

CORNU ASPERSUM

I'd like to introduce you to some friends of mine. Sometimes, on warm, wet mornings, when I walk from the back door of the Abbey round to the chapel I stop to watch the 'snail show'. Lots of the little creatures have crept up from their hiding places to enjoy their breakfast of leaves—and petals, swinging out from their shells to get from one leaf to the next, quite athletic. I like garden snails, I find their shell-less relatives, the slugs, less attractive.

Of course I have to maintain strictly snail-free zones in some areas, like the greenhouse, but sadly they don't read notices and find themselves moving at an unfamiliar speed to new pastures . . . or worse.

Having one's speed compared to that of a snail never seems to be a compliment, more an invitation to hurry up, But why? Is speed really such a virtue? I remember someone, I think it was Geoff Cowley, saying that he was driving a friend somewhere and said enthusiastically that taking this route would save ten minutes, his friend asked him what he was going to do with the ten minutes he had saved, he had no answer the question.

Mostly we do agree that dashing around etc. is not good for us, but, as when driving downhill on a motorway, we can easily find ourselves way over our speed limit—unless, of course, the traffic is moving at snail's pace.

Saint Benedict doesn't seem to have anything to say about the phenomenon of going faster and faster. He certainly wishes his monks to live a well-balanced life, and stipulates that those who need help with their work should get it—unlike many monasteries today, he seemed to have no shortage of monks.

Here at the Abbey we try our best not to get caught up in the rush, but circumstances can take over and it doesn't always work out as planned. What we can do is try to ensure that our worship in the chapel, the central part of our life, isn't rushed. As in music, silence in worship is as important as sound. We aim to begin the Work of God (our chapel services) in the right frame of mind by having a pause between what we were doing beforehand and the Work of God. In the chapel we have a pause between the psalms, after the readings, and at various other places in the liturgy. In our busy world, would that we could all put into practice the words of the Psalm: 'Be still and know that I am God'.

We have a notice outside the chapel saying: 'You are welcome to join us in worship'. It seems that snails do read that notice—as some of you will have noticed on our doors and windows, garden snails often do their best to get in and join us.



Sr Benedict, [Turvey Abbey](#)