

HARTLAND ABBEY

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Dear

Thank you for your enquiry regarding a possible visit to Hartland Abbey and Gardens. We are a wonderful destination for a day out with so much to see and do and delicious refreshments at a very reasonable cost. We do hope that you will bring your group to our historic family home in 2012. Hartland Abbey is special in that it remains in the family and is not merely 'a museum' as so many of our ancestral homes are today. It exudes the warmth and friendliness only found in a lived-in house. Enjoy a warm welcome, a fascinating guided tour if you would like one or a leisurely wander round the house, gardens and walks with a lovely lunch or cream tea - or both! We also have a Gift Shop and Museum of family and local history.

The Abbey was built across a narrow river valley leading to the wild and rugged Atlantic coast of North Devon, in what is now an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. The Augustinian monks chose this idyllic site to found their monastery in 1157AD. The last Abbey in the country to be Dissolved in 1539, it was given by Henry V111 to the Sergeant of his Wine Cellar, William Abbot, whose descendant Sir Hugh Stucley, with his wife and family, lives here today. The Abbey was extensively remodelled in the 18th & 19th centuries with stunning interiors by **Sir George Gilbert Scott and John Meadows**; you can see Mediaeval, Queen Anne, Georgian, Regency and Victorian architecture and decoration, including a complete example of the century of Gothic revival.

Many of Sir Hugh's ancestors have been prominent in local and national history; they include politicians, courtiers, soldiers, High Sheriffs and pirates! Consequently the Abbey contains much of interest to visitors. Portraits by **Gainsborough, Reynolds, Hudson, Ramsay, Kneller's portrait of Sir William Stukeley** who saved Stonehenge for the nation, and many other paintings; murals by **Alfred Beer** of events in history in which family members took part; the famous **Alhambra Corridor** by **Sir George Gilbert Scott**; **ancient documents from 1160AD including Lewis Stucley's vindication of escorting his cousin, Sir Walter Raleigh, to the Tower of London; much fine furniture**, of which the huge, circular, segmented dining table fascinates visitors; **fine porcelain; Victorian and Edwardian photographs** including those of the **Sudanese Campaign of 1898**. **The museum and dairy also have much of interest on display. The Gothic Library** by **John Meadows** with its fabulous fireplace by **Batty Langley** is very much a family room. **Our Cream Teas are the best; all home made by the ladies of St. Nectan's Church; they also serve very good light lunches in the Old Kitchens.**

Having visited the house, the constantly evolving gardens are a must! **Woodland gardens** on either side of the house contain over 100 different camellias. From early spring masses of snowdrops, bluebells, violets, tulips and historic daffodils produce a wonderful display. Rhododendrons, azaleas and magnolias, at their best in April, May and June, are followed by eucryphia and many beautiful hydrangeas in late summer. In 1996 we discovered, under mountains of undergrowth, winding paths and terraces leading to the **Bog Garden** and **Victorian Fernery**, created by **Gertrude Jekyll** when she was a house guest at the beginning of the 20th century. We have now restored these charming gardens where you can see many different ferns, huge gunnera, primula and arum lilies amongst much else. A woodland walk leads from the Bog Garden to the hidden and beautiful **18thC Walled Gardens**. A small gate in the topiary leads visitors through arched doorways to four intimate gardens; after years of neglect, once again many roses, herbaceous perennials, shrubs, tender and rare plants including giant *echium pininana*, vegetables and fruit trees grow in abundance, within walls mirroring the contours of the valley. Greenhouses contain many more tender plants, many grown from seed collected on our walking holidays abroad.

Geraniums, streptocarpus, plumbago, jasmine and other plants from the glasshouses fill the Abbey rooms with scent and colour throughout the season.

The **Woodland Walk to Blackpool Mill**, a rugged Atlantic Cove 1 mile away, is a carpet of wildflowers, particularly snowdrops, bluebells, primroses and violets, in spring. The wild and rocky coastline, with its huge cliffs, has been the scene of many shipwrecks in the past and is a spectacular and beautiful sight. It is a haven for wildlife and it is usual to see buzzards, peregrine falcons, seabirds, and many butterfly species. A zig zag path leads to the **19thC Gazebo** overlooking the sea, which we restored using traditional materials in 2004. It is now a popular civil wedding venue. In 2010 we restored an overgrown path, unseen since 1914; it now enables visitors to make a lovely round walk in the bluebells and wildflowers. In 2011 the restored **Woodland Summerhouse** opened; visitors can relax here, surrounded by wildflowers, and read of Lady (Winifred) Fortescue's wartime refuge. She had escaped Vichy France to live here and write her novels, including 'Perfume from Provence'.

Blackpool Mill Cottage was the location for 'The Shell Seekers' (Die Muschelsuckers) by Rosamunde Pilcher, starring Vanessa Redgrave and Maximilian Schell and in 2008 the BBC adaptation by Andrew Davis of Jane Austen's 'Sense and Sensibility'. Janet McTeer, Charity Wakefield, Hattie Morahan, Dan Stevens and Dominic Cooper starred. **Gardeners World** was filmed here on the cliffs with Dan Pearson and Alan Titchmarsh.

2011 has been an incredibly busy year. The **BBC Antiques Roadshow** was filmed here in July. Fiona Bruce and many of the experts stayed in the house. Over 3,000 people turned up with their valuables, enough for two programmes to be made for the next series! Earlier in the year Sir Hugh was filmed for **ITV's 'Countrywise'** extolling the virtues of this beautiful, unspoilt area. The North Devon Hospice and Cancer Research Campaign committees raised a staggering £65,000 at their Midsummer Ball, Last Night of the Proms and Country Fayre held in the grounds. **Glamour** magazine did a glamorous photo shoot in the house and Walled Gardens!

The Abbey and Gardens have appeared in BBC's '**Out & About**', numerous articles including Country Life, The English Garden, Devon Life and The Lady. '**Going for a Song**' included objects from the house; **Bargain Hunt** with Tim Wonnacott was filmed here. American Vogue and Mario Testino used the Abbey and gardens as a location. The estate too is regularly used for filming; in 2010 we had Kirsty Allsop and Phil Spencer, **Top Gear** with Jeremy Clarkson, James May and Richard Hammond who drove their campervan over the cliff, a documentary, '**Landtraume**' (Country Dreams) for ZDF German television and Martin Dorey's '**One Man and his Campervan**' was filmed for BBC2 with stunning views of the Abbey and surrounding area. The Abbey features in '1000 Best Houses' by Simon Jenkins, and many other publications.

We do hope that you and your group will visit, or revisit, us. We are constantly changing our exhibits in the house and 2012 will see yet more family memorabilia on view for the first time. We will open for groups of 20 or more at dates and times other than those advertised but if you would prefer to wander at will through the house where we have charming Room Stewards in every room, then it is preferable to come in normal opening times. We love our home, we hope you will too!

Many further details, including Special Events for 2012 are on www.hartlandabbey.com.

SNOWDROP SUNDAY 12th February, **MOTHERING SUNDAY AND DAFFODIL WEEKEND** 17th/18th March, **BLUEBELL SUNDAYS** 22nd and 29th April.

Yours sincerely,

Lady Stucley