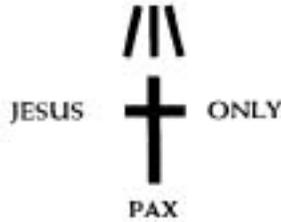




*Ignatius, O.S.A.  
M.C.*

Y GWIR YN ERBYN Y BŶD



# The Father Ignatius Memorial Trust

Charity Commissioners'  
Registration No. 253225

## NEWSLETTER

No. 42 SUMMER 2014

website at: [www.fatherignatius.com](http://www.fatherignatius.com)

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# *The Pilgrimage Association*

THE ECUMENICAL Llanthony Pilgrimage Association seeks to further the spiritual ideas of Fr Ignatius in two ways—through the annual pilgrimage to Our Lady of Llanthony at Capel-y-ffin, and by mutual support and prayer for those causes dear to his heart.

These include the evangelisation of our country, the renewal of community and monastic life in the Church and the reconciliation of divided Christians in the faith and practice of the undivided Church.

Membership of the Association is £6 per person annually (which also covers the joining fee for new members).

If you would like to know more, forms will be available at this year's pilgrimage, or contact:

The Membership Secretary,  
The Llanthony Pilgrimage Association,  
10 Llwynu Road,  
Abergavenny,  
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email: [caroline@woollard.go-plus.net](mailto:caroline@woollard.go-plus.net)

Caroline Woollard  
Association Membership Secretary

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Some snaps  
from the 2013  
Pilgrimage



## *From the Chairman...*

3, St Peter's Court  
Tiverton  
Devon  
EX16 6NZ  
Feast of St Benedict, 11th July 2014

Dear friends and fellow-pilgrims,  
In the event Metropolitan Kallistos was unable through ill-health to come and preach at the Pilgrimage last August. With only a few days' notice it was too late to invite anyone to take his place, but an informal talk on the 1880 apparitions was given by your Chairman. All being well we look forward to having Metropolitan Kallistos with us in 2015; meanwhile this year's Pilgrimage is on Saturday 16th August, when the preacher at the afternoon service will be Canon Steven Kirk, Vicar of Ystrad Mynach. Fr Kirk is a well known and respected figure in the Church in Wales; he has served for many years on its Governing Body, where he has a reputation for presenting the case for traditional church order with both clarity and charity.

At the 2013 Pilgrimage some of those attending the Eucharist at Llanthony had brought food and drink to share after the service, so it was good to have a communal outdoor 'agapé'. We should like to make to make this a regular occurrence, so would invite pilgrims to bring a 'pot luck' contribution. (But not too much – some of us came away last year with almost as much uneaten food as we

had brought!) A folding chair or two would also be useful if you have such things and can fit them in your car.

Over the years there has been a discernible change of emphasis in the Pilgrimage. When the Trust was formed in 1967 the last survivors of Fr Ignatius's community had only recently died, and one could still meet people with first-hand memories both of the Founder and of monastic life at Capel-y-ffin. In those days there was also a certain reticence about publicly commemorating what were (from a Roman Catholic point of view) 'unapproved' apparitions of the Blessed Virgin. Times change, and the Marian aspect of the Pilgrimage seems to have come to the fore at the expense of the 'Ignatian', although as an organisation with his name in its title we continue to make thankful remembrance of Ignatius himself and of all who passed through his monastery. For him, devotion to Mary was a core element in Gospel-based Christianity, and he would undoubtedly have agreed with John Macquarrie that the Mother of God can and should be 'a centre for reconciliation among Christians of different traditions'.

We extend our congratulations and best wishes to the Reverend Bernard Sixtus on his admission to the Roman Catholic priesthood as a member of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, which took place on Wednesday 2 July, feast of the Visitation in the traditional Western calendar. Dr Sixtus now divides his

## ...the Chairman continues

time between the post of Director of Religious Education in Schools for the Archdiocese of Cardiff and care of the parish of Ss Francis Xavier and David Lewis in Usk.

As we were preparing to go to press we were sad to learn of the death on Sunday 11 May at her home in Abergavenny of Mrs Helen Davies. Helen was born to Eric Gill's eldest daughter Betty and her husband David Pepler on 2 January 1931, and much of her early life was passed at the Monastery. In 1951 she married Wilfred Davies, then serving as an officer in the RAF, and spent the following decade with him and their young family travelling the world. On his retirement in 1962 they returned to her old family home, where they remained for over twenty years until he retired from a second career with the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Soon after their return to Capel-y-ffin Helen and Wilf conceived the idea of setting up an independent body to own and maintain the ruined Abbey Church, and the Father Ignatius Memorial Trust was the result. Although never involved in the actual business of the Trust she fully supported its aims and activities, including the annual Pilgrimage. While living at the Monastery she enjoyed welcoming and serving tea to the large and variegated company which in those days turned out for the event, although as it invariably coincided with 'change-over' day

in the holiday flats (then as now an important element in the Monastery economy) she was rarely able to attend the services. In later years, however, she became a faithful member of the Pilgrimage congregation. Recently she confided to me that she had always believed in the authenticity of the 1880 apparitions and felt privileged to have lived where such marvels had taken place, although as a loyal (if not uncritical) Roman Catholic she had with her customary tactfulness hitherto kept these views to herself. May she rest in peace, and rise in glory!

We look forward to welcoming friends old and new at this year's Pilgrimage, on the day following the feast of the Assumption/Dormition. Please do what you can to make it better known, and to increase active support for it and for the work of the Trust. We should like to encourage everyone who loves Capel-y-ffin and the Llanthony valley to keep in touch with us by receiving this Newsletter, so please help to circulate it more widely – extra copies can be obtained by request from the Hon Secretary. The return of the enclosed Subscription Form would be appreciated, as would a donation towards the upkeep of Fr Ignatius's ruined abbey church.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Allen

## *The Abbey Church, circa 1875*



THIS RARE VIEW OF THE Abbey Church at Capel-y-ffin was taken soon after construction ceased. The photographer was standing about half way along the site of the future south cloister: at this stage the little community was squashed into the only part of their living quarters to have been so far completed, the west cloister. But they would nonetheless have been enjoying a new-found sense of space, as the large ground floor room they had for the past four years been using as a temporary chapel could now be given over to domestic use.

As its rather unusual proportions suggest, what had just been built was intended to serve as chancel and choir of a magnificent structure based on the Priory Church at 'old' Llanthony. The next phase – announced in 1883 but never begun – was to have been a central tower attached to the west end of the choir. This would have had transepts either side and eventually a long nave would have stretched away out of the picture to the left, culminating in twin western towers. On either side the temporarily blocked arches would have opened into side aisles; the presence of tall lancets in the third bay shows that the aisles would have terminated one bay short of the east end, almost certainly forming side chapels with elaborately decked altars.

The little doorway in the middle of the second bay was the monks' entrance to the church; in due course a temporary covered staircase connected this with the nearest corner of the east cloister. And immediately above this doorway a second one was opened up to provide access by way of a covered bridge between the corrugated iron convent on the newly levelled patch of ground overlooking this south wall of the church and the nuns' choir in the gallery above that of the monks; monks and nuns had no contact whatsoever.

## The Llanthony Nuns

Hugh Allen outlines the intriguing comings and goings of the Mothers and Sisters that Father Ignatius attracted to the monastery.

AFTER A FALSE START in Norwich – apparently brought to an end by his nervous collapse in August 1865 – Fr Ignatius succeeded in establishing a convent of nuns to complement his main monastic venture, at the then rural Middlesex village of Feltham.

This was in the summer of 1868, when before the move to Wales the monastery was for three years (1867-70) housed at nearby Laleham. As Prioress he installed Harriet Emily Stewart (Mother Hilda), who had for several years been one of Miss Sellon's 'Sisters of Charity', as well as spending four years with the East Grinstead sisterhood founded by J.M. Neale.

Difficulties between Abbot and Prioress (he insisted on exercising personal and often capricious control of the sisterhood, regardless of her greater experience of the religious life) led after ten years to a split. The majority of the nuns – probably eight or ten of them – remained at Feltham under Mother Hilda; three nuns and one associate sister stayed loyal to Ignatius, who found a temporary home for them at Slapton, near Dartmouth.

Ignatius's grand plan had included a permanent nunnery at Llanthony, adjoining the monastery and on a similar scale. In the event all that was built was a single-storey structure

of corrugated iron and timber, on the level ground between the east cloister and the uncompleted church. The four loyalists – Mothers Werburgh (Florence Stanbridge, aged 30) and Cecilia (Martha Smith, aged 47), and Sisters Mary Agnes (Jane Povey, 29) and Etheldreda (Agnes Huthwaite, 52) – moved into this new building in September 1881, together with a more recent recruit: Agnes Goodwin (27), professed the following year as Mother Ermenild of the Sacred Heart.

At the time of the split, Mother Werburgh had only recently returned from a six-year spell 'in the world'. It was said that in this time she had married and had a baby, but that both husband and child had died; she was nonetheless made Prioress of the new establishment.

This tale was told by Sister Mary Agnes in her (not unbiased) *exposé Nunnery Life in the Church of England; or Seventeen Years with Fr Ignatius*, published in 1890, five years after she left the convent. Her experience of the regime had been particularly unfortunate. Only a year younger than the new Prioress (they had taken their novice vows on the same day in 1869 while still teenagers) she had never been allowed to advance to simple profession, and at Slapton and Llanthony was kept firmly in the same subservient place she



The 'iron  
and timber'  
nunnery  
at Llanthony

had occupied at Feltham. (So that well into her thirties she went on expecting Ignatius to indulge her as the convent 'baby'; herein perhaps for all concerned lay the real root of the problem.)

The history of the convent at Llanthony falls naturally into two phases. The first of these lasted just under ten years, ending with the departure of the surviving members of the original group in the spring of 1891, during the Abbot's thirteen-month tour of America. According to the chronicler of this expedition (Fr Michael OSB) 'all arrangements [had] been made for the safety and prosperity' of the monks and nuns during Ignatius's absence; these would almost certainly have included visits from outside clergy to say Mass.

These arrangements fell through, and an appeal for help to the Bishop of St David's falling on deaf ears the three survivors decamped to Roman Catholic convents. They did not, however, become nuns. Former Mothers Werburgh and Cecilia

settled at Princethorpe Priory, near Rugby (the one as a teacher in the school, the other acting as she had at Llanthony as organist); ex-Mother Ermenild found employment as a domestic servant at the Bartestree convent near Hereford, which operated a refuge for fallen women. During this period there had been no admissions, unless any of the handful of enquirers got as far as being enrolled as postulants. There had, however, been two departures. Sister Mary Agnes left finally in early 1886, having already done so a year earlier but later returned. Soon afterwards Sister Etheldreda died suddenly and was buried in the monastery garth; she was 57.

Although in length of service the senior member of the community (and the only survivor of the Norwich convent), Etheldreda was an associate, not a nun under vows. Throughout its history there were a number of these women, who unlike the enclosed nuns were able to come and go between the convent and their homes outside.

In the Norwich period we hear of Sister Ambrosia (Mrs More), who accompanied Ignatius and the Infant Oblate on their continental tour in 1866, and of Sister Louisa (Mrs Taylor), who took her new name in honour of Fr Ignatius's mother; later associates included Sister Winifred (Ann Easley), who provided the funds to buy the monastery site and Sister Annie (Mrs Grant), a Cheltenham tobacconist's widow who assisted with Ignatius's missions.

In the early 1880s there were also two little 'nunnery girls' (Ada and Alice Ulett, the daughters of a Hereford greengrocer), who were dressed in cut-down versions of the associates' habit, complete with veil and wimple; they may be the two habited children shown in the photo on page 7.

The presence of associates meant that the convent buildings were rarely or never unoccupied, even when there were no actual nuns. The first admission after Ignatius's return from America was that of Isabella Kennedy Stewart, the 27-year-old daughter of a Scottish industrialist, who had previously spent two years with the Sisterhood of St Margaret in Aberdeen. She came to Llanthony in the summer of 1893, and was given the name Scholastica. After a couple of years the combined effect of her poor health and what Ignatius described as 'self will and impatience' prompted him to send her away (he doesn't give the date); like the three who had left in 1891 she eventually became a

Roman Catholic.

In the winter of 1895-96 two new aspirants arrived, Emily Angela Finn, aged 32 (Mary Nonna), and 19-year-old Violet de Pothonier (Mary Helena). They went through the usual stages of postulancy and noviciate, following the distinctively Ignatian practice of taking 'novice vows' for a year and renewing them a year later – this last on St David's Day 1898. The following year Sister Mary Nonna was like Sister Scholastica dismissed, and for much the same reason: according to Ignatius's comment in the Register she had been 'utterly unable to understand what monastic obedience was, after three years of patient teaching'.

A fortnight before these two novices renewed their vows they were joined in the convent by 32-year-old Jeannie (or Jessie) Dew, a solicitor's daughter from the Isle of Wight. She became Sister Mary Tudfil (her patron saint the same as that of the town of Merthyr Tydfil). In the final decade of his life Ignatius was either taking life very slowly or exercising extreme caution as it was only after a three-year wait (at Michaelmas 1901) that she was given an opportunity to renew her novice vows, and over four years after that (on 21 January 1906) that she became a life-vowed nun and 'Mother' Tudfil.

On the same day Bro Asaph Harris who had entered the monastery at the same time also made his life

profession; as senior monk and sole nun they would take responsibility for its future after the Founder's death on 16 October 1908.

We aren't told when Sister Mary Helena left, but as her name isn't listed in the census of April 1901 it must have been some time before then. But probably not long before.

When in the 2012 Newsletter I mentioned the dismissal later that spring of Fr Illtud (A.C. Cobb) 'for going into the Nuns' Enclosure' I assumed this adventure to have been quite innocent. Since then I have discovered that six years after his departure his marriage to the former Sister Mary Helena was registered in the Brentford district of Middlesex; this was at much the same time that the dubious priesthood he had received from the episcopus vagans J.R. Vilatte was 'put right' by the Bishop of London. Sadly they only had ten years together: Fr Cobb died in 1917, at the early age of 43.

When Sister Scholastica took her novice's vows on Holy Cross Day 1893 she was supported by the two associates then in residence, Sisters Annie and Monica. I don't know anything about Monica except that (as her chosen name would suggest) she was a widow. Sister Annie died (not at the convent) in 1903; by this time another two associates had taken their places. In the 1901 census they are named as Alice R. Wheeler (spinster aged 41) and Rose Kidder (widow, 49; she was actually 62).

In 1909 Mother Tudfil withdrew from the community to facilitate its takeover by the more recently founded Anglo-Benedictines of Caldey Island, but two associates remained, one of whom was Sister Rose. In fact the transfer to Caldey was rather longer drawn out and less straightforward than the published histories suggest, with Asaph and his little group of fellow-survivors coming and going between the two monasteries at least until 1911.

Rose seems to have been very unhappy in the periods when they weren't at Llanthony and the liturgical round was in consequence neglected. (By this time Asaph and another brother had been to Canada and received priestly ordination from Vilatte; although not permitted to say Mass at Caldey it seems they still did so at Llanthony.) In an undated letter to Ignatius's cousin Arundell Lyne she expressed her feelings thus:

*I had the pleasure of spending last Sunday week at Maes-y-ffin [with 'Brother David' and family], attending the parish church in the morning. We had nothing here, as Fr Asaph, and all the Caldey brothers, were at Caldey. Fr A has been away now for 3 Sundays. We are expecting his return daily.*

*Can he love this dear place, or Our Lord's Sacramental Presence, and dear Father's memory, to act like this? It is so very sad. Even the villagers make remarks, as even the ringing of the Angelus is stopped, whereas when he is here the bells are going night and day.*

# Icon of Our Lady of Capel-y-ffin

With a Reflection by Fr Richard Williams

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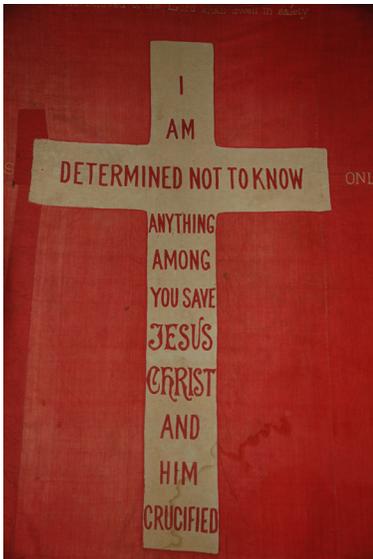
THIS LARGE AND SPLENDID icon of 'Our Lady of Capel-y-ffin' is presently at St Mary's Church, Hay-on-Wye, with a smaller copy at the church in Capel-y-ffin itself. The work of the well-known Orthodox iconographer Aidan Hart, its cost was met by an anonymous donation.

The two children are representative figures and not specific individuals, although the boy on the left (~~note the stick at his feet~~) could be 11-year-old Thomas Foord, whose immediate response was fear. The stick which he had been holding lies at his feet. His upraised hands, however, seem anything but empty. They, like his face, are full of awe and wonder.

Whenever the 'Kingdom' is apprehended breaking through, a sense of wonder is an inevitable response. 'What am I seeing?' - 'How do I respond?'. His initial response ('I'll hit it with my stick!') is an eikon of our very human ineptitude when we encounter the divine. God is the Mystery of all mysteries, so we should not be surprised that holy manifestations have an element of hiddenness and strangeness.

We are all little children in the presence of God. Our earthly pilgrimage truly lived is a wonderful opportunity to glimpse through the eyes of love and faith He whose face in eternity we shall behold unveiled.

May this icon help us as we journey.



Two textile items in the Fr Ignatius collection at the Abergavenny Museum. All the Monastery beds had covers on this pattern, of which this is probably the only surviving example. The cope of white Welsh wool of which this is the hood came into the care of the Trust many years ago, and is said to have belonged to Fr Ignatius.

# PILGRIMAGE PROGRAMME

## Saturday 16th August 2014

**11.30AM**

Solemn Eucharist at **St David's Church, Llanthony**. Preacher: The Revd Richard Williams.

**1.30PM**

Assemble outside St David's Church for Pilgrimage Walk. Stout footwear is essential and weather-proof clothing recommended.

**3.30PM**

Ecumenical Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary at **St Mary's Church, Capel-y-ffin**. Preacher: Canon Steven Kirk.

Followed by Procession to the ruins of Fr Ignatius' Abbey Church with 'station' at the **Wayside Calvary** and prayers at the **Statue of Our Lady of Llanthony**.

CAR PARKING is available in the official car park at Llanthony Priory for the Eucharist at S. David's, and in the afternoon at Chapel Farm, Capel-y-Ffin by kind permission of Mr & Mrs Watkins.

After the Eucharist pilgrims are invited to a BRING & SHARE LUNCH in the picnic area next to the car park at Llanthony (a wet weather alternative is available).

At the end of the afternoon service, tea and cake are served at a modest charge on the Monastery lawn, courtesy of Mr & Mrs Knill and helpers.

**Please note:**

The next pilgrimage will take place on Saturday, August 22nd, 2015.

n.b. The Father Ignatius Memorial Society is on the web: [www.fatherignatius.com](http://www.fatherignatius.com)



Pilgrims at last year's Bring & Share lunch, organised at the last minute. On the left is Helen Davies, R.I.P. This year we hope to have a few chairs.