

The Father Ignatius Memorial Trust

(Charity Commissioners' Registration Number 253225)

NEWSLETTER No. 5

Summer 1976

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LAST YEAR'S Pilgrimage Day, Saturday August 30, coincided with the eighth centenary celebrations at Llanthony Priory, which were held in the afternoon. (Three of our own Trustees were on the committee responsible for arranging this event.) For this reason it was decided to hold the Fr Ignatius commemoration at Capel-y-ffin in the morning, which turned out wet; so the service was transferred to Capel-y-ffin church, by kind permission of the Revd Ivor Davies, vicar of Hay-on-Wye. In spite of the relatively earlier hour, 11.30 am, and poor weather, a congregation of thirty or so people filled the tiny church. Among them were the Right Revd Dom Charles White, Abbot of Bodmin, and the Prior of Bodmin, Dom Ambrose Whitehead. Another visitor of note was Mar Georgius, the Patriarch of Glastonbury, whose presence Fr Ignatius would surely have much appreciated. The celebrant at the eucharist was the Revd William Price, lecturer at St. David's University College, Lampeter. Fr Ignatius's hymn 'Let me come closer to thee, Jesus' was sung, and a short address was given by Fr Brocard. Afterwards clergy and people made their way to the Monastery, to visit Fr Ignatius's grave.

The afternoon was fine, and nearly all our pilgrims took part in the great open-air service, attended by five hundred people, at Llanthony Priory. The Bishop of Monmouth presided at Evensong, at which the Abbot of Bodmin, vested in cope and mitre, was celebrant. In a well-thought out and much appreciated sermon Fr Whitehead included some fitting words of tribute to Fr Ignatius, whose unfulfilled ambition it had been to restore Llanthony Priory for monastic life and worship. It is thought that this was almost certainly the first occasion on which Augustinian Canons had been seen at Llanthony since the Dissolution of the Priory in 1538.

This year, 1976, the Father Ignatius Pilgrimage will take place on Saturday August 28. On this occasion, the assembly at Capel-y-ffin will be preceded by a Sung Eucharist for the feast of St. Augustine at St. David's church, Llanthony at 11.15 am. Pilgrims may wish to attend this morning service in the little church near the majestic ruins of Llanthony Priory before coming on to Capel-y-ffin for the afternoon. At the hamlet of Capel-y-ffin, pilgrims are asked to assemble not later than 2.15 pm in readiness for the procession to The Monastery for Solemn Evensong. The preacher

Hawker as 'a beyond man in a beyond place'. This phrase surely fits Father Ignatius of Llanthony, whom we commemorate here today, just as aptly as it fits Hawker. These two men never met; but they knew of each other, and there are certain links or similarities between them, very different though they were in temperament. A favourite book of Ignatius's was *Hawker's Daily Portion*, a volume of meditations by Robert Stephen's grandfather, Dr. Robert Hawker, the famous Calvinistic divine and vicar of Charles Church, Plymouth. Here at The Monastery at Capel-y-ffin we have Father Ignatius's own copy of this book, with annotations in his hand. The Vicar of Morwenstow and the Abbot of Llanthony were lone pioneers of the Catholic Revival in the national church. They were influenced by the Oxford Movement, of course, but they took no part in the counsels of its leaders. More specifically: Ignatius was a pioneer of the monastic revival; Hawker was a pioneer in restoring harvest festivals and ruri-decanal synods, neither of which had been seen or heard of for centuries. And they have both enriched our hymnology with simple verses that have endeared themselves to successive generations: Hawker with his 'Sing to the Lord the children's hymn', Ignatius with his 'Let me come closer to thee, Jesus'.

Joseph Leycester Lyne, better known to us as Father Ignatius, and Robert Stephen Hawker were indeed both of them 'beyond' men; certainly beyond most of us in their love of God and of men, and in devotion to their calling. But they were not supermen; they had their faults and failings, which are well known to us, and their times of depression and discouragement. Yet they were men of unconquerable faith, true men of God. That, surely, is what still draws people to these 'beyond' places, Morwenstow and Capel-y-ffin. All through the summer each has its daily tale of pilgrims, and through the winter too there are few weeks when they remain unvisited. Neither place can be reached by bus or train; and by car the journey is not easy. Even today the traveller can, and often does, lose his way. What is it that draws men to sacrifice time and effort to visit such remote, hidden-away places? Neither the romantic scenery nor literary and antiquarian interest is a sufficient explanation. What draws us to places such as Morwenstow and Llanthony is a sense of the numinous, an apprehension of the divine, latent in the wild beauty of the place, but focussed in the memory, perhaps we might almost say in the unseen presence, of a man of God.

When Father Ignatius, who had failed in his plan to purchase and restore Llanthony Priory, came to settle here at Capel-y-ffin in 1870 and to build his monastery he not only blazed a trail that others were to follow; he also found here, and entered into, an ancient tradition: the tradition of contemplative prayer and of public worship of the Creator which one might say was almost native to the valley since its history began to be recorded. First we hear of hermits in the region of Llanthony; and then, in the year 1175 or thereabouts, we have the coming of the Austin Canons. These priests, living in community under the Rule of St Augustine of Hippo, praising God seven times a day, and caring for both the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor people of the valley, came to these beyond parts, remote from town or city, because theirs was a contemplative as well as an apostolic way of life. In pursuing the contemplative side of their vocation they were but following in the footsteps of the hermits who had dwelt there before them. As Hawker said of the old Celtic saints in Cornwall: 'They had their lodges in the wilderness.' And in time the wilderness blossomed. Then hard times came, and evil days followed; and in the end the destroyer struck, and the work of the canons regular of St Augustine was seemingly brought to naught. But not entirely. The old tradition of prayer and worship was kept alive in the churches of the valley by a succession of pious clergymen, who passed on the tradition to their people. The same was done in the chapels by a line of devoted pastors. Then, in due time, came Ignatius, to make the name of Llanthony known far and wide as a place of living faith and ardent religion. *His* monastery too flourished for a time – a shorter time – and then seemed to end in failure. But with the coming of Eric and Mary Gill a chapel for public worship was opened in the former Monastery, and it is open still.

When we recall, on this double centenary day, how during these eight long centuries, through all their changes and chances, Christian faith and Christian worship have endured in this valley, and still endure, surely we may exclaim with the Psalmist: 'This is the day that the Lord hath made. Let us rejoice and be glad therein'.

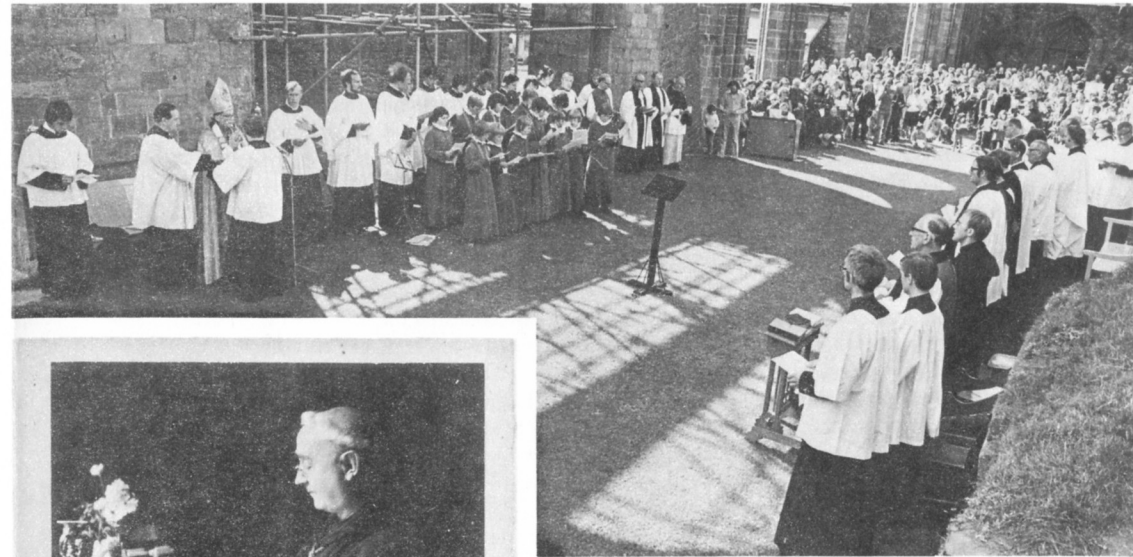
this year will be The Very Reverend Father Anthony, O.S.P., (Prior of Alton). Once again the Abergavenny Borough Band will be with us, to ensure that everything goes 'with a swing'. *Numbers count!* The band needs the support of a large number of people to join in the hymns. So please bring a friend or relative — or several! Apart from the usual announcements in the *Church Times* we cannot afford to advertise the event; we must depend on word of mouth to make it known. So please spread the good news; the earlier the better. In previous years people have often said to me *after* the event: 'I wish I had known about it'.

Your Trustees have suffered a great loss in the death of their doyen, Father Windle, formerly, for thirty years, parish priest of Welsh Newton. His devotion to the memory of Fr Ignatius was outstanding. He rarely, if ever, missed a Trustees' meeting, in spite of increasing infirmity. An appreciation of him by two of his co-Trustees was printed in the *Church Times* of May 2nd 1975. All the other Trustees were present at his funeral at Welsh Newton on April 30. The assistant-bishop in the diocese of Hereford, the Right Revd W. A. Partridge (the preacher at our 1974 pilgrimage) presided, and officiated at the interment. Fr Windle was buried, of his own choice, in a grave next to that of St John Kemble, the recusant martyr, whose character his own not a little resembled.

Fr Mountney has resigned the benefice of All Saints', Hereford, and has accepted a chaplaincy on the Continent. While wishing him *'ad multos annos'* in his retirement from parochial ministry, we already miss greatly his nearby presence just over the mountains, and his availability by telephone. But happily he is retaining his trusteeship, and we hope to see him at least once a year.

The financial situation remains precarious. There is so much that we should like to be able to do. Due to lack of funds, we are unable to secure the fabric of the roofless church from further decay. This, of course, would call for constant attention over the years. We would like also to repave with new tiles the steps from the nave up to the sanctuary. These are now difficult, if not dangerous, for the elderly or arthritic to negotiate. A slightly longer-range project would be the provision of a dignified stone altar, to replace the present 'temporary' structure built up from fallen masonry. All these matters, are in need of attention as soon as possible. Recently it was noticed that the memorial Calvary in the lane up to the Monastery was suffering from rot at the base, and had become unsafe. It has been taken down for restorative treatment, and we hope it will be back in place in time for the pilgrimage. All work of this kind is now expensive; but we cannot let the wayside Calvary, put up by Fr Ignatius's nieces, the Misses Ewens, lie unrepaired.

It seems that these Newsletters are beginning to be 'collected', as a useful if not indispensable, contribution to Ignatian studies. As with most serious periodical publications, however modest, a complete run of the series is likely at some future date to be valuable. A good investment, in fact! Very few extra copies are printed other than those sent to our friends, so it is likely to have 'scarcity value'. It is our one means of communication with our friends, and this is its chief purpose. But it is also intended to provide a permanent record, in part photographic, of the Trust's work. As a general rule, we cannot afford, printing and postage costs being what they now are, to appear more than once a year; and indeed *that* would be difficult were it not for the understanding of our printer, who is a good friend to us. Even so, we need your support to help us with Newsletters and other expenses and would invite you to complete the enclosed subscription slip. Completion of this and return to the Secretary will ensure that your name is included on our next mailing list.



Above: The scene in the nave of Llanthony Priory ruins during Solemn Evensong last year to celebrate the eighth centenary of its foundation (1175-1975)



Left: Father Ignatius at home

Capel-y-ffin, with its memories of Fr Ignatius, is an oasis, a place of respite and of refuge, a place of prayer and of vision in an increasingly bleak and uncaring world. As long as the church is open for public worship and private prayer, as long as pilgrims continue to come, the work of Fr Ignatius lives on. What better memorial to him could there be?

The Trustees have no office or secretarial expenses, no salaries to receive or pay, no rent to meet; *all* that we are given is used directly and immediately for the Trust's objectives. You have shown that you feel, as we do, that the upkeep of the Father Ignatius sanctuary at Capel-y-ffin is a good cause. We thank you for your interest and help, past, present, and future.

for the Trustees

FATHER BROCARD SEWELL, O.C.A.R.M.

The Father Ignatius Memorial Trust

AN ADDRESS given by Father Brocard Sewell, O.Carm. in Capel-y-ffin Church on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage in memory of Father Ignatius of Llanthony, on Saturday August 30, 1975.

TWO WEEKS ago some of us were in Cornwall and Devon celebrating the centenary of the death of Robert Stephen Hawker, the poet-vicar of Morwenstow. In his sermon at the commemorative service in Morwenstow church on Sunday August 10 Archbishop Michael Ramsey spoke of