

HARTLAND ABBEY NEWSLETTER-SPRING 2008

Dear Visitors,

Another winter has passed and we have been so busy that I am only just finishing writing this at the end of May. I started writing on the 8th April when one could have been forgiven for thinking it was mid winter! Apart from all the lovely spring flowers being out but with the daffodils nearly over, it was absolutely freezing cold. We had snow on Sunday 6th April, just as we were opening, with the result that five cars came in, the snow bucketed down, and no more visitors came! The last time we had seen snow in April was about twenty years ago!

The winter was very busy, particularly doing up the kitchen for the tea room. Very sadly our beautiful, huge old stone sink, which had been there for at least 150 years, has been consigned to an outhouse. In order to conform to the dreadful health and safety regulations, we have had to put in a stainless steel one. We had never poisoned anyone in those years so quite why it wasn't safe mystifies me. I am very sad and I don't see it as 'progress'! Of course, much of the resulting winter work is unseen to visitors as a huge amount of time is spent mending slates, blocked pipes etc. We had one awful leaking pipe which went on for a month undiscovered, leaving the house smelling like a bag of rotting potatoes! Apologies for this!

We opened on two consecutive Sundays in February for our Snowdrop Sundays. We had planned two days in case of one, at least, being a washout. As it was both Sundays were absolutely beautiful, warm and sunny, and to our utter amazement car after car rolled in and in the two days nearly 4,000 people came to see the snowdrops! It was a really extraordinary turnout and we are so grateful to everyone who came and put up with the most enormous queues for the tearoom! The church tea ladies did a fantastic job and adopted a wartime spirit; more supplies and helpers were called in from all over the parish and the food managed to stretch! There was a wonderful atmosphere. We were hoping for about 200 people on each day so it was all a bit of a shock! We almost had to shut the car park as cars were parked all the way up the valley, in the road and almost anywhere, but somehow we managed to squeeze everyone in and no-one was disappointed! Fortunately it was dry or else we would have been in deep trouble! We think the combination of lovely weather and being able to walk and see the location for 'Barton Cottage' in BBC's 'Sense and Sensibility' was what brought people here.

Last year's filming of 'Sense and Sensibility' here has had an extraordinary effect. We had over 1,000 emails from people wanting to rent Blackpool Mill cottage for their holidays. We spent weeks and weeks answering every single one, in fact we didn't achieve much else in January! The consequence is that the cottage is almost fully booked for 2008 and 2009 but if anyone is interested it is still worth trying as there are bound to be cancellations. Details of both Blackpool Mill and The Bear are on our website www.hartlandabbey.com and both are wonderful cottages for a peaceful holiday in this beautiful area.

The film industry returned to the estate this year. We were approached at very short notice by the company making a film called 'Solomon Kane', a huge blockbuster which had been

filmed mainly in Czechoslovakia. The beautiful area just south of Hartland Quay was the location for some exciting stunts with people being thrown off the cliff; luckily in real life all survived! It looked very spectacular and rather akin to 'Lord of the Rings' but we decided it was probably not our sort of film. However, it was all good for local business and hopefully will show our lovely coastline off really well when it comes out next year in the cinema.

On the family front two more babies are expected. Charlotte, our eldest daughter who is married to Tom Scudamore, is expecting their second child and Susie, our daughter-in-law who is married to our second son, Peter, is expecting their third child. So it is going to be a busy time for us with the inevitable calls for help! All we pray for is safe and healthy deliveries. Tom has had a successful steeplechasing season but marred by injury in the autumn. On his return to the saddle he managed to ride his first Cheltenham Festival winner, An Accordion, trained by David Pipe along with some other good winners. Our other son-in-law, Ran, married to Lucinda, is an amateur jockey in his spare time and rode at Aintree in the Foxhunters Chase where he finished a very creditable sixth, just scraping into the prize money, earning enough to pay for the petrol to the races! We were all thrilled for him to get round those huge fences in one piece. Amber, our daughter-in-law, married to George, has just started a mail order business with a friend, called www.mummydeli.com. They sell mainly organic and healthy baby food, baby clothes and some treats for new mothers too. They have worked so hard to get it off the ground and are just beginning to send out their first orders which is enormously exciting. Any parents or grandparents reading this - do have a look at their website!

The wildflowers and bulbs this spring have been exceptionally beautiful. From the early snowdrops, followed by the daffodils, primroses, violets and bluebells, all of which stretch from the Walled Gardens to the sea, it has been a breathtaking show. The cold spring has had its advantages enabling everything to last longer. The camellias started in October and are still flowering, the magnolias and early Cornish Red rhododendrons looked magnificent. We have been splitting many of the old daffodils and narcissi and moving them from places where they were never seen. The wild ferns are unfurling and the sheep and donkeys have returned here from their winter quarters on the farm; the peacocks are screeching all night long; summer is coming!

Mary Heard, our Administrator, has been in hospital receiving a new heart valve. She is not quite back to her normal self yet but we are sure it won't be too long! She and her husband, John, have farmed in the parish all their married life and have been huge supporters to us over the years. They celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 3rd May and we wish them every happiness for another 50 years!!

We are so grateful to our wonderful staff here for all they do. If they were employed by the National Trust there would be at least double the amount but here we cannot afford to employ more people so everyone does their best! I hope you will agree that, thanks to Carol, the house looks sparkling clean, thanks to Leighton it doesn't leak too badly, thanks to Dave the grass is kept tidy and thanks to Joanna, with her part time help, Nigel, the gardens look lovely. We can't help the badgers digging it up at night, the moles making monumental molehills and the deer eating our best plants; we just have to live with it!

The tea ladies are quite simply, wonderful, as all their time and energy and the cakes they make are given free, with all proceeds going to the church. Over the years they have raised many thousands of pounds to keep it going. Well done to them!

We are enormously grateful to everyone who visits Hartland Abbey; without you we simply would not be able to keep this wonderful old house going. Also to those of you who support our tea room, nearly every penny raised goes towards the upkeep of St Nectan's Church and we do urge anyone who can, to visit this beautiful church which has been so closely linked to the Abbey throughout history. Thank you for coming and if you have enjoyed yourselves, please tell others; if not, please tell us! Hugh and Angela Stucley
May 2008

Christmas 2007 - Eddie(6) and the dogs are missing!



STOP PRESS

We now have two new grandchildren, born within 5 days of each other. Susie produced a son, Sam, a month early on 3rd May and Charlotte produced Myrtle a day late on 8th May! She was due a month before Sam. Thankfully both are fit and well but it was all rather confusing at the time! They are adorable and hopefully will both come to Hartland soon. My mother now has 7 great grandchildren!