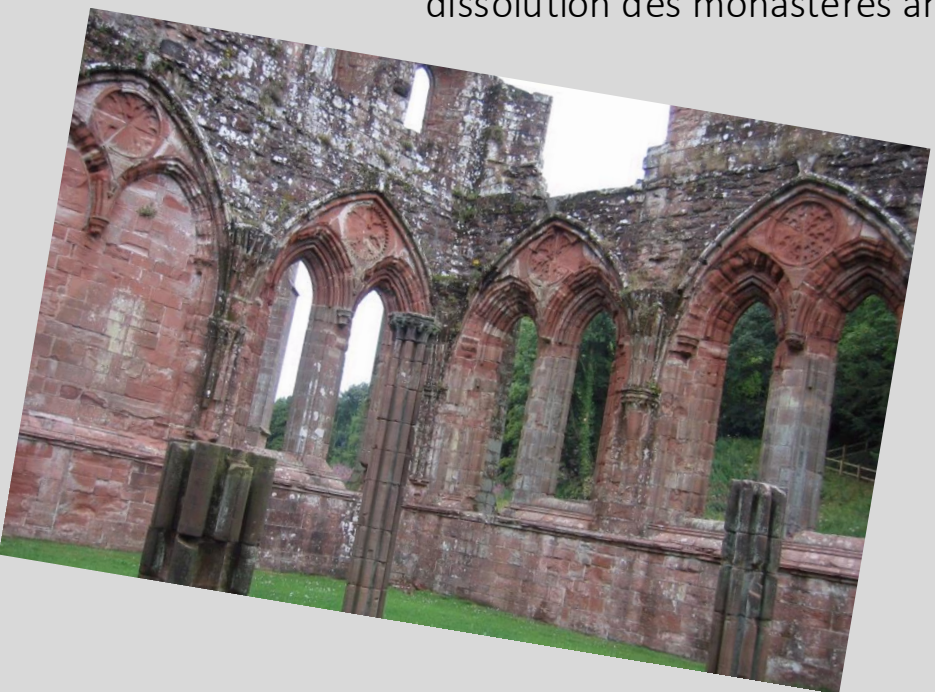
1829 – le Catholic Emancipation Act : droit de vote, droit de représentation au Parlement, droit de travailler dans la fonction publique.



1. Anon., *A History of the Benedictine Nuns of Dunkirk, now at St Scholastica's Abbey, Teignmouth, Devon*, Londres, 1958.
2. Anon., *Annals of the English Benedictines of Ghent, now at St Mary's Abbey, Oulton Oulton*, 1894.
3. Anon., *Chronicle of the First Monastery Founded at Brussels for English Benedictine Nuns, A.D. 1597*, Saint Mary's Abbey, Bergholt, 1898.
4. Reverend Mother Prioress of Colwich et J. S. Hansom (éds), 'The English Benedictines of the convent of our Blessed Lady of Good Hope in Paris, now St. Benedict's Priory, Colwich, Staffordshire', *Catholic Record Society*, Misc. VII, vol. 9 (1911), pp. 334–413.
5. Rumsey, M. J. (éd.), 'Abbess Neville's Annals of Five Communities of English Benedictine Nuns in Flanders 1598–1687', *Catholic Record Society*, Misc. V, vol. 6 (1909), pp. 1–72.
6. The Lady Abbess and Community (éds), 'Obituary Notices of the Nuns of the English Benedictine Abbey of Ghent in Flanders 1627–1811', *Catholic Record Society*, Misc. XI, vol. 19 (1917), pp. 1–92.
7. The Lady Abbess of East Bergholt and J. S. Hansom (éds), 'Registers of the English Benedictine Nuns, Brussels, 1598–1856', *Catholic Record Society*, Misc. IX, vol. 14 (1914), pp. 174–99.
8. The Lady Abbess of Teignmouth and the Archivist (éds), 'Registers of the English Benedictine Nuns of Pontoise OSB', *Catholic Record Society*, Misc. X, vol. 17 (1915), pp. 248–326.
9. The Right Reverend Lady Cecilia Heywood, Abbess of Stanbrook and J. Gillow (éd.), 'Records of the Abbey of Our Lady of Consolation Nuns at Cambrai 1620–1793', *Catholic Record Society*, Misc. VIII, vol. 13 (1913), pp. 1–81.2.



1536-1540
dissolution des monastères anglais



Couvents anglais fondés en exil

- Chanoinesses augustiniennes (Bruges, Louvain, Paris)
- Bénédictines (Bruxelles, Cambrai, Dunkerque, Gand, Paris, Pontoise, Ypres)
- Bridgettines (Lisbonne)
- Carmélites (Anvers, Hoogstraten, Lierre)
- Dominicaines (Bruxelles)
- Franciscaines (Bruxelles)
- Conceptionistes (Paris)
- Clarisses (Aire, Dunkerque, Gravelines, Rouen)
- Sépulchrines (Liège)



Quand l'idéal de sainte dévotion devient débâcle et scandale



Les premiers protagonistes

- William Holt, jésuite
- Mary Percy, fondatrice et abbesse du couvent de Bruxelles (1616-1642)
- Robert Chambers, confesseur ordinaire
- Lucy Knatchbull, rivale de Percy puis fondatrice et abbesse du couvent de Gand (1624)

participant de ce que est par
ment appelée et tenue ala maison de Vn gentilehomme sur la
J'entends tousant l'estat et condition du monastere des Benedictins
Angloises a Bruxelles, par quelques Vns des mes amys et cognoissance
lesquels se trouuants mis en la bonne comodité du lieu ou ils estoient
assembler, et aussi ayants fort bon loisir alors de discourir largement
et librement, il leur sembloit entretenir la bonne occasion avec grand
apetit, come gens charges interieurement avec ^{quelques} grand descontentement, en
rencontrer en ce lieu la, et chacun desirant se desgorgier de son fardeau
en presence de son amy. car il n'y auoit personne d'entre nous, que ne
se monstroient affame de dire quelque chose en cette occasion par voye de
se plaindre de ce pouure maison la; de sorte que en nomant seulement
le monastere de Bruxelles, au premier abord, les humeurs comencoyent
d'estre troubles, et chacun de censurer et monstrier ouuertement son
mescontentement qu'il auoit; quelques Vns disoyent qu'elle estoit come
les ruynes de Troie, aultres l'appelloient le deshonneur de la nation
Angloise, aucuns furent ouyes faire des exclamations contre les dissen-
tions de la maison, et aultres de blasmer la decadence ^{de} leur temporalite
Les uns admiroyent, les aultres faisoient comparaizon de la maison presen-
tement, avec ce qu'elle estoit au temps passe, et avec des aultres monaste-
re de nostre nation poudela, mais enfin chacun deplora et auoit compassion
de la miserable condition d'icelle, come de Vne famille qu'on estimoit
estre sur le point d'estre dissipée, et prest en Vn moment de ^{la} separer et
s'en aller. cestes et semblables plainctes donnoient occasion peu a
peu de discourir plus largement, et a la fin estoient cause que tous ceux
pourent a deuiner des Troyes et actuelles raisons
de la maison, et aussi a penser

1620, lettre de R. H. à
l'abbesse Mary Percy, « les
ruines de Troie »

- « en nomant seulement le monastere de Bruxelles, au premier abord, les humeurs comencoyent d'estre troubles, et chacun de censurer et monstrier ouuertement son le mescontentement qu'il auoit; quelques Uns disoyent qu'elle estoit come les ruynes de Troye, aultres l'appelloient le deshonneur de la nation Angloise, aucuns furent ouyes faire des exclamations contre les dissensions de la maison, et aultres de blasmer la decadence de <en> leur temporalites »

Nouvelle fondation à Gand, 1624.



ENGLISH BENEDICTINE ABBEY AT GHENT.

[*Frontispiece.*]

- 1628, Anthony Champney nommé confesseur ordinaire
- 1629, le conflit devient international
- Francesco Barberini, cardinal protecteur de l'Angleterre
- *Propaganda Fide*
- 1630: Procès en justice à Rome
- Les appelantes occupent la sacristie, puis le chœur de force: *Black Sanctus*
- 1632, les appelantes sont expulsées *manu militari*
- 1639, les appelantes sont réintégrées

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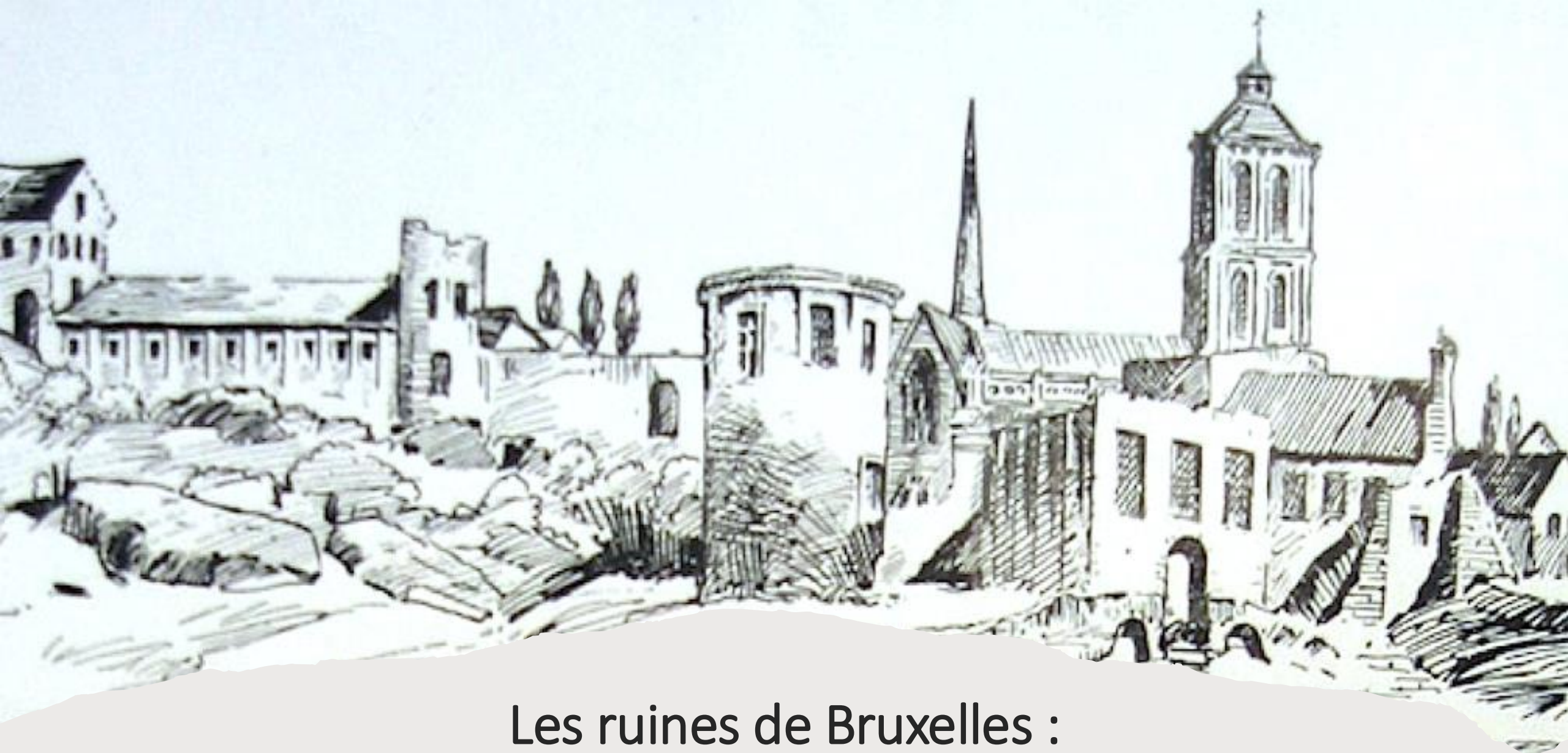
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ra an.

18 The 21 of March being the feast of our holy father the
Convent going at mattins in the quier, there was raised a grant
tumult, D. Alexia endeavouring with all her forces to have the
upper hand in the appoyntment of the lessons, soe that the diuine
office was left of for a tyme, and the religiousse betooke them
to strins and contend. the Appellantor would have thrust out
of the quier those of my ladyes side, and to comming alsoe to y
prioras whoe set in her seat pulled her booke out of her hand
and bid her to goe out of the quier vnto her very contume-
lions wordes and D. Mary Evers especially whoe at last wth were
to prouoke her, vnto her strike, strike if you dare, strike if
you dare, in this contention D. Flavia fell to the ground, but
by what means it is not known. whether her foote might slipp
as she was earnest in strining, or whether thrown downe by any
of the Appellantor whoe were neerer vnto her then D. Marina
Whom they accuse to have thrown her downe. But D. Marina is
soe certain that she did it not that ^{she} will take ^{her oath} it vpon it. And the
Priorasse that D. Mai Evers was between D. Flavia and Dame
Marina when she had the fall.
Agatha Wiseman Priorasse.

19 The Appellants endeavour with all their forces to hinder
D. Alexia whoe is a deane shoul^d haue the place due vnto her office
and D. Martha hers whoe is elected m^r of Nouices, whereby
they haue caused much strife in the quier and refectorye.
soe that in the absence of the priorasse twoe at once doe
ordinarely preside in her place.

20 The 22 of March the priorasse being absent from the
quier, and leaving D. Alexia to supplie her place, at the
Christina Parient of prime when the benediction was to be giuen the



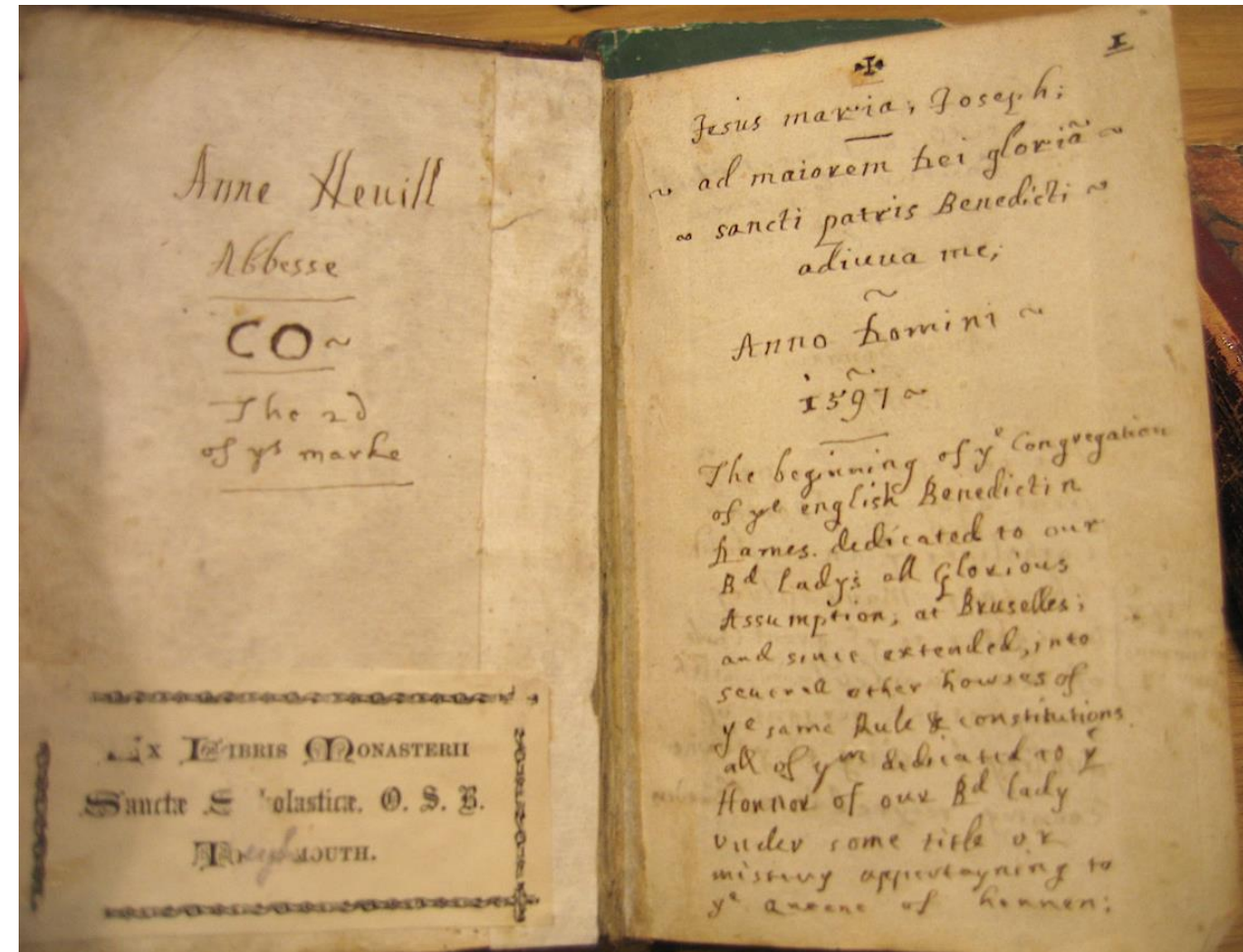
Les ruines de Bruxelles :
textes de mémoire, écriture de l'oubli

1053 manuscrits (entre 1 et 118 feuillets) pour reconstruire l'histoire de Bruxelles (en latin, français, anglais et néerlandais):

- Archives de l'archevêché de Malines-Bruxelles (861 manuscrits)
- Archives de l'archevêché de Westminster (160 manuscrits)
- Archives de la Congrégation pour la propagation de la foi (23 manuscrits)
- Bibliothèque vaticane (4 manuscrits)
- Archives nationales, Londres (4 manuscrits)
- British Library, Londres (3 manuscrits)
- Abbaye de Douai, Angleterre (un manuscrit)



Anne Neville, abbesse du couvent de Pontoise (filiale de Gand), compile ses annales des cinq premières communautés de bénédictines anglaises



Mary Vavasour, abbesse du couvent de Bruxelles après Mary Percy

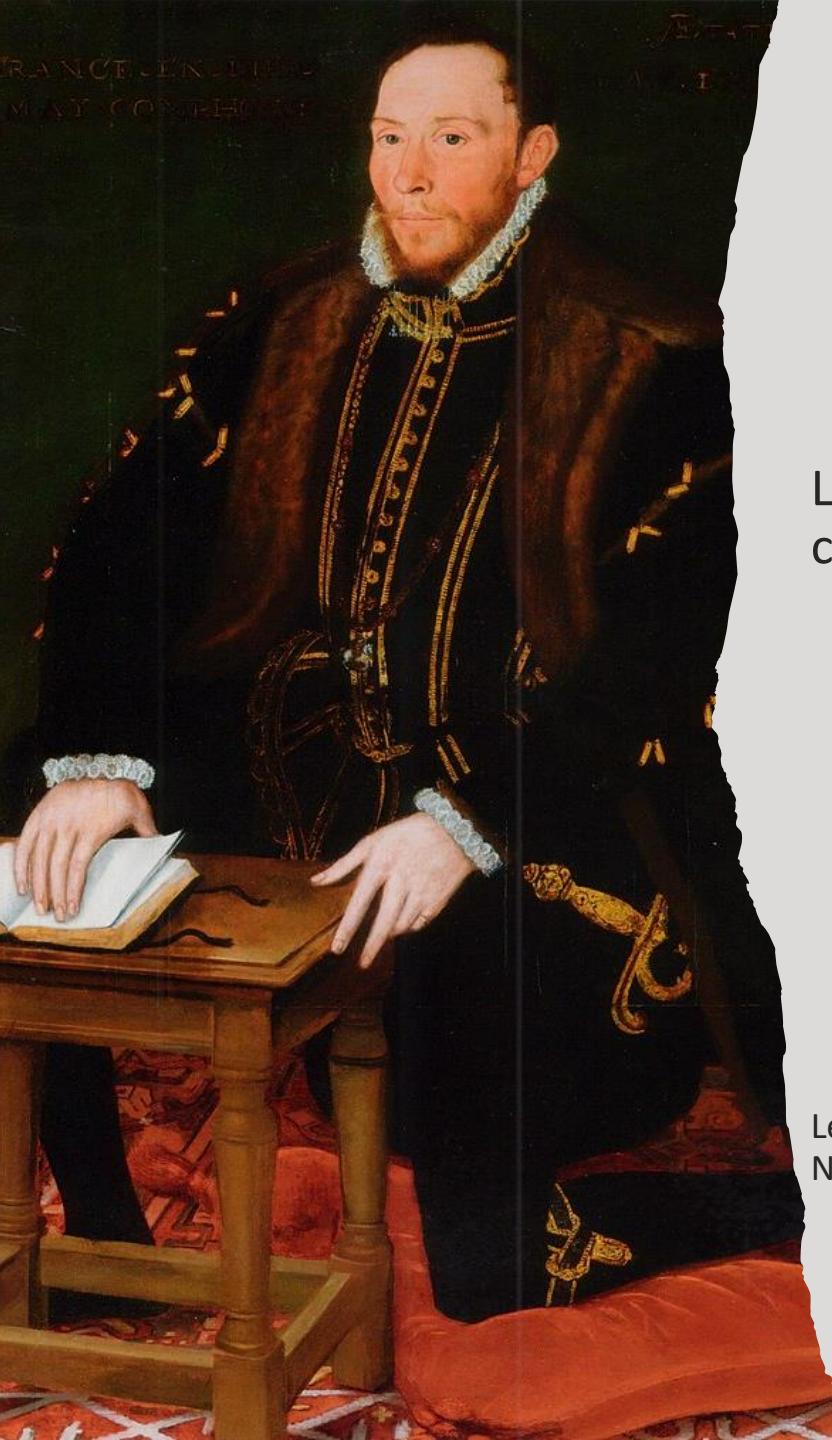
« [...] tout comme parmi les saints, des contradictions s'élèvent parfois, dans cette sainte communauté s'élevèrent quelques différends, et l'on fit quelque opposition contre les statuts. Mais *la plus grande partie de la communauté* les soutint, et nous fîmes alors notre humble recours auprès de Sa Sainteté et de la Sainte Congrégation, pour la défense de nos statuts. Et Dieu soit loué, le Saint siège *nous protégea toujours*, mais pourtant, en ces temps, nous souffrîmes beaucoup ; mais Dieu nous porta assistance et tout trouva *une heureuse conclusion*. »

- Dans les années 1870, l'historien jésuite John Morris informe l'abbesse Mary Francis Sales Woollett de l'existence de manuscrits sur la polémique : « il vaut mieux que tout cela soit oblitéré, ou demeure inconnu ».
- Dans les années 1890, l'abbesse Mary Gertrude Lescher travaille à l'édition de la chronique du couvent de Bruxelles, destinée à ne circuler qu'en interne : un "malheureux malentendu".
- En 1975, les archives sont confiées à Douai Abbey, hors d'atteinte des chercheurs.
- En 1978, Mildred Murray-Sinclair de l'abbaye de Teignmouth pour écrire une histoire de la maison de Bruxelles se heurte au refus de l'abbé président de la Congrégation bénédictine anglaise.

Private

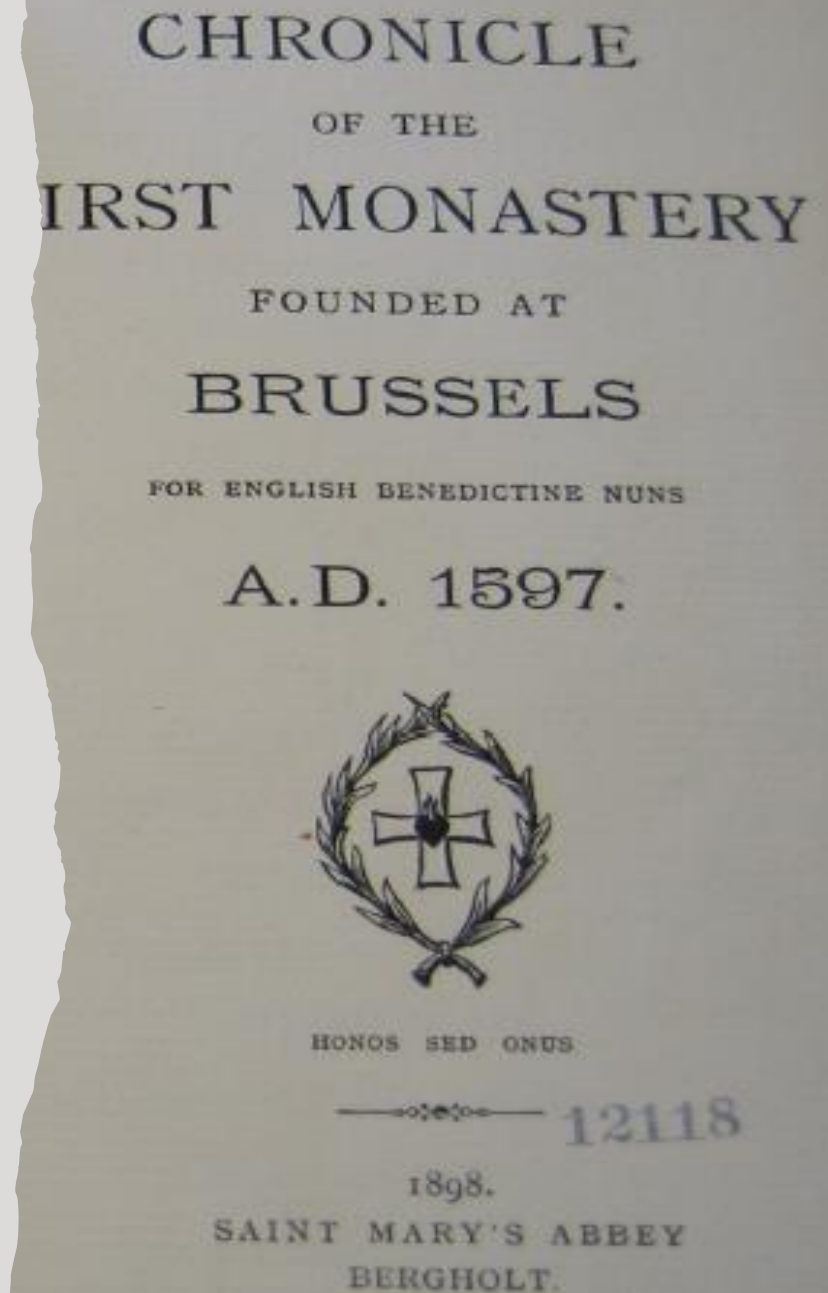
My much loved Lady & Sister

The accompanying letter is one you can show Dame Mary when she is able - I know you will understand me - but she does not seem to reflect sufficiently upon what the consequences might be of handing down these details, it cannot do good, & who can say it might not do harm? - Because these Annals are being written with a view to their being read for the edification of the future generations - I would give anything to be able to lift the mystery & clear up the story - but only for the satisfaction of handing down unvarnished names & untarnished - but not to



La chronique publiée en 1898 se concentre des aspects plus édifiants

Le Vénérable Thomas Percy, 7^{ème} compte de Northumberland par Steven van der Meulen (1566)



**Écrire pour façonner son histoire :
Gand ou l'art de l'auto-représentation**

- « si bien que quelques personnes de grande vertu et valeur au sein de la Compagnie furent d'opinion qu'il ne serait pas peu profitable au service de Dieu Tout Puissant, [...] qu'une petite colonie des religieuses en soit délicatement prélevée et placée dans une autre ville. »

- « elle fut transportée ici avec trois autres reverendes dames du chœur, [et]deux novices ».

mis-accidents as those; and rather
stroke, then strike that kind of
posits, and adversaries, with a soft
gentle hand, beinge guided, and in-
duced by a ^{with a} forgiu sweet forgi-
ing heart. And here, will I en-
this reflection, upon the great be-
ferance which she had in that first
Monastery, where she lived; and so
on to the second part, where we shall
find, that she suffered also extremely; and
besides, what an eminent service she
performed, and payed, to Almighty God
by that other Monastery which she created
and founded, in honour of his divine Ma-
and of his all-Immaculate Mother, accord-
ing to that Prediction, whereby he per-
her to understand, in a Supernaturally, ^{way}
he would then prolonge her life for his
owne service.

The Second Part.

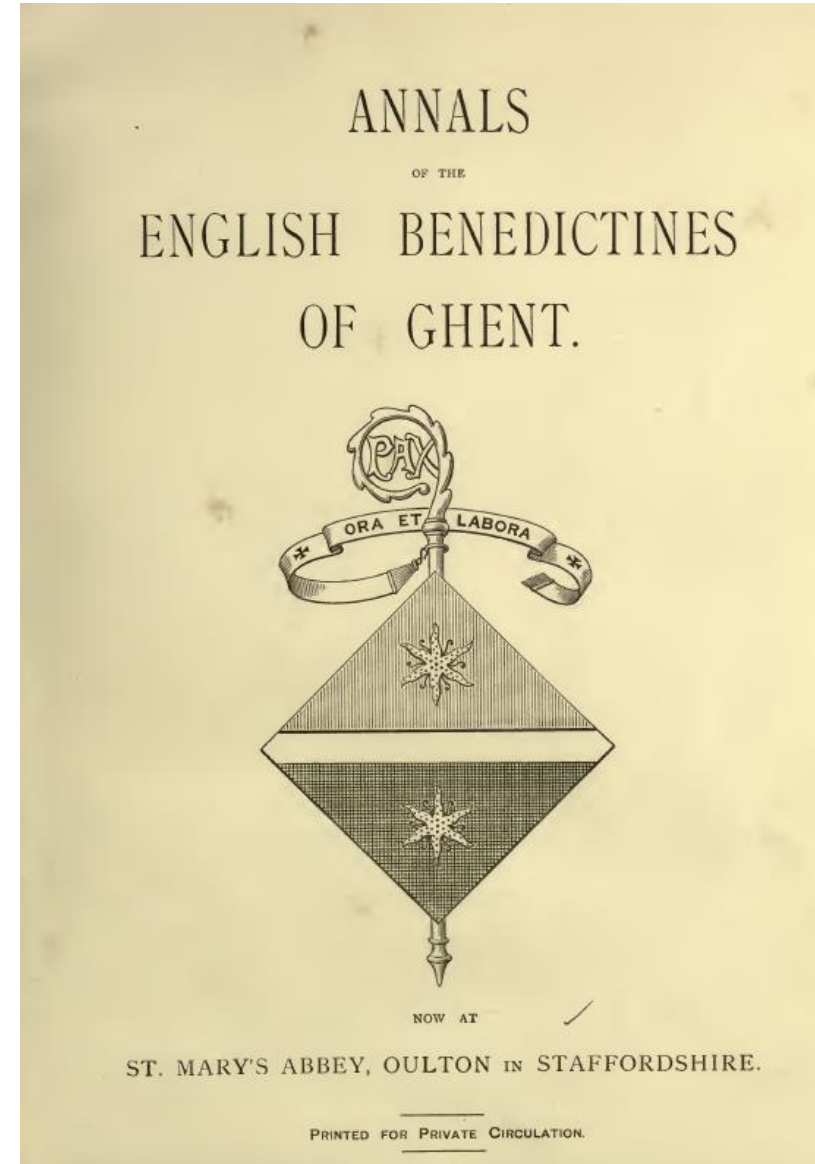
The first Chapter.

By what degrees, and means,
the good Abbess grew able
to serve our B. Lord, by
cooperatinge about her
remove from Brussels,
and obtaininge leave,
and means, to beginne the
Foundation, of her new
Monastery at Gant.

The Monastery of English Dames
or Ladies, at Brussels, who live un-
der the Rule of the glorious Pa-
triarke S.^t Benedict, was one of the
most illustrious Communities, or Con-
gregations of our Nation, in all kind
which

Annales des bénédictines anglaises de Gand (1894).

- éloge de John Knatchbull (Norton), présenté comme « très actif à préparer la nouvelle fondation ».
- « la fine fleur de la maison » :
« Peut-être n'était-elle pas prête à s'en séparer ».



Les contemplations, visions et
extases de Lucy Knatchbull, d'après
son confesseur Tobie Matthew

my S^t Teresa was, who translated up
more, through all that words of hers, about
minge her Order, and foundinge also
Monasteries. Which would be sure to give her
to doe, about treatinge, wth secular persons,
conditions, and in dispatchinge multitudes of
y^e, w^{ch} would make a very faire way, for the
minge of her vertues, and consequently woult
some possible meanes, to sett them exactly
re; w^{ch} cannot be so easily done in the
of a Religious woman, who, upon the
mater, is a meer Recluse; and of
you can say, and deliver almost
e, but what passes in a kind of spiri-
; which will make no great differ-
So that for my part, I will ap-
lfe to the other course, by
use of ~~her~~ her owne Letters
; which I hope will give
faction to others, as I am sure
rather doth to me.

My

The 6^t Chapter.

How the sanctity of her soule
in all kindes, appears by
severall Letters, and Papers,
to some spirituall friends
of hers, which Letters still
survive, and are all written
in her owne hand.

My serious entrance now, into this
of the further account, which I me
to give you, of this B^d creature
be taken from that short reflection
here I meane to make, upon the
Relation, which you see she m
herselfe, in the former part
Discourse, whereof I will be
she leave to affirme, that
been lately imparted to severa

Extraits des *Annales... de Gand*

- Circulaire mortuaire de Lucy Knatchbull

APPENDIX THE FIRST.

N. I. MORTUARY BILL OF LADY LUCY KNATCHBULL, FIRST ABBESS.

In the year of Our Lord 1629 Most Happyly Departed this Life Our most Pious and Right Reverend Mother In Christ My Lady Lucy Knatchbull of most happy memory on the 5th of August the 19 year of her Profession the 45 of her age and the 5 of her being Prelatrice.

My Lady Lucy Belov'd of God and man was in baptism call'd Elizabeth daughter Reynold Knatchbull Esquire of a very illustrious, wise and ancient family, in County Kent. At the age of seventeen by considering the vanity of the world and the anger of Death found the strong inspires of Almighty God calling her to Religion yet to foregoe her liberty or loose those pretended hopes of advancements which she had an ambition to pursue, shutting the ears of her soul against the voyce of Almighty God (as she terms, for much of her life both at Bruxells and Ghent, by Order of her spirituall Guids is Extant in her own hand writing) God of his Goodness at length persevering to knock at her heart. She declares the result in these words: Between the Desires my soul had to Embrace the Divine Vocation and the extream aversance since found in it, my heart (as it were) was torn in pieces. And she atfully concludes with humble thanks to God that after three years struggling she made her Resolution and broke those Chains which had so fetter'd her affections. After for half a year she experienced great quiet of conscience, but then the Enemy wrought into her mind how intollerable she was to suffer all days of her life in undertaking a course so contrary to her naturall Inclination to freedom. Yet for all this strife within, she sett a good Shew by Exterior Cheerfulness, entering Bruxells Monastery with alacrity, though her heart was seaz'd upon with an Extream sadness through her many reprehensions. But for her Honour's sake she kept it very secret. After a while they gave her an Eight Days Exercise and she took this spirituall retirement very seriously, wherein God Almighty was pleas'd to give me much light and by little and little appeas'd the tumult of my heart (said she) making me forgett those follies which had been cause of my Disquiett. When she came out she set herself with a resolute spirit to do all which was ordain'd her, and she found great Comfort in her obedience, Yet now and then even weary of a solitary life, which had ever been hatefull to her; thus the Enemy brought clouds and mists before her, yet by the Light of God's Grace vertue appear'd so able in her Eye that she continued in her resolves to go through. Speaking thus to herself: I will doe what I can though it will cost me Dear to compass it. In all the

Extrait des *Annales ... de Gand*, l'apparition de John Sherman

- fantôme de John Sherman apparu à Aloysia German(1636).
- « car personne d'autre que vous ne peut me secourir ».
- « Cette maison est si agréable aux yeux de Dieux et de sa Bienheureuse Mère qu'aucun de ses membres ne mourra sans une mort heureuse. »

No. 4.

APPARITION OF JOHN SHEARMAN.

(From a MS. written at Ghent and sent by Lady Mary Knatchbull to Rev. Hugh Tootell (Charles Dodd) in 1718. It is now in the possession of the "Old Brotherhood.")

A true and faithful Relation of y^e soul of John Shearman as it happen'd to a Religious in y^e English Monastery of y^e holy Order of St. Benedict in Gant, whose name was Aloysia German in y^e year of our Lord 1636 on y^e third of March.

John Shearman coming often to my Aunt Whiting's house on account of business and observing him to be a man of very good life, I had a great compassion of his