

The Father Ignatius Memorial Trust

NEWSLETTER

NO. 52 SPRING 2024



In our last issue we failed to draw readers' attention to a significant anniversary:
the centenary of the arrival at Fr Ignatius's former monastery
on 17 November 1923
of **Dom Joseph Woodford of Caldey Abbey.**

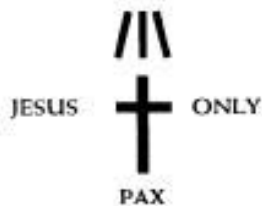
He suffered from chronic tuberculosis, from which it was thought the mountain air would afford relief.

Fr Woodford was joined by postulant Michael Davies (later Dom Raphael) and from time to time by other members of the Caldey community so, until his removal five years later to a Swiss sanatorium, monastic life was once more being led at Capel-y-ffin, albeit on a small scale, as well as family life by the Gills, the Hagreens and others who arrived the following year.

*Our picture is an early view of the chapel
created in the north cloister in 1925.*

The ecumenical **Father Ignatius Memorial Trust** was established in 1967 and organises an annual Pilgrimage to Llanthony & Capel-y-ffin. The Trust has in its care the statue of Our Lady at Capel-y-ffin Monastery as well as the ruins of the adjacent Abbey Church, and the nearby Wayside Calvary. The Monastery was founded in 1870 by Fr Ignatius OSB (Joseph Leycester Lyne 1837-1908), first restorer of monastic life for men in the Church of England and popular mission preacher. Fr Ignatius' body is buried within the Abbey Church; further information about him can be found on the Trust website: www.fatherignatius.org.uk

Y GWIR YN ERBYN Y BYD



Charity Commissioners'
Registration No. 253225

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The Work of the Trust

WELCOME TO THE 2024 Fr Ignatius Memorial Trust Newsletter; we very much hope you will enjoy reading it and learning more about the work of the Trust. Although the Abbey Church is now sadly unsafe for public access, the Trust continues to maintain its lower west wall, outside which the annual Pilgrimage ends, as well as the site of the Wayside Calvary, and the statue of Our Lady outside the monastery. In addition, we hope you will be able to join us for the annual Pilgrimage to Llanthony and Capel-y-ffin organised by the Trust (see back page for details).

From the Chairman...

Ascension Day 2023

Welcome to the 2024 edition of the Father Ignatius Memorial Trust newsletter. I began last year's letter by saying that 2023 was no less turbulent than 2022—and the truth of that has been ever more evident over the last 12 months. It's hard to think about the world today and not be disheartened. Yet there is always hope and however insignificant we may feel we must do whatever we can, however small.

Fr Jeremy Dowding

I also wrote last year that Fr Jeremy Dowding had resigned as a Trustee due to ill health. It was with great sadness that we reported that Fr Jeremy died at the beginning of December last year. His Requiem Mass was held at St Mary's Priory Church, on January 6 this year, the Feast of the Epiphany. Looking back at past editions of this newsletter, Fr Jeremy (then 'Mr' Jeremy Dowding) was appointed as a Trustee at the Spring meeting in 1989, having been part of the pilgrimage and "assisting with the event for the past eighteen years." The report goes on to say

"Now an ordinand of the Church in Wales, he has been accepted for a two-year theological course at St Stephen's House, Oxford. This begins in September this year. Successful completion of his studies will then lead to his ordination as a deacon in the Diocese of Monmouth."

It was at St Stephen's House that he met Fr Robert Coates, who presided at Fr Jeremy's Requiem Mass and who remained a life-long friend (see page 5).

As Mr Dowding, Fr Jeremy had been a faithful member of the congregation at Holy Trinity, Abergavenny, playing the organ, serving as churchwarden and assisting at the then customary traditional Anglo-Catholic services. Before ordained ministry, Fr Jeremy was a psychiatric nurse at Pen-y-Fal Hospital in Abergavenny. After ordination, he served his curacy at St Stephen's, Newport, and then St Mary's, Risca, before leaving the Diocese of Monmouth for his incumbencies. In 2005 he was appointed Priest-in-Charge at St Michael's, Thorpe-le-Soken before being appointed Vicar of the parish in 2017. He retired in 2019, moving back to Crickhowell, between Abergavenny and Brecon, with his wife Diane. He took services in Abergavenny until just before he was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease and his ministry was greatly appreciated in the churches both there and beyond.

Fr Jeremy was always a wise voice at Trust meetings and, although he couldn't make all them (Thorpe-le-Soken is 250 miles away from Abergavenny), he was an enthusiastic pilgrim along the Llanthony Valley. He will be much missed by those who met him there and at Trust meetings.

Charity status update

The Trust is very nearly there with becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation following the passage last month of new legislation governing charitable bodies. The solicitors are now awaiting documentation from

...the Chairman continues

the Charity Commission to enable the transfer of Trust property and the appointment of the remaining Trustees to the CIO (the Chairman and Secretary are already CIO Trustees).

Fabric update

We had hoped to have completed a structural survey of the Abbey Church last year, using a grant from CADW, but unfortunately that was not possible—we will reapply for survey funding for this year. However, vegetation was removed from the fabric of the building last autumn by iBEX of Raglan (see picture on Facebook/website).

Pilgrimage

This year's pilgrimage, on August 31, returns to its usual format after road closures had affected the last couple. Mass was held as usual at St David's, Llanthony, last year but, because of those closures, it wasn't possible to get to St Mary's, Capel-y-Ffin. Evening prayer was instead held at St Michael's, Llanfihangel Crucorney – many thanks to Fr Julian and Fr David for facilitating this – but it did seem strange not to be walking or driving up the valley. We were especially pleased to welcome Fr Matthew Carney of Our Lady & St Michael's Church, Abergavenny as our guest preacher together with some of his choir and parishioners.

This year Mass will be again be said at St David's, with a bring-and-share lunch afterwards, before the pilgrim-

age walk to St Mary's for Evensong (full details on back page). The Mass will be presided over by Fr Richard Williams who, by the time you read this, will have retired as Vicar of Hay. Fr Richard, who is also a Trustee, will give the homily. His fellow Trustees would like to wish him all the best in his retirement.

The preacher at Evensong will be Fr David Wyatt, who has taken over from Fr Richard as Vicar of Hay; St Eigon's, Llanigon; St Michael & All Angels, Clyro; and St Mary's, Capel-y-Ffin. Like Fr Richard, Fr David keeps dogs, although in his case they are two beagles, rather than the standard poodles so beloved of Fr Richard.

Thanks

Many thanks to everyone who makes the annual pilgrimage possible, to those who support us either financially or by joining the pilgrimage (or both) and to all the Trustees.

And to return to my comments at the start of this letter, it was St David, at whose church we celebrate the pilgrimage Mass, whose last reported words were: "Be joyful. Keep the Faith. Do the little things."

And, however small a part the Father Ignatius Memorial Trust plays in the grand scheme of life, the annual pilgrimage is very much about being joyful, keeping the faith and doing the little things.

I hope to see you in August.

Caroline Woollard
Chairman

ONLINE

Fr Ignatius Memorial Trust is at: www.fatherignatius.org.uk
Our Facebook page is: www.facebook.com/fatherignatius

Obituary

Jeremy Dowding

At Fr Jeremy Dowding's Requiem Mass, part of the eulogy was given by Fr Robert Coates, SSC, parish priest of St Augustine's, Bexhill, in the Diocese of Chichester. Here he shares some reflections on his great friend.

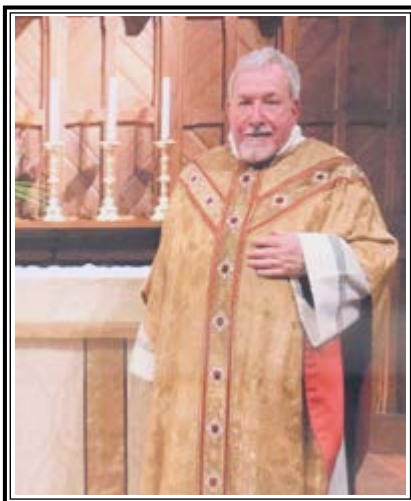
IT WAS IN OCTOBER 1989 that I first met Jeremy. We had arrived at St Stephen's House at the same time and needless to say we shared the usual anxieties of leaving home and facing two or three years of study and assessment

Jeremy was, as far as I can recall, the first ordinand to extend his hand of welcome to me. And from that moment on a cold autumn evening our friendship was formed and lasted some thirty-four years.

Friendships are formed not only on a common interest but by sharing each other's lives. Jeremy and I shared our interest in the ordained ministry of Church and we shared each other's lives as well. He, Diane, Christopher and Thomas became an extension of my family.

My memories of Fr Jeremy are centred around his love for his Lord. This love was revealed through the sacraments of the Church. Jeremy's love for the Mass and his devotion to Jesus in His Sacrament was pivotal to Jeremy's whole personality and ministry.

I recall visiting Jeremy when he was in Thorpe-le-Soken. After the Sunday Mass he would go off in his car to take the Sacrament to the sick. Each call was made special and the



administration of the Sacrament was impeccable.

As I said at his requiem, it was the Mass that identified Jeremy as a priest.

Jeremy was also a great pastor and he loved his people and they loved him. I know how important he placed visiting on his daily To Do list.

It was to the very end of his life that I saw his devotion to the Lord through his daily recitation of the Divine Office. Never once did he fail to say the office even, as I have been told, a few hours before he died.

During my visits to Jeremy last year he would often laugh - he had a great sense of humour. Someone once said that priests should have their eyes fixed on heaven and their feet in the ground. Jeremy was a true example of that saying.

Book Review

Hugh Allen

Donald Jackson Kerr: AWAKENING A CURATE'S LIBRARY: The Rev. William Arderne Shoults (1839-1887): His life, his book collection and his legacy to New Zealand (The Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand, 2022)

NEAR CONTEMPORARIES (Shoults was some eighteen months younger, but only lived to the age of 48), the paths of Fr Ignatius and the subject of this intriguing study seem first to have crossed in 1867, when they were both in their late 20s. Shoults, the bookish Cambridge graduate, was serving the second of his four London curacies (he never achieved an incumbency) in the parish of St Paul, Bunhill Row. Ignatius, whose recorded opinion was that a monk needed to know no books but the Bible and the Holy Rule, was treading a tricky path between weekday leadership of his little community, on the move that summer from Stoke Newington to Laleham-on-Thames, and weekend preaching duties at various London churches, among them the one in Bunhill Row.

Shoults's career path had up to this point been relatively conventional, and he possessed the supreme advantage of priestly orders, while Ignatius would remain a deacon until the age of sixty (and then receive the priesthood from a

questionable source). His community was therefore for most of its existence dependent on the ministrations of clergy from outside its ranks, whether the various misfit "abbey priests" who later graced (or disgraced) the Llanthony establishment, or occasional visitors, among them for a time Shoults, or "Father Cyril" as he was known in the monastery.

Dr Kerr's field of expertise lies more in the field of books and bookmen than in the intricacies of 19th century Anglicanism and with these he occasionally struggles, but he nevertheless gives a fair account of Shoults's progress through the various phases of his ecclesiastical career. A significant chapter is devoted to his association with Ignatius's communities both male and female, the latter having been established at Feltham in the summer of 1868.

For four years (late 1869 to late 1873) he was without a parochial appointment, and it's tantalising that we know little of what he was doing in this period. When the 1871 census was taken he was

listed as a “visitor” at the home of Ignatius’s Third Order prioress Frances Lack, sister of his benefactress Ann Easley, and he certainly paid several visits to the new monastery at Capel-y-ffin, but if he served as its chaplain it was as a very occasional one. He isn’t mentioned in Brother Cuthbert/John Spence’s account of his noviciate in 1872, although he did in fact pay one visit that August. He was there again for the profession of Brother Dunstan (Thomas Bray) soon after his return to parochial ministry at St Michael’s, Shoreditch, but his main spare-time ministry seems to have been sacramental support for the Feltham convent, an easy trip from his successive London addresses, processing with the Blessed Sacrament at its opening ceremony and continuing his visits in the following years. When the sisterhood split in 1878 he remained with the “rebel” majority: by this time, perhaps influenced by H.D. Nihill, his employer at St Michael’s, he seems to have lost his earlier enthusiasm for Ignatius. His marriage, in that same year, would doubtless have made the coolness mutual.

What Shoults was doing throughout his life was collecting books (some 5600 at the final count), and using them in pursuit of a

wide range of scholarly interests. Theological themes predominate, but his collection also included Greek and Roman classics and texts in middle eastern languages as well as some early scientific works. He amassed an impressive number of mediaeval manuscripts and early printed books: one has the impression that their polymathic owner’s feet may have been on the pavements of mid-Victorian London, but his head was at least partly in centuries long gone.

In describing Shoults’s life and the contents of his library Dr Kerr is uniquely qualified, the result not only of his bibliographical expertise but of familiarity with the books themselves, of which he was for many years the guardian. In a two-part article in numbers 47 and 48 of this Newsletter he outlined how Shoults’s library found its way to the Antipodes; in his final chapter that story is told in greater detail and brought up to date, a fitting conclusion to an altogether fascinating history.



On the publisher’s website the price is given as AUD\$65, with the addition of AUD\$25 for international postage. However, an ebook is also available (no price given), and copies may possibly be obtainable directly in this country—a Google check is advised.

The Further History of the Llanthony Nuns

Scholastica Jacob

‘WE DO NOT PROSPER and everything goes wrong with us’, wrote Dame Mary Wer(e)burgh at Llanthony Convent to Dame Benedicta Anstey, Stanbrook Abbey in December 1890.¹ While many readers will be familiar with the history of Father Ignatius’ nuns up until this date, their subsequent journey has yet to be chronicled in detail.² Correspondence and Annals’ entries in the Stanbrook Abbey Archives provide previously unpublished information on the deliberations leading up to the departure of the nuns and signposts to their future careers.³ This article is an introduction to on-going research on the Llanthony nuns and an in-depth study of Ignatius’ impact on Benedictine female religious life.

Father Ignatius established the first Anglican Benedictine convent five years after the foundation of his monastery in Claydon, Suffolk. The nuns were initially based in Feltham, Middlesex with Mother Hilda [Sr Ella] Stewart (1828–1906) installed as prioress.⁴ Arguably, Mother Hilda

brought more experience of religious life to the role than Father Ignatius had, and this was to become apparent in the clash of 1878 which resulted in his ‘excommunication’ of all those sisters who did not conform to his rule. This was by far the greater proportion of the community who remained at their new premises at Twickenham while Ignatius removed his four ‘loyal’ nuns to Slapton, Devon. The histories of both communities after the split are under-researched and deserve further attention.

The faithful remnant were: Mother Wereburgh (Florence) Stanbridge⁵; Sr Cecilia Smith; Sr Etheldreda Huthwaite and Sr Agnes (Jane) Povey. They remained at Slapton under Father Ignatius’ jurisdiction but continued to be rocked by discord.⁶ In 1881 they moved to the grounds of Llanthony Abbey. Sr Etheldreda died in 1886 and Sr Jane Povey left, finally, that year too, while Sr Ermenild Goodwin had arrived sometime before 1881.⁷ By 1890, when Father Ignatius departed on his

1 Dame Mary Wereburgh [Werburgh], Llanthony to Dame Benedicta Anstey, Stanbrook Abbey, December 1890, Stanbrook Abbey Archives [SBBA] Box 466. Although the name Wereburgh is more frequently spelt without the second ‘e’, her letters to Stanbrook do include it. This spelling is used here.

2 Hugh Allen discusses the departure of the remaining sisters in 1890, *New Llanthony Abbey*, Father Ignatius’s Monastery at Capel-y-ffin, Peterscourt Press, 2016, pp. 218–9.

3 SBBA Box 466 and Annals, 1890.

4 Quite how Hilda Stewart came to take on this role

is unclear although she did have earlier connections with Ignatius. It is likely that the two met through his connections with Pusey and Sellon (see Allen, *New Llanthony Abbey*, pp. 6–10 and 70–2).

5 Occasionally recorded as Staubridge or Stourbridge.

6 Sr Mary Agnes Povey, *Nunnery Life in the Church of England, or Seventeen Years with Father Ignatius*, 1890 charts the tempestuous history although the author herself was hardly an unbiased or balanced witness.

7 Allen, *New Llanthony Abbey*, pp. 207–219

American tour, there were only three nuns: when he returned the convent was deserted. The history of their departure can be found in the archives of Stanbrook Abbey.⁸

Mother Wereburgh first wrote to the Stanbrook nuns in 1890 requesting a book printed by their Abbey Press. In subsequent letters she unfolded the situation at Llanthony and asked for guidance on certain Catholic practices and doctrines. The letters are of significance for what they reveal about life in the Llanthony Convent in those final years, and the complex relationship the sisters had with Father Ignatius. In December 1890 Mother Wereburgh wrote:

‘Now I do not want to do or say anything as it were underhand or in detriment to our Rev. Superior of whom I greatly reverence and love. Yet for all that I cannot help telling how falsely we are placed. I have tried to speak to him at different times but he has refused to hear, saying he does not allow arguing.’⁹

In the same letter she goes on to deplore the state they found themselves in:

‘We have no protection as doubtless you know the English Church will have nothing to do with us and lately our Superior (I do not think he knows as he is away so much) has received most unfit men into the Monastery and leaves me to fight the battle against them [...] We have no Chaplain and have never had one, priests have come here to try to act as such but have left—some because they were quite

unfit and others because they could not endure the life and fights against the abuses.’



Abbess Cecilia Heywood, the abbess of Stanbrook whom Mother Werburgh approached when planning her “escape” from Llanthony. On 12 January 1891 Mother Werburgh wrote to Dame Benedicta Anstey: ‘I am so very thankful to you for all your help and love and for dear Lady Abbess’s motherly solicitude for me.’

Mother Wereburgh also requested instruction in the Roman Catholic faith and the letters show the lack of religious formation provided for Fr Ignatius’ nuns. Her life story is given in these letters and reported in the Annals. This is rather different from the version told by Sr Agnes Povey in *Nunnery Life in England*. She and Sr Agnes were novices together in 1869 but Sr Agnes claimed that Wereburgh left to marry and have a child, only re-entering after the death of both husband and baby.¹⁰ In her letter of 12 January 1891 Mother Wereburgh sets out her full

8 Now at Wäss, North Yorkshire.

9 Letter 3, 12 December 1890. SBBA Box 466.

10 She described Wereburgh as ‘a desecrated virgin’: Povey, *Nunnery Life*, p. 65.

family history: 'I am a lady by birth but have no means of my own'.

After advice from Stanbrook Abbey and Bishop John Hedley of Newport and Menevia, Wereburgh did escape, rather dramatically, across the mountains and took refuge at Stanbrook Abbey where she was received into the Roman Church.¹¹ The House Chronicle for 29 March 1891 records:

On Holy Saturday Miss Stan[u]bridge had the happiness of being received into the Church – all was private – She made her first Communion on Easter Sunday. She is quite overpowered with gratitude. She is most anxious that the two sisters left at Llanthony should also be instructed in the true faith.¹²

The remaining nuns at Llanthony supported her move and sent gifts:

'During Easter week we received a quantity of plants, shrubs, bulbs and seeds from Llanthony which Miss S kindly sent for. So now roses and lilies from Llanthony are blending with flowers from Solesmes, Princethorpe and Maryland!'

Now simply called Miss Stanbridge again, she applied to enter Stanbrook Abbey, but the publication of *Nunnery Life in the Church of England* made this impossible. The Annals record that much of what was alleged was false, but:

'a great deal was founded on fact [...] one very important fact was of too serious a nature (not too easy to disprove though denied by Miss Stanbridge).'¹³

She was advised to contact other Benedictine communities and

eventually joined St Mary's Abbey, Princethorpe as an oblate and teacher. Sr Cecilia (Miss Smith) also asked to be received at Stanbrook, but the community felt that the notoriety of the whole episode made it inappropriate for her to come and she too eventually made her way to Princethorpe and taught in the school. Miss Goodwin, Sr Ermenild, was younger than the others and 'uneducated'. She too became a Roman Catholic and entered the Colletine Convent at Bullingham as an extern sister according to the Stanbrook Annals.¹⁴

The Annals and letters at Stanbrook Abbey provide a new insight into the final days at Llanthony Convent and character and subsequent history of the remaining nuns. The archives of Princethorpe as well as the Poor Clares, Hereford, may also reveal more information.



Scholastica Jacob was formerly a member of Stanbrook Abbey. She is now Librarian & Archivist at the Institute for Anglican Religious Life, St Antony's Priory, Durham. The Institute's aim is to preserve and promote all aspects of Anglican religious life, especially by supporting and enabling research into its history, offering a secure home for archive collections from closed organisations, or those unable to continue to maintain them. It is intended that an edited version of the letters and further history of the nuns will be published in the future.

www.religiouslife.ssm.org.uk

11. Letters from Bishop Hedley also in SBBA, Box 466.

12. SBBA Annals.

13. SBBA Annals p. 1587. Her 'true character' did later become known at Stanbrook: Annals p. 1591.

14. Now East Birch, Hereford. Hugh Allen found her listed in the censuses of 1901 and 1911 at Our Lady of Charity and Refuge Convent, Bartestree, where she died in 1925. It is possible that she transferred there from Bullingham.

MAY 12TH, 2024: A SUBDUED NORTHERN LIGHTS EVENING AT CAPEL



A glimpse of the Nuns' correspondence...

JESUS + Only.
N.Y.

St. Scholastica's Priory
Planchthony Abbey.
Mr. Abbigavenny.

June 18th 1890.

Dear Sister in Jesus.

S. Scholastica's Priory
Planchthony Abbey

July 26th 1891.

My very dear Sister in Jesus

PILGRIMAGE PROGRAMME

Saturday 31st August 2024

11.30AM

Sung Eucharist at St David's Church, Llanthony.*

Preacher: The Reverend Richard Williams

1.30PM

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

3.30PM

Evensong at St Mary's Church, Capel-y-Ffin.

Preacher: The Reverend David Wyatt, Vicar of Hay; St Eigon's, Llanigon; St Michael & All Angels, Clyro; and St Mary's, Capel-y-Ffin.

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

*After the Eucharist pilgrims are invited to a Bring & Share Lunch in the picnic area next to the car park at Llanthony.

CAR PARKING is available for the Evensong at St. Mary's, and for the afternoon programme at Capel-y-Ffin.



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

Please note:

Next year's pilgrimage will take place on Saturday, September 6th, 2025.

[To be confirmed]

**PLEASE SEE WEBSITE
www.fatherignatius.org.uk**

Unable to travel this year?

**THE VIRTUAL PILGRIMAGE & SERVICE
prepared to replace the cancelled
2020 Events is on YouTube
at: <https://bit.ly/3eIbPZs>**

THE 2023 VESPERS

WAS MEMORABLE FOR BOTH
THE NECESSARY RELOCATION
TO ST MICHAEL'S LLANFIHANGEL
CRUCORNEY & THE PARTICIPATION
OF 3 BENEDICTINE MONKS FROM
2 COMMUNITIES: FR MATTHEW
CARNEY FROM BELMONT ABBEY,
HEREFORD, & PP IN ABERGAVENNY
& LLANARTH, PREACHED
& WAS JOINED BY
BR ADRIAN (I) & BR IAN
FROM MUCKNELL ABBEY,
NR WORCESTER

