

Quarr Abbey

NEWSLETTER

Issue 36

Summer 2023

There is More to a Man

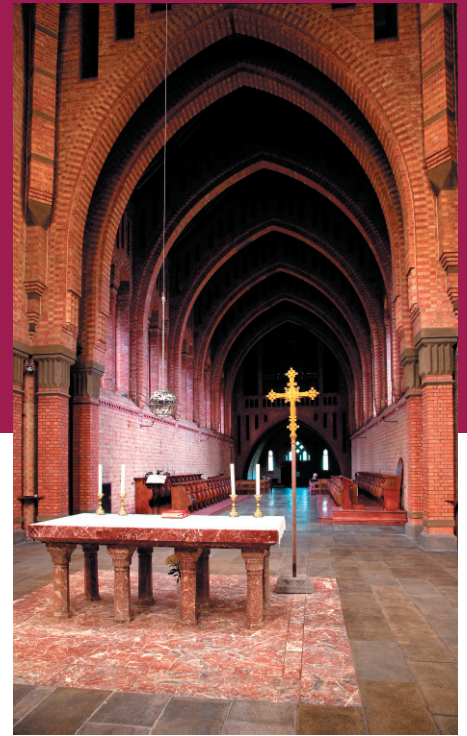
A man has died. He was a good friend. I had known him for years. I had even known his parents. All very good persons. I speak of him with a common friend. 'Do you remember when...?' – 'O yes. And this way he had of... wasn't it unique?' – 'It really was, even extraordinary, wasn't it?' Memories come up. Images fill our minds. A special warmth, a tone of voice, a look, even a fragrance: all this seems to be so present at the very moment when it has ceased to be available. Is he not here among us as we are speaking of him? Or has he gone and are we only facing what is left of him in us, and which will disappear with us? He lives in us, but for how long? Or does he continue outside of us – in a new self beyond death; in God?

There is more to a man than the sum of his actions and the impressions he left on those who knew him and shared with him joys and sufferings, work and holidays, youth, maturity and old age. There is more to a man than what we can say of his qualities, his achievements, the stories of his life and his unique character. There is more to a man than the good – and bad – choices of his freedom. There is more to a man than even the goodness of his heart and this very best part of him which only those who loved him could sometimes glimpse.

This 'more' is his mystery. I do not mean only the secrets of his heart; the stories he never told anyone; what happened between him and God. One's privacy is one thing, one's mystery another. For all his qualities, he was an ordinary man, like me and – if I may say so – you (probably). His secrets were ordinary secrets, nothing really exciting if we think of it. But his mystery remains: I mean the unique relationship he had with God who created him, God who accompanied him through his life, God who welcomed him when he passed out – or rather: over. The mystery is really his, but it comes totally from God. God loved him before the world was created. God thought of him and created him. God cared for him eternally with kindness and love beyond telling. God redeemed him and gave His own Son's life for him. He was definitively, uniquely wanted by God – just as you and I, too, are known, desired and loved by God.

We need places where each of us can reconnect with his or her own mystery and thus discover his or her deepest identity. Quarr is, I hope, one of these places where visitors can experience a peace and feel attracted to a Face, invisible, yes, but nevertheless beckoning to them and saying: "Do not be afraid. You are eternally loved, wanted for yourself, waited for. An eternal home is prepared for you."

Abbot Xavier



The Friends of Quarr – A Celebration of Ten Years of Friendship

"What draws people to be friends is that they see the same truth. They share it."
C.S. Lewis

A decade is both a short and a long period of time, depending on your viewpoint. Nonetheless, a friendship that has lasted for ten years is a considerable achievement and worthy of celebration. We all have those individuals in our lives whom we are blessed to call our friends and sometimes these relationships go back such a long way that we may not even remember how they began in the first place. Psychologists may suggest that in order to call someone a friend, the relationship must be long-lasting, positive and cooperative. Most of us think of our good friends as those who are there for us; who listen to us; empathise with us; are capable of both apology and forgiveness and above all bring us joy in their company. These attributes are in no small measure what we seek both to offer and to experience in our friendship with the community at Quarr Abbey.

Continued on next page

C.S. Lewis wrote that friendship is “the instrument by which God reveals to each of us the beauties of others”. When Dr Rebecca Ashton set up the Friends of Quarr in December 2012, it was to be an interface between the monastic community and the wider community of the Island and beyond. She saw it as a friendship that would evolve and grow. Over those ten years Friends have supported the spiritual life of the Abbey, endeavoured to raise its profile and helped to maintain the physical fabric of the institution. In return, the monks have offered spiritual support and guidance, generous hospitality, and ongoing prayer for those who are members. Many of our members live on the mainland or are unable to visit very often, but are always assured of a warm welcome whenever they are able to come. Hopefully, both the Friends and the monastic community are beginning to see the beauty of each other, for we know indeed that we share the same truth and as we move forward together in cooperation and common purpose, may we bring each other true joy in the years to come.

Below is an account of the Celebration of The Tenth Anniversary of The Friends of Quarr.

St Benedict's Day 2023

St Benedict's Day marked the beginning of three very busy days at the Abbey, so it was good to begin with Mass and to share refreshments afterwards with those Friends who were able to join us. Coffee and cake in a marquee was a delightful way to mark the occasion and to anticipate the arrival of the guest speaker for the afternoon and evening: Jim Towey. Jim's book “To Love and Be Loved” was written during lock down and describes how he came to know and work with Mother Teresa of Calcutta during the final twelve years of her life. It is honest, reflective and very readable and can still be purchased at the Abbey bookshop.

Cheryl Fontana

Quarr Abbey Chronicle

Summer 2023

We don't often watch television. In fact, we don't actually have one. So when Fr. Abbot decided we could watch the coronation of our new sovereign, King Charles III, the more technically minded members of the community arranged for the projection of a computer generated image onto the wall of the meeting room. It took time for the technical problems to be overcome, but by the time the congregation was all seated in Westminster Abbey the picture had more or less settled down.

Of our community, only Fr. Gregory was alive at the time of the last coronation; for the rest of us, it was all quite new. I for one was unexpectedly and strangely moved by it all. It was not the rich array of colour on view, or the glorious music, although Bryn Terfel's Welsh Kyrie made a big impression. Rather it was the drama of the rite itself. The king was less the principal actor- that role surely belonged to the archbishop- than the principal sufferer. He was there to suffer things being done to him. Most notably, he was stripped down to his long white shirt for the anointing,

looking small and strangely vulnerable in the midst of so much splendour. But then followed his re-emergence from obscurity as he was re-clothed in ever more splendid garments before receiving the state crown, which more than hinted of powers more than merely human.

The whole ceremony was like a baptism which takes a man of flesh, fills him with the Spirit and makes him little less than a god. Please God, King Charles will prove a good and wise king, long to reign over us. Amen.

Fr. Abbot was absent for two weeks in May for the quadrennial general chapter of the congregation at Solesmes. He went alone, but did not return alone; with him came Abbot Geoffroy Kemlin, the new abbot of Solesmes who was paying his first visit to Quarr. Over several days he met with us all individually, getting to know us and our concerns, just as we had an opportunity to get to know him. A highlight of his visit was a day-trip to Appuldurcombe House, near Wroxall, on the south of the Island, the house where the exiled community of Solesmes first settled before moving to Quarr.

The house was fire-bombed in 1940 and is now little more than an elegant shell, but enough remains to gain an idea of what monastic life must have been like there over a century ago.

After singing the divine office *au plein air* we enjoyed a picnic lunch on the lawn. After that we followed



in the footsteps of the Solesmes monks taking one of their walks to the obelisk atop Stenbury Down on the very edge of the Appuldurcombe estate. The views over the Island were magnificent. The memory of them will hopefully draw Abbot Geoffroy back again for a further visit to Quarr in the not too distant future.

June 24th marks the Solemnity of Saint John the Baptist, the patron saint of our novitiate. It was therefore very fittingly chosen for the day on which Br. Matthew, our novice, should make his temporary vows. Simple Profession is the act by which a man becomes a monk; it is a significant rite of passage and the preparations were many.

Our oblate, Julia Trahair came from Cornwall to make the long scapular in which Br. Matthew was to be clothed; Br. Matthew himself wrote out the chart containing his vows of stability, conversion of life and obedience which he was to read; and he was well rehearsed in the chant and ceremonial by which all was to be effected.

The Profession rite takes place during mass after the reading of the gospel. It is a rite of self-offering to God, brought out especially in the singing of the "Suscipe" ("Receive me, O Lord"), and in the laying of the Chart containing the vows upon the altar. All is perfected with the offering of the eucharistic sacrifice in which all other offerings find their beginning and their end.

All this was duly accomplished and, after mass, the whole community celebrated with our congregation with tea in the forecourt garden. A more secluded lunch followed with Br. Matthew's family on the terrace. The sun shone splendidly; there was, quite literally, no cloud to be seen in the sky.

It all began with an old friend of Fr. Brian Gerard's coming to give a talk about his recently published book. Jim Towey first met Fr. Brian Gerard many years ago in Florida, before he became a monk, and before Jim had met Mother Teresa with whom he worked and maintained a friendship over

many years. But when he accepted an invitation to come to Quarr as part of a promotional tour for his book, "To love and be loved", it was decided to plan three days of talks and make an event of a visit. A marquee was erected in the monastery forecourt, and a line-up of speakers drawn up for each day.

Jim spoke first in the church to a packed and attentive audience. He spoke again in the evening, at a formal supper in the Marquee. All who heard him were much moved by his humble, humorous and yet quietly challenging stories of a saint whom he knew and loved so well.

The next day started with speakers who also had recently published books to promote; Fr. Abbot spoke of the Benedictine vocation in history and in the world of today. Abbot Christopher Jamison, Abbot President of the English Congregation followed on the topic of Grace and finding the right contemporary language to communicate the experience of God. Fr Luke came next, providing a general introduction to his now growing body of work. Jake Esman then introduced his book, "Seen" and talked about his work as a leadership coach.

On the Thursday, we came down to earth; Matt Legge spoke of farming at Quarr Abbey, of the pigs which are a perennial attraction. David Tomalin talked about monastic Wight, what we have lost, what we have found, what we might seek. Marine archaeologist Dominic Fontana followed on the subject of the wreck of the Mary Rose and its connection with the Isle of Wight. And Richard Smout, Council archivist looked at the history of Quarr estate from the time of the dissolution until the coming of Solesmes.

We can only conclude by thanking so many people for such a varied and fascinating look at so many things which feed into the multi-faceted reality which is Quarr.

Quarr Abbey possesses a very fine Mutin-Cavaillé Coll organ, one of only three of this French manufacturer in the country. Since its restoration in 2017 we have held regular three

day organ recitals to demonstrate the beauty and versatility of the instrument. This year three organists were asked to give recitals in honour of the great French organist and composer Louis Vierne (1870-1937) who for many years was organist of Notre Dame of Paris.

Neil Wright, the organist of Farnborough Abbey gave the first recital on Saturday, July 22nd. He played French music throughout, the kind of music for which the Cavaillé Coll organ was principally designed. I was particularly struck by Vierne's "Naiades". The multi-layered texture of the piece suggested overlapping currents of water, and reflected light, and ripples moving across the surface. In complete contrast the finale of Vierne's first symphony brought the recital to a solemn, triumphal and definitive conclusion.

Edward Dean, organist of Worth Abbey followed on Sunday afternoon. His programme was more varied, with German and English music joining with French. The charmingly lyrical "Berceuse" of Gabriel Faure lit up the first half of the recital, but I was more moved by the concluding "Carillon de Westminster" from Louis Vierne's "Pièces de Fantaisie". The chimes of Big Ben, incessantly repeated provided the underlying architecture for an edifice of sound, at once, rich, resonant and quite substantial.

Dr. Devon Howard an organist from Dallas, Texas, concluded the series on Monday. His programme was the most varied of all. He played four triptychs of thematically cohesive pieces designed to explore a great range of musical expression. This included Louis Vierne's "Triptyque pour Grand Orgue" the piece he played just before his death, seated at the organ of Notre Dame in 1937. Lighter work in an impressionistic mode by Debussy, and music inspired by native American melodies gave the programme its unique flavour.

After so many riches we are left eagerly awaiting next year's offerings.

Br. Duncan Smith



Monsignor Le Gall and Fr. Abbot

La Fondation des Monastères

Visitors to our Visitor Centre and to the Monastery Shop may have noticed a board which has recently been put up. It commemorates the help of the *Fondation des Monastères* to the upkeep of Quarr.

La *Fondation des Monastères* is a charitable organisation based in Paris which helps monasteries which are situated in France or have strong French connections. Because of our link with Solesmes, we can apply for their assistance. We have thus benefited from grants of the *Fondation* for the restoration of the organ (2016), the cloister roofs (2018), and the Old House roofs (2022).

What was to become the *Fondation* began in 1969. At that time, new regulations made it necessary for

monastic communities to make a substantial contribution towards the insurance of their members. The amount became an unexpected challenge to quite a few French monasteries. A group of Cistercian monks joined with a team of lawyers of high repute in order to offer legal support and financial assistance to these communities. The chairman of their *Association* was a member of the Académie Française.

As early as 1974, this endeavour was officially recognised as a *fondation*. In French Law, a *fondation* is a non-profit organisation which puts private funds to the service of causes of public interest. It makes it possible for the general public, individuals as well as companies, to make donations

towards the special aim of the *fondation* while benefitting from substantial tax-reductions. The *Fondation* is also enabled to receive legacies for the benefit of monasteries in general or for a particular monastery. Because of its charitable purpose, the important taxes around legacies, which are typical of the French legal system, are not applicable.

Over more than fifty years, the *Fondation* has developed, becoming a key feature of monastic life in France. A team, based in Paris, employs about ten members of staff. A board of directors, both lay and monastic, oversees the administration and finances of the charity. The *Fondation* offers the service of experts in law (civil and church law) and regulations and the way they apply to the different aspects of the life of monastic communities. It is possible for individuals to make donations to the *Fondation* or, as explained, through the *Fondation* to specific monastic houses. Communities can apply for grants in order to contribute towards insurance and social cover for the members, works of repair or construction, or promotion of the culture and the image of monastic life. A review, *Les Amis des Monastères*, is published four times a year. It publicises the activities of the *Fondation* and highlights different aspects of the life of communities.

His Grace the Most Reverend Robert Le Gall, OSB, Retired Archbishop of Toulouse (France), who is a regular guest at Quarr, is the Honorary President of the *Fondation des Monastères*, a title he acquired after having served as Chairman of the *Fondation* from 1996 to 2001, at which time he was the Abbot of Sainte-Anne de Kergonan.

Abbot Xavier

Quarr Abbey is a Catholic community of Benedictine monks of the Solesmes Congregation. If you wish to contact us please write to guestmaster@quarr.org or Quarr Abbey, Ryde, Isle of Wight, PO33 4ES. Our website address is www.quarrabbey.org

The tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Friends of Quarr

The tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Friends of Quarr

On Saturday May 13th, Father Abbot and the community welcomed about 30 Friends of Quarr to the monastery to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Friends of Quarr. We were taken to the sacristy where we saw amongst other things, vestments from Ethiopia and India. We also saw a seventeenth century recusant chalice and Brother Duncan showed us a beautiful illuminated manuscript Gospel created by sisters from St Cecilia's Abbey in Ryde over a period which spanned the Second World War.

Father Brian took us into the Abbey library which contains 60,000 books on Theology, Philosophy, History and spirituality. We were shown a polyglot

bible which is written in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Aramaic enabling swift comparison of the texts and translations. The edition was compiled by Brian Walton in the mid 17th Century. It had come to the Abbey from Bishop's House in Portsmouth where it had been damaged in the Blitz, the book sustaining water damage from the attempts of the firemen to put out the fires started by the bombing.

We then gathered in the Chapter House for a speech by Father Abbot and on behalf of the community he expressed his thanks to Rebecca and presented her with a specially commissioned ceramic plate. I added my own thanks and on behalf of the Friends of Quarr gave Rebecca a bouquet and card. Rebecca thanked us and wished us all well for the future.



Father Abbot, Rebecca and Dominic.

The community had arranged an excellent tea in the cloisters and it was good to meet so many Friends and members of the Abbey staff. After that there was the opportunity to join the community at Vespers.

We are very grateful to Father Abbot and the community for their welcome and hospitality; to Tracy Osborn for her wonderful catering and also to Rebecca for all that she has done to establish the Friends of Quarr over the past ten years.

Cheryl Fontana

Two great mystics and a poem

The inspiration for this poem comes from meditating on the lives of saints who have heroically sought to overcome their psychological and spiritual challenges in a hidden way. St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873 – 1897) was brought up in a very devout family in Alençon, France. Both her parents are also canonized, the only married couple in the history of the Church to be canonized together. With a strong influence from Jansenism in her early years, she suffered from a propensity to scrupulosity throughout her life, even as a cloistered Carmelite nun. This she sought to overcome heroically. Her struggles were largely interior ones, overcome by her heroic love.

Originally from Albania, taking as her patron St. Thérèse, St Teresa of Calcutta (1910 – 1997) was another

saint who suffered through an interior spiritual trial unknown to anyone except her spiritual directors. Her heroic love for the poorest of the poor is well known. But what was hidden, even from her sisters and her closest friends was the fact that she underwent a 'dark night of the soul' which lasted for 40 years. Despite her deep love and her profound humility, she often felt abandoned by God. Her interior struggles now known through her letters show clearly how she was able to overcome the temptations she encountered, never allowing a 'death' to overtake her soul.

Death Dies Within

Death abides my memory,
Yet comes to die within,
Pours out wrath
Over my soul.
But no harm to You
Encompassing to banish him
Who seeks only to destroy.
Lord of my life,
My soul,
My being

Enrapturing to be
My Sacred Kin.

Death dies within,
As Grace Divinely
Empowers the humble soul
To battle against sin.
Mary's gentleness pours forth
All Graces through her soul
Forever her Lord owns -
Love makes lovers equal.

Death dies within
Due to Spirit's awakening
Indwelling in my soul.
You, and You alone
All-Powerful Guest,
Gift of Love,
Gift of my soul.
Whoever has Mary
Already has You.
Trials overcome
With fullness of joy within.
Endured sorrows
Dissolve in joy,
Not death to lead
Only love, heroic love
Now, forever,
Eternal.

Dom Brian Gerard Kelly



Fig. 1. St Catherine's Tower from the east, showing its upper and lower doorways and the peaked gable scar of its lost oratory. 2020

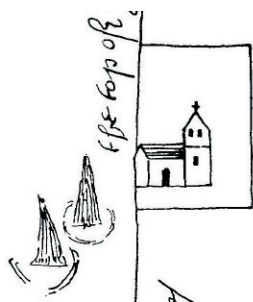


Fig. 2. Saint Catherine's oratory viewed from the north in 1566.

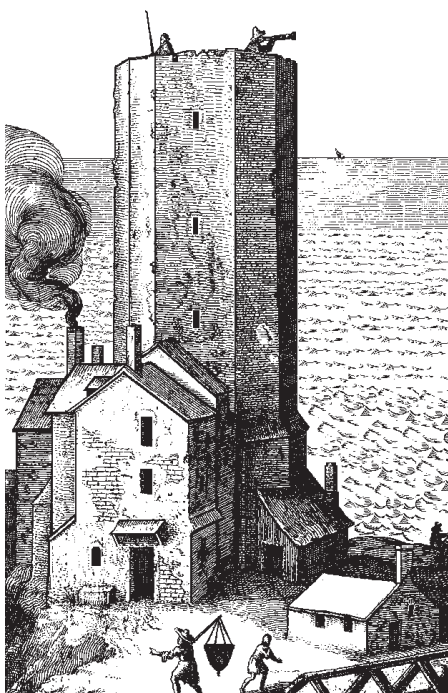


Fig. 3. The 14th century octagonal lighthouse 'Tour du Prince Noir' with attached chapel and hermitage on the Ile Cordouan, at the mouth of Gironde. Adapted after an engraving by Claude Chastillon, circa 1590.

Tending a flickering light *David Tomalin*

A new 'enlightened' view of the medieval oratory tower on St Catherine's Down

Early history

Of all the upstanding monastic remains on the Isle of Wight, the tower of St Catherine's oratory is surely the best known and most admired. High on its chalk hilltop, variably known as St Catherine's Hill, St Catherine's Down or 'Chale Down', this elegant structure stands sentinel over the fearsome wave-racked turbulence of Chale Bay.

It is to the architect and antiquary Percy Stone that we owe the first detailed account of this building. Writing in 1891, he notes that a small monastic cell or *hermitorium* was standing on this hilltop in the early years of the 14th century. Here, in 1312, Walter de Langeberewe, was the resident priest, answerable to Bishop Woodlock of Winchester.

Within three years of this date, a shipping disaster on this coast would transform the history of this minor hilltop chapel. In 1314, a French wine ship, the *Sainte Maria* from Bayonne, was driven on to the rocks of Atherfield Ledge. Here, the crew and a great number of wine casks were washed ashore. It was not long before the crew agreed to ameliorate their misfortune by opportunely selling the rescued cargo to a number of enthusiastic local worthies. The principal beneficiary was one *Walter Godeton*, who, apparently, at that time resided at Gotten Manor, at the foot of Chale Down.

When news of this dishonesty reaches France, a demand for reimbursement inevitably follows but an Island court soon prevaricates by concluding that the casks had all been bought by the locals in good faith. Eventually, *Walter Godeton* is required to pay for fifty-three casks. From this we might suspect that the share-out and the bribing of the sailors was perhaps his idea.

Unfortunately for Walter, storm clouds were still gathering. The cargo, it seems, had been Church property. This, Percy Stone attributes to a French monastic community that he cites at Livers in Picardie. This evidence, however, is based on verbal recollections of a lost document.

After further prevarication on Wight, a papal bull was apparently issued and Walter finds himself threatened with excommunication. In expiation, he is then required to build, above the scene of the disaster, an oratory chapel where a resident priest will, in future, maintain a light and pray for those lost at sea.

From a surviving letter from Bishop Stratford, dated 17 August 1328, we learn that Walter had, by then, completed his expiatory task. Whether this entailed the demolition or remodelling of the earlier *hermitorium* is a question that archaeology might, one day, pursue.

Architecture and archaeology

On the crest of St Catherine's Down, at a height of 236m, we may now admire a slender octagonal tower that is 10.6m high (fig. 1). A Tudor map, dated 1566, shows this structure attached to the west end of a small chapel or oratory (fig. 2). Today the outline of this lost building can be recognised amid grassy up-cast from an excavation once carried out by historian and architect, Percy Stone. The roof height of this lost building is clearly revealed by the gable scar on the east side of the tower. Below the scar we see upper and lower doorways (figs 1 & 4).

The upper door may have connected

with a priest's garret but unless he was resigned to the use of a ladder, it could hardly suit his everyday needs. This doorway could give access to no more than a cramped square shaft measuring just 4ft x 4ft.

At ground level, the lower doorway would simply lead to the same ladder. Here access could enable an operator to lower or replace a fire-basket, yet the risk of burning the ladder, or indeed oneself, would surely be high.

At this point we are prompted to consider whether the tower was designed to house something other than a bright blazing warning light for mariners. When we see that the ground floor doorway provided direct access from the chapel, the first consideration is surely a rope and a bell.

Was St Catherine's tower ever a lighthouse?

With little space and minor cramped apertures at its apex, it seems that St Catherine's Tower could never accommodate an effective warning light. Where the light chamber could only be reached by ladder, access would always be impeded by falling ash and soot.

Forged iron beacon baskets are well illustrated in some Tudor documents where they are shown in static positions atop poles and gantries. Here they could be reached or fed by way of ladders or a climbing pole fitted with rungs.

A practical alternative to a lighthouse tower was once the lever-light or swape. This comprised a cantilevered iron-shanked wooden pole that could be quickly raised and lowered when refuelling or replacing of the fire-basket was required. This design was much akin to a medieval ducking stool. Fixed beacon baskets were a further signalling device, although poorly suited to daily use.

What say the documents?

When we look to the primary historic sources relating to Walter Godeton's penitential project, we are prompted

towards some very different functions at St Catherine's Tower. Percy Stone tells us that the vital papal bull concerning the construction of this building was apparently once in the possession of Captain Dawes of Wydcombe (IW), but was lost after the captain's death. A loosely memorised version was subsequently relayed to him by the Reverend Robert Oliver. It is only on this uncorroborated account that the assumption of a lighthouse has been founded.

A shift in the title and definition of this tower is evident in 1796, when Charles Tomkins employs the term 'lighthouse' in his description of this building. Just fourteenth years earlier, Sir Richard Worsley, had used no other term than 'tower'.

On the Tudor map of 1566 (fig. 2) we see a clear representation of the oratory and its integral tower, while short distance to the north-east we are also shown two large conical beacon stacks. Both would be capable of raising a blaze far in excess of a stone-enshrined lantern or fire-basket.

Lights and towers for mariners

Medieval lighthouses at Calais and Coudouan are particularly interesting. The *Tour du Guet* is a 13th century structure rising 35m above the threshold of a gateway in Calais' city wall. Its tall upper stage and flat top was well suited to accommodate a flaming open brazier.

At Courdouan, at the mouth of the Gironde, a robust lighthouse (now replaced), the *Tour du Prince Noir* was erected sometime between 1362 and 1371. An engraving of c.1590 (fig. 3) shows a hexagonal tower with a broad flat parapet. This, again, befits a blazing brazier. At its base, a 'chapel of the Virgin Mary' was accompanied by a hermitage for the nightly tender of the tower and its rooftop beacon.

Dim light at the oratory

In 1975, our supposed 'lighthouse' on St Catherine's Down was described by Douglas Hague and Rosemary

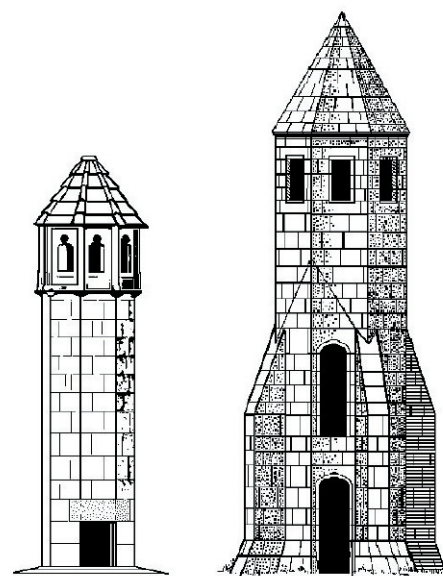


Fig 4. The lantern on the roof of the chapel of St Catherine at Fontevrault. (circa AD 1225-1245) and St Catherine's Tower, Isle of Wight

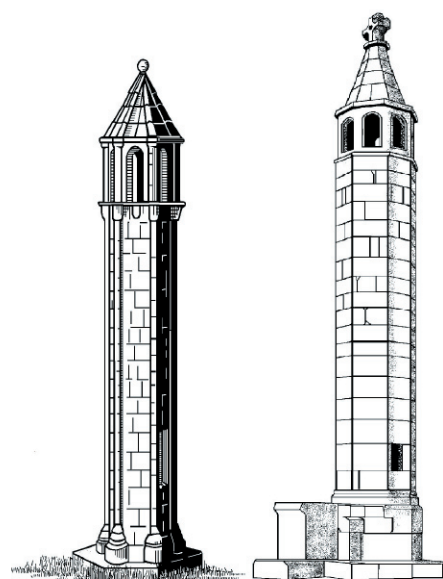


Fig. 5. The 12th century octagonal lanterns des morts at Saint Agnant-de-Versillat), Aquitaine (left) and Ouradour-Saint-Genest, Haute-Vienne (right). The heights are 8m & 8.6m.

Christie. They then suggested that its builder 'may have been familiar with the French *lanternes des morts*'. Although no suggestion was made that this might be the actual function of the tower, here was the starting point for this overdue review!

These 'lanterns of the dead' are best known in and around the old Angevin

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Empire of western France where they are mostly found in cemeteries and occasional wayside chapels. More can be found in Spain and Italy. None could offer effective illumination, yet their modest wavering flame might ever present a nightly statement of care, faith and hope.

In 1998 John Bate produced his valuable inventory of French *lanternes*, a ready source of architectural analogies. Since 2001, new work by Cecile Treffort in the 'land of lanternes' has produced further architectural and documentary information. Both sources prompt us to reconsider the function of our much-admired hilltop landmark.

Towers and lanterns in a Christian countryside

For towers displaying enclosed stone lanterns we now look to medieval France. An appealing comparison for Walter Godeton's tower is a medieval *lanterne* in the abbey town of Fontevrault. (Fig. 4) Although shorter than our Wight example, this octagonal edifice gained further height from its crowning position on the top of a substantial building that once served as a medieval kitchen. Later, when surrounded by the local cemetery, the entire structure was known as St Catherine's chapel; a choice of name that is certainly intriguing.

In the village of St Agnant-de-Versillat, and in the town of Ouradour-Saint-Genest, we find other lanterns with a particular likeness to our tower on Wight.

Tending the light

Although a few towers were fitted with internal steps, most lanterns show nothing more than simple slotted footholds. Presumably, these were needed when a problem occurred with the hook or the pulley in the roof of the tower. By means of a rope and chain, the lamp or fire-basket could be drawn up or down from a hatch at the base. Close to the hatch, a projecting tablette, or stone table was



Bee orchids at Quarr

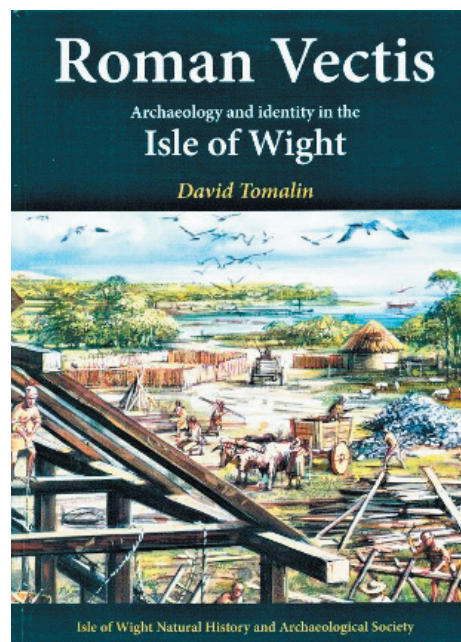
commonly provided for the changing or refuelling of the lamp (fig. 5).

When the Cluniac monk Pierre le Venerable visits some of these graveyard towers, around the year 1150, he records that—

at the centre of the cemetery there is a stone structure at the top of which there is a lamp with a light that illuminates this sacred place, as a sign of respect for the faithful that rest there. There is also a few degrees [rise] by which one reaches a platform where there is a space for two or three men to sit.

It seems that in 1218, a ruling by the General Chapter of the Cistercian

Order may have enlivened the construction of lanterns within the region of Aquitaine. It was in this year that the burning of lamps was forbidden on tombs. Here, perhaps, was cause to circumvent this unwelcome instruction by boosting the erection of towers housing a single lamp that could simply overlook an entire cemetery. Later, on St Catherine's Down, Walter's priest might make similar provision when maintaining a light and praying for those many anonymous souls lost in the vast seabed cemetery that is Wight's shipwreck coast.



NEW BOOK

Professor David Tomalin has been a friend of Quarr for many years, and his knowledge of Island archaeology of all periods is rivalled by few, if indeed, by any. It is with much pleasure that the Monastery Shop offers his new book for purchase. "Roman Vectis: Archaeology and Identity in the Isle of Wight" provides the fruit of much research, is wonderfully illustrated and leads us into some of the least known parts of the Island's history. The Hardback edition of the book retails at £39.50