

Broadband offers bright future to Welsh monks

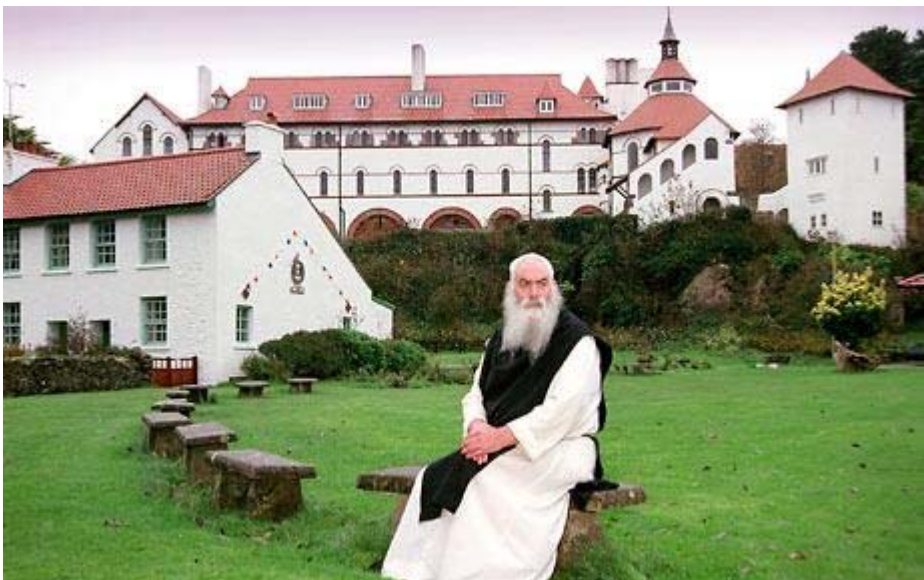
A community of monks on a remote Welsh island has entered the 21st century - by having wireless broadband installed.

By Laura Clout

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The 15 Cistercian monks, who live on Caldey Island, off the coast of Tenby in Pembrokeshire, organised the upgrade after becoming frustrated by their slow internet connection.

They hope the faster internet access will enable them to expand their mail order business, selling perfume and chocolate online to support their community.



The Cistercian Monastery, Caldey Island, West Wales Photo: CHRISTOPHER JONES

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Father Daniel, Abbot of Caldey Abbey, said: "Patience is one of the characteristics of monastic life, but even the patience of the brothers was being tested by our slow, dial-up internet service.

"We have many plans to develop our commercial activities now we have a modern, high-speed communications link."

Over the last five years, the monks internet shop has increased its turnover by 100 per cent, but the slow internet speed was hampering further growth of their business.

Father Daniel said that because the island is three miles off the coast, they had all but given up hope of finding a solution.

But with the help of a local telecommunications firm, the monastery now picks up a signal from a communications tower on the mainland to transmit wireless broadband.

Father Daniel added: "We knew we needed a faster connection, but we had almost given up trying to find a workable solution which would give us an internet connection at speeds enjoyed by others on the mainland.

"We have many plans to develop our commercial activities now we have a modern, high speed communications link," he said.

Caldey Island has been inhabited by monks since the 6th century, and the present order moved to the monastery from Scourmont Abbey in Belgium in 1929.

The wireless broadband service is being transmitted to a receiver at Caldey Abbey by TFL Group from its communications tower on the mainland.

Jonathan England, from TFL Group said: "We are absolutely delighted to have been able to provide the community at Caldey Abbey with state-of-the-art wireless broadband access."

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