

Monastic Wales Activity

Tintern Abbey

1. A religious 'order' is a community of people who live according to the principles, beliefs and rules of their founder. Most orders are composed of both lay people and clergy. Tintern Abbey belonged to the Cistercian Order.
2. Tintern Abbey was founded by the Anglo-Norman magnate Walter fitz Richard (Clare), who was lord of Chepstow.
3. Tintern was the first Cistercian house to be founded in Wales. The fact that it was colonised by monks from L'Aumone (itself a daughter house of Citeaux) and within eight years had founded a daughter house in Gloucestershire, suggests that there may have been a 'missionary' motivation in its foundation.
4. Being sited near to the south coast of Wales made Tintern fairly accessible to its continental founders, enabling it to remain connected to Citeaux and L'Aumone. Most Cistercian monasteries are sited on or near major rivers, and Tintern's valley site provided a plentiful source of water. Cistercians favoured a humble, devout life, separated from temporal distractions, making the isolation of its situation attractive in offering protection both from worldly distractions and physical danger.
5. The only two events in the abbey's history recorded on the website are its foundations of two daughter houses. The first was in Kingswood, Gloucestershire in 1139 and the second in Tintern Parva in Ireland in 1200. Tintern was dissolved in 1536. The Abbey seems to have been fairly well shielded from violent events through history, probably explaining the relative intactness of its buildings today.