

Catholic Clergyman and a Monk. While the Summer lasted our troubles were only amusing, and a very real touch of romance halo-ed our surroundings. We were beginning just as some of the great monastic foundations of by-gone days commenced. We often talked and thought of St Stephen Harding's doings at Citeaux, and the origins of Fountains and other old abbeys of the past. But now 'the harvest was past, the Summer was ended,' and we were still in the old barn and new shed. At night, these were very cold now at the end of September. We tried to hollow out a cave in the ravine, but it kept falling in as we dug. A cave would only have been damp, while the barn and shed were damp and bitterly draughty. One brother became very ill, and I had to send him away to his friends and his family doctor's care. Two others ran away, without a word of warning; but still six of us were left to sing the offices and our constant Psalms and Canticles mingled with the sound of the winds and waters of the hills. By the end of October severe frosts set in. I used to rise at five in the morning from my bed in the shed, my blankets steaming with damp, and the stone floor wet with rain, or slippery with ice. As I lay in my bed I could see the stars through the loose tiles. The lamp that hung from a rafter before the Blessed Sacrament seemed to talk to me of Him, Who once, for our sakes, had not where to lay his head. We, for His dear sake, were almost the same. I don't think I was ever happier than in these days. We used to gather wood in the day time, and at night light a fire in the chimney of the refectory, that was to be, on the mud floor, and fasten up a blanket over the un-glazed window to keep off the wind, and one of us would read the Conferences or lives of the Saints by its light. We should have made a good picture, with our hoods drawn over our heads, in the fire-light, for a Rembrandt, or some such weird-like son of the paint brush. And then, adjourning to my shed, we would say Compline, Matins, and Lauds. By 9.30 the brothers would depart in silence to their barn, beds, and puddle, leaving me to my shed and solitude, and to – GOD.

IGNATIUS, O.S.B.,
Monk



Drawing of the Monastery by Eric Gill (1934)

The Father Ignatius Memorial Trust

(Charity Commissioners' Registration Number 253225)

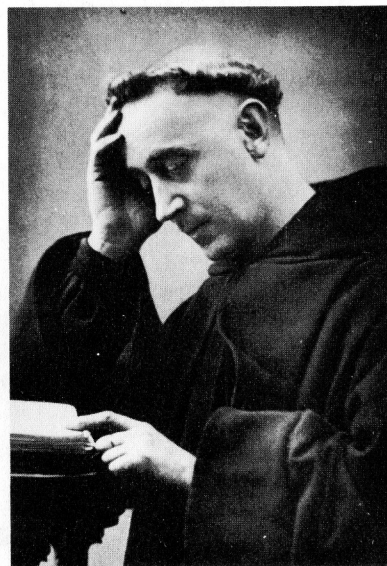
NEWSLETTER No. 6 1978

Trustees:

The Reverend F. H. Mountney, M.A.
Father Brocard Sewell, Order of Carmelites
The Reverend Hugh Allen (Master of Ceremonies)
Douglas Lyne, M.A. (Archivist)
Wilfred Davies (Secretary)

The Monastery
Capel-y-ffin
Abergavenny
Gwent NP7 7NP

The last Saturday in August 1976 fell on the feast of St. Augustine, so we found ourselves beginning our Pilgrimage that year by continuing to think along lines suggested by the previous year's Octocentenary of the Augustinian foundation at Llanthony. About fifty people attended the Sung Eucharist in the little church beside the Priory ruins there, at which an address on the conversion of St Augustine was given by the Revd A. R. Davies, until recently Vicar of the group of parishes which includes Llanthony. More pilgrims joined us in the afternoon for the customary procession from Capel-y-ffin to the Monastery and Evensong in the ruins of Fr Ignatius' abbey church; at this service the preacher was Fr Anthony, of the Anglican Benedictine community at Alton.



Last year the Pilgrimage again began with the Eucharist at Llanthony, after which a number of pilgrims walked the remaining four miles to Capel-y-ffin, where the tiny 'chapel on the border' was packed to the doors for Evensong, the ruined church being out of commission at the time. Once again our preacher was the local incumbent – this time Canon Ivor Davies, Vicar of Hay-on-Wye with Llanigon and Capel-y-ffin.

The 1977 Pilgrimage was the sixth to be sponsored by the Trust; it was also the first to be organised by a locally-based Pilgrimage Committee. Each year the debt of gratitude we owe to local clergy and others for their co-operation and help mounts up; we must record our thanks to those who serve on the Committee and to everyone

else whose hard work ensures that all goes smoothly every Pilgrimage Day.

We hope that none of our friends have been inconvenienced by the changed date of the Pilgrimage. Last year it was on August 20th, and this year we have made arrangements for it to take place on August 19th, in each case a week before the traditional last Saturday, but with that hallowed date now coinciding with the Bank Holiday weekend it seems more sensible to choose a day when the volume of traffic in the valley will not be at its annual peak. The 1978 Pilgrimage will follow the now well-established pattern: the Eucharist will be sung in St David's Church, Llanthony, at 11 a.m., and at 3 p.m. the procession will leave Capel-y-ffin church for the Monastery. The Abergavenny Town Band will be with us to support the singing, and at Evensong in the ruined church we shall welcome as our preacher the Dean of Canterbury, the Very Revd Victor de Waal. There will be ample time for those who feel so inclined to make the journey from Llanthony to Capel-y-ffin on foot, and, as always, there will be a cup of tea and something to eat after Evensong. After that, we hope to be able to show some of the slides and films which have been taken at past pilgrimages.

A film of a different kind was the episode in the BBC2 'Kilvert's Diary' series shot here last summer and broadcast on February 3rd. The script for this 15-minute programme was based on the diarist's entries for April 5th and September 2nd, 1870, which record his visits to Capel-y-ffin while the Monastery was being built and his meeting with Fr Ignatius, who impressed him as being 'a man of gentle simple kind manners, excitable, and entirely possessed with the one idea' of carrying out his life's work. As a visual experience the programme was enjoyable, but it was hard to believe from the casting that at the time Fr Ignatius was only 32, a mere three years older than the convincingly youthful Kilvert. At this time, of course, the monks were living in extremely rigorous conditions; as an appendix to this letter we are printing Fr Ignatius' own account of these early days, taken from an article published in the 'Llanthony and Mission News' for the third quarter of 1894.

We have already reported on the damage done to the stonework of the ruined church by frost the winter before last. In 1972, before our Centenary celebrations, we spent £450 on capping the walls with cement; this Spring we must pay out another £250 on similar work, to make the church once again a safe place for pilgrims and other visitors to assemble. Before arranging for this work to be done we consulted various experts, all of whom confirmed us in our belief that the preservation of the structure in its present form is to be preferred to the only alternative — demolition. To keep intact what we have inherited will continue to be both an unpredictable and a costly undertaking, but we believe it will always be a worthwhile one, and we know from your support in the past that you, too, believe this. The repairs at present in progress will use every penny we have in the bank; money must continue to come in if we are to be able to maintain the structure of the church in good condition and to improve it in any way.

Regular donations to the Trust increase their effectiveness by 53% if paid by deed of covenant. For example, if you covenant to subscribe £10 a year to Trust funds, we would receive an extra £5.30 p.a. from the Inland Revenue, or an annual payment of £5 would yield an extra £2.65 — *at no extra cost to you*. A covenant

form is enclosed with this letter; please complete it and return it to the Secretary at the above address. Also enclosed is a subscription form; please fill this in as well if you wish to be kept informed of the affairs of the Trust.

We thank you for your support, and we look forward to welcoming you at Llanthony and Capel-y-ffin on Saturday August 19th.

for the Trustees
HUGH ALLEN
Master of Ceremonies

'THE MONASTERY'

'To begin with,' we had, on our first arrival at our new home, no shelter for ourselves or our goods and chattels but a very old barn and a very new shed. The Brothers had the barn, and I had the shed. While the warm Summer days lasted, we had only very little difficulty in making ourselves comfortable enough for Monks. If heavy rain visited us, our barn and shed were plentifully supplied with moisture. The barn was divided into three parts, one held our store of furniture; the centre part was the refectory, the other end the dormitory and kitchen. The fire, made of wood which we collected, was on the earthen floor up in a corner. The mark of the smoke on the wall is still visible. The beds were placed close together round the wall on the uneven earthen floor. The wet would accumulate, after rain, in a hollow which when full, was suggestive of piscatorial possibilities. The small Altar we possessed was erected in my shed, and the Blessed Sacrament was reverently housed in a very handsome oak tabernacle. To my shed the brothers used to come for all the offices, from the early Prime at five to the Matins and Lauds which we then recited after Compline. We had collected enough money to build the west side of the cloisters in a very humble and somewhat rough fashion. To this day visitors remark how rough the building of this portion appears in comparison of the beautifully dressed stone of the other cloisters. We had £887 in hand to pay for this, for we never went into debt. But, although the building was begun in March, we were still without shelter when the Winter set in with great severity. Workmen would not stay in this desolate wilderness. They built themselves wooden huts in the ravine hard by; but once there came a great flood, and everything belonging to them, beds and all, were soaked with water. One of them got rheumatic fever and nearly died; the others were so wretched they would not stay. So, time after time, the building came to a standstill, and the time was long past when the builder had contracted to have it finished. It seemed as if it were an impossibility, in such a solitude, to build at all. Even we ourselves, at times, got very disheartened. It really seemed, as so many friends declared, the adventure of madness to attempt to build a Monastery, or anything else in such an inaccessible seclusion. '*The end of the world*' was the nickname people gave the place. It must be remembered, also, that there were no roads thither then. The vans that brought our furniture stuck four miles down the valley, near the ruins of old Llanthony Priory, which was itself sufficiently un-get-at-able to please an ordinary lover of solitude; the drivers dare not attempt to go a step further. It took a long while to drag our belongings piecemeal, in the little rough carts of the peasantry, up to our old barn. It was soon bruited abroad that hermits again existed in the Valley of Ewyas, and valorous pilgrims penetrated our 'end of the world' seclusion. I well remember Lord Bute, then a young man of one-and-twenty, and young Lord Gainsborough (I think it was) coming to see us. Lady Llansfer and Lady Herbert of Lea also courageously made the pilgrimage. We never saw ladies in those days, or allowed them on the grounds where the building was trying to come into existence; so they only caught a glimpse of us and it was from a distance. Lord Bute came into my shed, and he and I had a prayer together before the blessed Sacrament. With him were a Roman