

Monks Astonish England By Marvels Of Building Unique In Modern Times

After 40 Years of Labor, Exiled Benedictines Complete First Restoration of Ancient English Monastery Ever Accomplished and Erection of Biggest Church in England Outside London.

MONKISH BUILDERS MERE HANDFUL

Rebuilding of Ruined Abbey of Buckfast, Begun in 1882, Was Carried On at First by Single Monk Mason with One Assistant and at No Time Have There Been More Than Six Monks at Work

ANOTHER WONDER MONK FROM SPAIN

Working Single-Handed, Lay-Brother from Catalonia Has Built Big Church Hall From His Own Designs and Simultaneously Enlarged and Decorated Roman Catholic Chapel.—Has Fitted Each With Lighting and Heating Apparatus and Water Supply and Laid Parquet Flooring Containing Over 5,000 Blocks.—In His Spare Time This Monkish "Admirable Crichton" is Doctor, Dentist, Nurse and Barber to the Other Members of His Community, Makes His Colleagues' Clothes and Vestments and Darns Their Socks, Does Sculpture Work, Teaches French, Spanish and Music, Prunes Vines and Brews Beer, and Incidentally Helps to Edit the Parish Magazine.

By HAYDEN CHURCH

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LONDON.—I have just met Sir James Barrie's Admirable Crichton in the flesh. But Barrie, it proves, was mistaken about the identity of the astonishing master of many crafts whom he took as the hero of his famous play and who later, under American auspices, made his appearance on the movie screen. His name isn't Crichton really, he isn't English but Spanish, and instead of being a butler he is a monk.

This Admirable Crichton of real life is one Raymond Tous, who is known to the other members of the little monastic community in England of which he is a member simply as "Brother Raymond." Until yesterday he was an obscure lay-brother of this community, a branch of the Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart of Mary whose "house," as it is called, the only one that this famous Spanish order has yet established in this country, though it has hundreds in other parts of the world including the United States, is located at Hayes, an ancient and historic little village in Middlesex, not many miles from London.

To-day, however, Brother Raymond has become famous from one end of England to the other, the story of an accomplishment on his part which is really stupendous when considered as the work of one man, having only recently become generally known. Summed up in few words it may not seem particularly spectacular, consisting as it does, of the designing, building and embellishing, single-handed, of a large "church hall" and the simultaneous enlargement and decoration of a Roman Catholic chapel. It is only, in fact, when the details of the extraordinary work which this Spanish monk, who is now close on 50, carried out without any assistance whatever, and that kept him busy for more than three years, are known, and when one discovers also, as I did yesterday, what an all-around genius generally is this monkish native of sunny Castilla that one recognizes him as a sure-enough Admirable Crichton, even if he isn't the one that Sir James Barrie had in mind when he cre-

ated the character of his famous butler hero.

Brother Raymond stands out as an individual. But monks as a class have, as it happens, been doing wonderful things in England of late, the achievement of one Benedictine community particularly having also made a sensation. This community, expelled from France a little more than forty years ago, acquired in 1882 the site of the ruined Abbey of Buckfast, which in its time was one of the largest in England. For more than a decade they devoted themselves to its partial restoration and in addition they have nearly completed a wonderful church that alone represents twenty years of labor on the part of the monks themselves, and that has just been inaugurated by Cardinal Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster.

And another Benedictine congregation, which is now to return to France after twenty-one years of exile on this side of the English Channel, not only built themselves a new and beautiful abbey in the Isle of Wight, but have, it appears, established there a monastery which now contains what must be one of the most wonderful collections of music manuscripts, both ancient and modern, in existence anywhere.

Altogether what we have heard recently of the achievements of monks as architects, builders and laborers, as well as in other lines, is almost enough to make one imagine that we are back in the Middle Ages, when the life of whole communities centered about the local monastery, when monks worked in the fields and were shepherds and artisans, and when the only schools for the children of the yeoman class, were those in which monks were the teachers.

Type of the Monk-BUILDER

There is no comparison, of course, between the restoration of the ancient Abbey of Buckfast, which represents the only re-building on record of an ancient English monastery, by monks of the Benedictine order and the work which Brother Raymond Tous has

carried out, single-handed, at Botwell House, in Hayes. The feat of this individual monk, however, is extraordinary enough. It made me eager to discover what manner of man it was who had accomplished it, realizing as I did that he must be a type of the other monkish builders whose performances are the wonder of the country. And having seen him and heard from his colleagues of his other accomplishments in many widely different "lines," I came away wondering if there can exist anywhere else in the world as astonishing an all-around genius in his way as this humble Spanish lay-brother, now verging on his fifth millennium.

Before I tell you of all that Brother Raymond has done, however, let me sketch a hasty picture of the engaging little community that, because of him, has suddenly been brought into the limelight. The Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart of Mary, a monastic order founded in 1819 by a famous archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, the Venerable Anthony Mary Chanel, now numbers over 2,000 members, scattered the world over. It has fifty "houses" in Spain alone, many throughout South America and Cuba, others in Span-

ish West Africa, and a number in the United States and Canada. Until 1912 it was unrepresented in England, but then a little body of its missionaries arrived in this country and established a centre at Botwell House, Hayes, an ancient family mansion whose "newest" part, the drawing room, was added in 1818. It stands in very beautiful grounds of about four acres, the church and presbytery being entirely hidden from the prying eyes of the world by immense cedar and fir trees.

The community now consists of five priests, two students and three lay-brothers, one of these latter being the extraordinary Brother Raymond. Forty-eight years old, this wonderful monk and expert craftsman, is, he told me in his funny broken English, a native of the Spanish province of Catalonia. He has been a monk ever since he was 17, and before coming to England ten years ago belonged to a branch of his order at Gibraltar.

"Some" Job For One Man

When he started work a bit more than three years ago, the ground on which he built his church hall was occupied by some stables and cowsheds. These Brother Raymond tore down, and utilized the bricks in constructing the new building, which is 60 feet long, about 20 feet wide and high in proportion. It is panelled all round to about three-quarters of the height, and is lighted naturally by four small windows and one big oriel, and artificially by three magnificent chandeliers, which were constructed and exquisitely decorated by the monkish artisan. The ceiling is panelled, too, and the parquet flooring contains about 5,000 oak blocks,

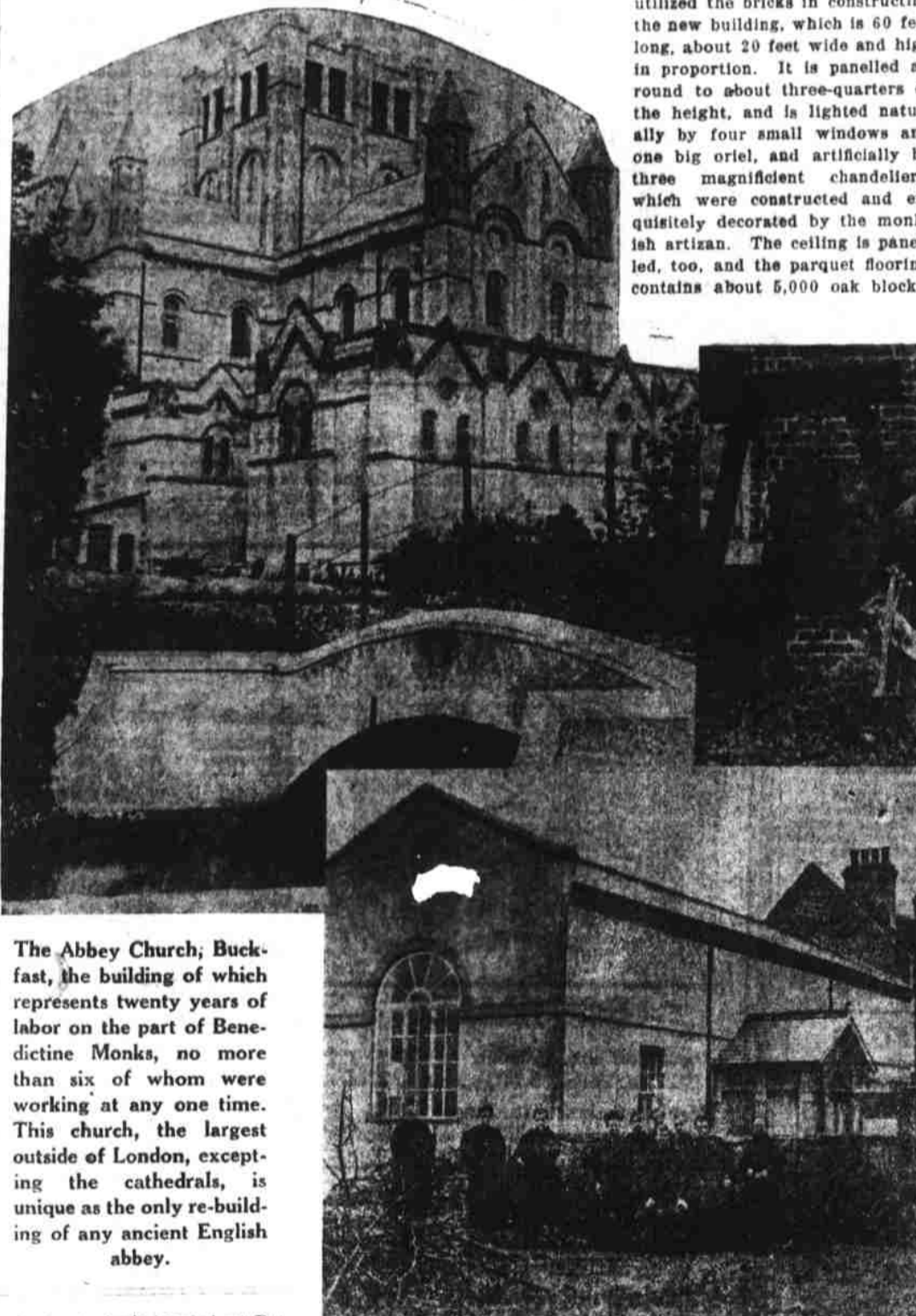
colleagues' hair, brews the non-alcoholic beer which the community dispenses, prunes the vines in the garden, makes the clothing for the rest of the community, makes the rich vestments that are worn by the officiating priests, has made a gorgeous canopy for the church, and helps to edit the parish magazine! He also does a good deal of sculpture work, teaches music, French and Spanish, and acts as dentist for the community. He not only darns his colleagues' socks but knits them, does all the marketing, was cook for a whole year, and in his "spare time" manages a bit of boot-repairing. All this work has to be done in between his religious duties. With his companions he rises at 4.30 a. m., and goes to bed at 10 p. m. The things that stump me most of all is how he ever gets to bed.

Among other things Brother Raymond is responsible for the fitting of the water supply to the house. He showed me yesterday a design of his own for a beautiful church with a tower, buttresses and flying arches.

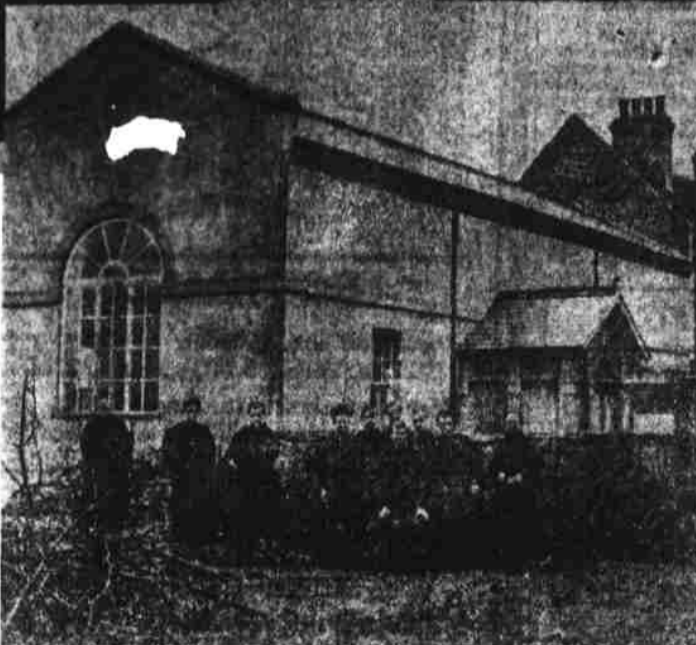
"We have the site here," he said, "but we have no money." And this amazing man assured me that he is prepared to start on building the church of his imaginings alone if only the money for the materials is forthcoming.

Handful of Monks Re-Build Great Abbey

Somebody has described Brother Raymond's church hall as "a little



The Abbey Church, Buckfast, the building of which represents twenty years of labor on the part of Benedictine Monks, no more than six of whom were working at any one time. This church, the largest outside of London, excepting the cathedrals, is unique as any other re-building of any ancient English abbey.



Brother Raymond and his fellow monks in front of the church hall at Hayes, Middlesex, which he has taken three years to build.

Brother Raymond, the Monk who is master of all the crafts, carrying wood for the church hall that he built, single-handed, in three years.

Buckfast." The meaning of this designation is clear, for if the rebuilding of the famous Abbey of that name in Devonshire by a community of Benedictines who have been engaged thereupon these forty years represents a unique achievement, it is easier of comprehension when one considers what one monk alone has accomplished in the little Middlesex town of Hayes. With this single observation, one may go ahead with a story that is surely one of the most romantic of modern church life and building.

No one seems to know exactly when the original Abbey of Buckfast was founded, but there is good reason for believing that it could not have been established later than the eighth century. From then on until the Dissolution in 1539 the Abbey was the centre of religious life in the beautiful valley of the river Dart, and its possessions included great stretches of Dartmoor, with granges and out-lying cells for the occupation of the shepherd lay-brothers; for it was from wool that much of the Abbey's income was derived.

After the Dissolution, the Abbey buildings, following the general course, passed into private ownership. They were left to decay and by the beginning of the 19th century nothing but walls and founda-

tions remained, with the exception of a single tower, still standing. Out of these ruins there was built, on the site, a private house, and the decay and destruction was then so complete that even the foundations of the old Abbey were not longer recognizable.

In 1882 a congregation of Benedictine monks, expelled from France, bought the site of the Abbey and a portion of its possessions, with the view of establishing thereupon their own religious system. The remaining tower was restored, the domestic buildings of the Abbey were rebuilt, and a temporary church was erected. Before any of the work could be begun, the foundations of the Abbey and its church were laid bare, and the whole of the re-building was raised on the ancient walls. This portion of the Abbey was re-opened in 1886, and the Benedictine monks have since continued the services of the Roman Catholic Church which were suspended at the Dissolution. In 1899 the settlement was restored to the full dignity of an independent Benedictine monastery.

The next work was to rebuild the Abbey Church, and for nearly twenty years past this work has been going on in the true medieval fashion. The design was that of Frederick Walters, F. S. A., architect of the Abbey buildings, who has also designed the church of Our Lady of Ransom at Eastbourne, (notable for the extreme beauty of the coloring of the stonework) and the Franciscan Friary at Chilworth, in Surrey. All the work from 1883 has been carried on under his superintendence. At first the actual building was done by a single monk mason with one assistant. At no time have there been more than six monks at work, and so the building has been carried on, as money came. Under ordinary building conditions, the work would have cost at least \$100,000. What it has actually cost has been a mere fraction of that sum.

The whole building, when complete, will consist of a nave of nine bays with aisles, transepts with eastern chapels, and choir with an eastern square-ended projection or transept of six chapels, the whole surmounted by a square central tower and spire. Its internal dimensions will be: Length, 240 feet; width, 64 feet; length of transept, 85 feet; height, 49 feet. The whole of the eastern portion, the transepts and crossing, and two bays of the nave are completed. Four more bays of the nave are finished to the clerestory, and that is the portion that has just been opened. The building follows the style of the original church, (Transition Norman) which was built about the middle of the twelfth century. The fittings of the church will be of a beauty and dignity consistent with the building, and they include an abbot's throne, reconstructed from fifteenth century carved woodwork. A fourteenth century statue of Our Lady recovered (in fragments) from the ruins, has been restored and placed in the north transept chapel.

Is Unique Achievement

This noble building occupies an exquisitely beautiful situation in the valley of the Dart, near to the poet Herrick's Dean Prior, and to Dartington, where Proude, the historian, spent his childhood. The site (with the ruins of the old Abbey) forms the foreground of one of Turner's wonderful drawings of the great gorge of the Dart, and, as seen from the elevated churchyard of Buckfastleigh, forms a choice a setting as that of any abbey in England.

The church which has now arisen is unique as the only re-building of any English abbey, and it forms one of the most important ecclesiastical buildings of modern times. No existing church outside London, except the cathedrals, is so large. The tower, as shown in the accompanying photograph, is temporarily finished in its upper stages. It holds a fine peal of fourteen bells. Unusual and handsome features of the interior are the galleries by which the triforium passage is carried around the transept and a similar gallery on the internal faces of the tower walls, at present used as a ringing gallery.

Knowing what I did of the stunts he has to his credit, I had expected to see a man in the full flush of youth, but Brother Raymond's hair is iron grey and he looks all of his years. But he is a man of brawn, all right, who stands close on six feet and whose muscles stand out like whipcords. In the white-smock and coarse black trousers he was wearing when I talked with him he looked much more like a Russian peasant than a Spanish monk, especially when, vastly entertained by my wonder at his achievements, his broad face broke into a smile that showed all of his strong, yellow teeth.

"The fact that he has never had any special training in the different crafts he practices," said Father Joseph Pinella, the Superior of the Botwell House community, "makes the work that he has done here the more surprising." And then he told me about the multifarious activities of Brother Raymond.

every one of which was made and fitted by Brother Raymond.

Just as he had got going well with the church hall, moreover, the church itself had to be enlarged to accommodate the rapidly growing congregation, so Brother Raymond tackled that job, too, and got it off his hands before he started on the hall again.

Here are just a few of the things he has done during those three years of amazing industry. He has built the church hall, a porch for the church itself, an altar and out-buildings; done the work of a sanitary engineer; installed 13 hot water radiators; put in a new boiler; fitted the church and house throughout with electric light; put in the ventilators; drawn all his own plans; designed the buildings; laid the wood block flooring; fitted all the windows and doors; done all the glazing work, and laid on the gas.

If there is anything this extraordinary man can't do I didn't discover what it is. He cuts his