

NEWSLETTER OF THE
F R I E N D S O F O U R L A D Y O F T I N T E R N

PATRONS: RT REVD DOM D VAN SANDVOORT OCSO RT REVD DOM P STONHAM OSB RT REVD D WALKER OGS

Easter 2009

Dear Friends

The summer season is beginning at Tintern Abbey. The number of visitors rises again from day to day, after what is by comparison a thin dripped in wintertime. There are some changes for them to see in the Abbey. For over a year the Friends' statue has been in place, a powerful attraction from the moment it is first sighted. But now the remaining pieces of the original -- known in its day as Our Lady St Mary of Tintern -- have been given new life too. They can be seen upright in the small area where Philip Chatfield did the final part of his sculpting. Before long a finishing touch will be added to these beautiful works of art, in the form of a sign giving details of their origin and history.

CADW calls the signs put up, around the monuments they care for, "interpretation panels". Sympathetic and accurate interpretation is surely a deeply precious commodity for times like these. We interact more and more with other races and cultures. We cannot escape awareness of crisis, of overwhelming and competing claims on our resources, from near and far. How can we find kinship with what feels alien? Sort out priorities of need amongst all the suffering? Discover the huge well of needs as yet unknown, behind the chosen images selected by the media which bombard (and stupefy) our senses? There are still so many voiceless people -- in a voiceless creation. These things are not remote from the Friends' commitment to bringing people together, finding and making common cause in what we believe, and working to answer the human need that lives, or arrives, on our doorstep.

True understanding and right action in these matters must surely come from heart and mind at work together, and often in silence. Mary "pondered all these things" and kept them on her heart; didn't jump to find quick answers or push things out of mind. Jesus seems to have said progressively less on his journey from Gethsemane to Golgotha. It seems our best work is often done by way of those burdensome activities called waiting, watching, bearing -- fitting enough for Lent and Passiontide, you might say, but a sound principle for everyday dealings too. So we continue to wait in unabated hope for news from the Charity Commission about our Trust Deed and from Cadw about Beaufort Cottage, the potential home of our proposed Centre...

But we also look forward to 'the hope that is set before us'. There is the promise of a public talk under the Friends' auspices later this year, when the speaker will be Herbert Girardet, member of the World Futures Council and an expert of international repute on alternative forms of energy and city planning (and in whose house Philip Chatfield lodged for some months while carving our statue). On 6th September there will be the customary service of Sung Vespers at the Abbey. We have also the generous offer by the Martin Singers to give a recital there for our benefit next year. But above all, of course, we have -- now and always -- that greatest hope, celebrated afresh at every Paschaltide since its granting was made manifest to our world:

Out of that hope we wish you all peace and joy at Easter.

The Revd. Nora Hill and the Revd. John Dearnley
Co-Chairs of the *Friends of Our Lady of Tintern*