

This annual newsletter has been printed almost throughout since its first issue in 1966 by Skelton's Press of Wellingborough. The Press was founded by Christopher Skelton, no stranger to The Monastery and its history and a regular visitor while we lived there. A nephew of Eric Gill, Chris has now sold Skelton's Press and begun a smaller one, The September Press, where time can be devoted fully to fine quality printing jobs. Certainly, the most remarkable of many fine productions by Skelton's Press was the publication in 1983 of 'The Engravings of Eric Gill', an admirable survey of this aspect of Gill's prodigious works. From a meticulous collection in original prints of every engraving, Chris Skelton and his staff reproduced all the engravings in their exact dimensions – a striking research and printing achievement which won wide acclaim in the printing world, including the highest award at the 1983 National Book League Exhibition. We thank Skelton's Press for the fine quality of our Newsletter each year especially as this issue will be the last to be produced by Chris and his colleagues. Our Newsletter presentation would also have been greatly diminished had it not been for the expert help of Ozzie Jones. A friend of the Trust for many years, he has not only processed all the photographs used in each issue but has supplied us with a photographic record of most of the pilgrimages. Now, recently retired from his appointment as staff lecturer in Photography at Wandsworth Technical College, he will be free-lancing in the Abergavenny area in future. Thank you, Ozzie! Among other acknowledgements, let us thank Peter Barnfield of Abergavenny very warmly for the loan each year of his public address system at the pilgrimage; also Will Jackson and his son, Paul, who install it and help in other essential ways; Derek Lloyd of Chapel Farm at Capel-y-ffin who re-built a large section of dry-stone wall behind the altar, following a collapse during the continuously wet Spring of last year. Our special thanks go too to Joan Wheeler for her loyal support and friendship over many years in the arrangements for each event.

We invite all our friends to complete and return the enclosed subscription form to help with the work of the Trust financially, not only with the future annual production of this Newsletter but mainly to help with the cost of maintaining the fabric of the places we are responsible for at Capel-y-ffin. We are concerned to build up a strong reserve against the need, which will surely come, for future work to stabilise the structure of the Abbey Church so that it will remain a safe and

fitting place for acts of public worship and for the interest of all the many visitors who come to Capel-y-ffin throughout the year. Other minor tasks will include the re-painting of the railings both in the church and around the Calvary. Some maintenance work will also be required on the statue of Our Lady on the forecourt.

And, so, why do we concern ourselves with such things? 'Why', as Canon Ivor Davies asked in an earlier issue, 'do we trouble to attend a pilgrimage to a ruined church on a remote hillside on a day when it usually rains?' And why, we might add, do we seek your continued help in seeing to it that we do what we can to conserve such a place – just another ruin in Peter Anson's inventory of the 'waste places'? Is it something to do with its lovely setting in the Black Mountains? Is it the act of making a special pilgrimage and joining with others in a traditional form of public worship in the open air? Is it, perhaps, what we feel that Joseph Leycester Lyne was trying to say to us all? It might be a kind of amalgam of all such influences. In reflecting on such things, we may recall that Bernard Manning confessed to owing something of his evangelical conversion to Fr Ignatius, discovering, as he said, 'behind the veil of eccentricity and credulity the real greatness of a most extraordinary and complex personality.'

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And now, to the details of our 1986 pilgrimage. This will be held on:

#### SATURDAY, 23rd AUGUST

- 11.30am The Holy Eucharist at St David's Church, Llanthony
- 2.30pm Procession leaves Capel-y-ffin Church for the Abbey Church at The Monastery where the address at Solemn Evensong will be given by Dom Aidan Harker of Nashdom Abbey

Please note that it is the week-end of the Late Summer Bank Holiday. Car parking arrangements will be as usual in the field at Chapel Farm with our thanks once again to Mr Ivor Lloyd for the regular use of this vital facility.

Please join us for the pilgrimage if you possibly can

For the Trustees  
WILFRED DAVIES

## THE FATHER IGNATIUS MEMORIAL TRUST

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### NEWSLETTER NO. 14 MARCH 1986

THOSE OF US who were at last year's pilgrimage will recall that it was the only day during that wet and sombre summer when the sun came out for a while. Certainly, it seemed to be a small miracle. Wet weather garments and umbrellas remained stowed away in the boots of cars. All of us were, I think, so grateful for just one day of warmth and sunshine, together with the pleasure of meeting old friends and colleagues, that goodwill and cheerfulness in abundance were in the air throughout. There was a feeling of summer fête, particularly during tea, cakes and soft drinks on The Monastery green after the service, with children playing on the grass and smiling groups of people exchanging news. We thank Stanley and Karol Knill of The Monastery and their family for their help with the event; for making us so welcome and for essential facilities. Thanks too, to all those who helped with the arrangements for the day generally. The following day, the weather returned to normal again – more rain!

Fr Ignatius and friend – 1908  
– the year he died.



We were especially grateful to the Very Reverend Alun R. Davies, Dean of Llandaff, who preached, taking as his text, 'And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no-one, but Jesus only'. (Matthew 17.8). His sermon reminded us that, though the community founded at Capel-y-ffin was never to flourish, Fr Ignatius played a part which later generations had too often underestimated, in restoring the place of the monastic vocation in the Anglican communion. In response to a number of requests, the Dean kindly arranged to let us have a copy of the text of his sermon. These have already been distributed but a few copies are still available from the Secretary.

The good weather of last year's pilgrimage contrasted sharply with some of our past events when rain and wind buffeted many a staunch pilgrim. Having lived with my family at The Monastery for twenty-three years, we listened to the weather forecast with attention, particularly during the winter, of course. Capel-y-ffin, at 1,200 feet above sea level, could be sure of rather more than its fair share of snow and ice during a cold spell. One cannot help remembering that first testing winter spent there by Fr Ignatius and his two postulants in 1869 while the first wing of The Monastery was still being built. Donald Attwater recalled those early days as follows, 'The hardships and labours of the community in its early days have been compared, quite justly, with those of the Cistercians at Citeaux and Fountains. The farmhouse, Ty Gwyn, was still in occupation by its owners and the monks' only shelter was a dilapidated barn and a hastily-built stone hut with a flagged floor. Winter begins early there and, at that altitude, is bitterly cold; every spare moment had to be given to gathering firewood. From time to time, work on the new building stopped completely; on the one hand, the contractors were handicapped by the remoteness of the place, by the limited accommodation for their workmen and by the difficulty of hauling stone from the quarry.' Fr Ignatius writes of those days, thus:— 'We went through incredible

hardships at our first foundation there, I myself living in a cold wet shed, the only shelter for the Blessed Sacrament and myself for some time that existed here; the other monks living in a windowless barn, some hundreds of yards off. . . . The kitchen fire, for cooking purposes, burned on the mud floor up in a corner, the smoke finding its way out as best it could. . . . As the winter frosts began, our sufferings were great indeed. I myself often rose at 5 am from my bed in the cold damp shed, the blanket that covered me steaming with damp. I had to quickly make my bed and ring the bell to call the brothers from the barn to come and sing Prime with me in my shed. . . . Of an evening, after supper and Vespers, we would kindle a fire on the muddy ground of the unfinished and desolate cloister, fastening up a blanket for shelter from the cutting wind. We had gathered the wood from the mountain for ourselves, being too poor just then to procure coal.'

After these hard early days, we move on to some seventeen years later in 1887 on August 30th, when the seventh anniversary of the Apparition of Our Lady was celebrated. Pilgrims came from far and wide, including visitors from Kent, Somerset and Yorkshire as well as from Abergavenny, Hay-on-Wye and Glasbury. After morning service in the Abbey Church, all were fed at the expense of The Monastery and the event was reported in The Hereford Times:

'The South Cloister of the Abbey was soon crowded with men and boys who, trusting to monastic hospitality, had come on the pilgrimage with nothing to eat and were very hungry. Sirloins and huge rounds of beef, pork and veal pies etc quickly disappeared. Fruit, cake and tarts followed suit. The only beverages were water from the mountain spring hard by, sherbet and sweet wines. It was a most interesting sight – gentlemen, tradesmen, working men and farm boys – all served and were served alike. Women and girls crowded the neighbouring convent guest room. Afternoon service followed at 3 pm and Fr Ignatius preached from Luke 1.43 'How have I deserved to be thus visited by the Mother of my Lord?' The church was packed almost to suffocation. After this service, it was circulated among the younger pilgrims that, if they waited on the level before the church, Fr Ignatius had something to give them. Hundreds collected. Soon, Fr Ignatius and Brother Michael, with their shaven crowns, appeared at one of the cell windows overlooking the church level. Expectant faces soon saw them and the monks, nodding and smiling to the younger folk, threw showers of nuts and bon-bons from the window. At first, only the boys scrambled but, as the excitement grew with each shower of goodies, men, even old men, were seen sprawling over one another on the grass; girls, ladies and even, at last, some sedate and

lovely Salvation Army lasses in their sober costumes were constrained to try if they could perhaps pick up a small share of the sweet shower. Tea followed and a short mountain ramble.'

While often at odds with his own communion, support and friendship came to Ignatius from Wesleyans, Methodists, The Salvation Army, Plymouth Brethren, Roman Catholics and Jews. He shared mission platforms with the famous Booth family; appeared at revival meetings with the co-evangelists, Moody and Sankey and, on one occasion, preached at a Roman Catholic seminary in the United States. In his memorable sermon at our 1984 Pilgrimage, Fr Stanley Luff of Our Lady's Church, Llandovery examined the apparently divergent Catholic and Evangelical strains in Fr Ignatius's life and teaching. The key to this was, he explained, expressed in one of Fr Ignatius's own sermons, thus . . . 'if they (the Catholic revivalists) had endorsed the Evangelical movement and had brought the revival of the Sacraments into the Evangelical movement, the two would have made a beautiful, living and satisfactory whole.'

It was not until the mid-1920s that the Abbey Church began to fall into grave disrepair. The roof became unsafe and had to be removed. The fate of the altar and reredos, a striking example of late nineteenth century ecclesiastical art from

Munich, became a matter of a good deal of concern among friends of the Abbey. It was with relief that they learned, in due course, of its acquisition for St Julian's Church, Newport by Alfred Field. After careful dismantling, the problem of its removal was solved by Mr George Pick, Removals and Transport Contractor of Newport, who was also a server at St. Julian's. We are grateful to Mrs Pick for the photograph of her late husband in this issue standing by his lorry outside the Abbey Church on removal day. The vehicle, thought to be a vintage Chevrolet, contains the reredos angels, well swaddled with blankets for protection on the journey. They can be seen overlooking the cab – possibly the only time during his career when Mr Pick enjoyed the blessing of really solid guardian angels watching over him! A reveller, emerging unsteadily from the Half Moon Inn at Llanthony might well have rubbed his eyes in disbelief at this passing vision.

The second and third biographies of the life and times of Fr Ignatius were by Donald Attwater and Arthur Calder-Marshall. The first was by the Baroness de Bertouch, a pious lady who was devoted to him. Before her marriage she was a Miss Elmslie and related to the Booth family of The Salvation Army. Later, Fr Ignatius's nieces, the Misses Hilda and Irene Ewens, were to join the Salvation Army. Indeed, the wayside Calvary in the lane just below The Monastery was commissioned and donated by these two sisters. The oak canopy over it is inscribed with the words, 'PEACE TO THE WAYFARER THROUGH THE BLOOD OF JESUS', still, one feels, a source of comfort to the lone and footsore traveller in the Black Mountains even to-day. The Calvary was dedicated on 30th August 1936. Although this was some twenty-eight years after the death of Ignatius, the response was astonishing. Twenty bus-loads of people arrived; many also came by car, on bicycles, pony-back and on foot. In all, some 1,500 pilgrims joined the procession from the little church at Capel-y-ffin to the Calvary and The Monastery. The ceremony and service were conducted by Father John Windle of All Sants' Church, Hereford, later to become one of our trustees. It ended with Fr Ignatius's own hymn, 'Let me come closer to Thee, Jesus' – the singing led by Sgt Irene Ewens and her fellow Salvationists. We are hoping that some members of the Salvation Army may be able to join us once again at this year's pilgrimage thus renewing a welcome and valued tradition.

Mr Pick outside the Abbey Church just prior to leaving for St Julian's.



Pilgrimage 1985. Left to Right – Mr Jeremy Dowding, Server at Holy Trinity Church, Abergavenny; The Revd Jennifer Welsh, Curate of Risca; The Revd Hugh Allen, Vicar of St Matthew's Church, Newport (wearing the cope used by Fr Ignatius) and Canon Ivor Davies, Rural Dean of Hay.

