

**Launceston Priory Activity Day, Saturday, 22nd July, 2017 – 10 am to 4 pm,
St Thomas's Hall, Newport, Launceston.**

Launceston Priory was founded in 1127 as a house of Augustinian Canons and consecrated in 1155. It owned land over a large area, and in common with other such priories and monasteries it was a seat of learning, healing and charity, and played a leading role in the civil life of the community. During those times the medieval Catholic Church played an important part in people's lives, and most of the older churches you see today including those at Launceston were built during this period. However, things were about to change.

On the continent of Europe a Protestant movement was underway including pockets of discontent in this country. However, the majority of this country remained Catholic. This was to change dramatically when the Pope refused Henry the Eighth a divorce, and this set off a chain of events which led to the English Reformation initially led by Henry and his advisors. During these events, the prior of Launceston was invited to Canterbury to discuss Henry the VIII's request for a divorce. A decision was made to dissolve the monasteries and either sell off or destroy their contents including their libraries and works of art. Thomas Cromwell, Henry's chief advisor oversaw the destruction of Launceston Priory in 1539, and many similar buildings. This had the benefits of providing money to the King as these institutions were wealthy especially with their land holdings, and once taken from the church Henry was able to give the buildings to his friends or those who supported his aims. By this means he was able to keep many rich and influential people on his side as well as gaining wealth for the nation. Unfortunately during those times the penalty for disagreeing with the monarch of any religious persuasion was usually the death penalty, and during this period much hardship was experienced by the people. The initial Reformation continued for three generations after which all memory of the old church had gone. However, the consequences of the Reformation lasted for many centuries.

Launceston Priory Activity Day is **Saturday, 22nd July 2017** and will be held between **10 am** and **4 pm** at St Thomas's Church Hall and the Priory. St Thomas's Church is in fact a chapel of the Priory, being the only survivor of three on the site. Guided tours, mini excavation boxes, cord winding, dressing up, medieval stained glass window making using card and paper tissue, written display of the life of the Launceston Canons and a video presentation and pictorial display of a typical monk's life will be free to view. Local experts Terry Faull and Arthur Wills will be on hand to answer questions. Entry is free along with free refreshments.

On **Wednesday, 19th July 2017**, a special open and free **ecumenical event** will take place focusing on St Gennys and consisting of members of various local churches to celebrate our shared heritage. People to meet at St Cuthbert Mayne Church, St Stephen's Hill at **7 pm** for a very short service, and then to gather in the car park. There will then be a pilgrimage walk to St Thomas's Church and the Priory via the Prior's Foot Bridge, and if good weather a half hour service will be held in the Priory ruins. If inclement weather it will be held in St Thomas's Church. Tea to be served after in St Thomas's Church Hall.

Geoff Provis.

Friends of Launceston Priory.