

DOUAI ABBEY

NEWSLETTER

April 2009

No 34

Death of Fr Robert Richardson OSB

Fr Robert Richardson died in his ninety-seventh year during the night of January 8-9. He had resided for many years in the monastery infirmary, so his death should not have been unexpected, but as he had not shown any symptoms of being ill in recent years, and had not seen a doctor for over twelve months, his passing was a surprise. Over the past few years he had slowly faded away.

James Richardson had been born in Solihull in 1912, but his family moved to Coventry in 1917, where he came to know the Benedictines at St Osburg's parish. He came to Douai School in 1928 and entered the novitiate in 1931, solemnly professed in 1936, he was ordained priest in 1938.

His activities in the monastery were varied. He had founded the monastery printery in 1934; taught Maths and Chess in the school; during the 1939-45 war he joined the Civil Defence Rescue and also celebrated Mass in Aldermaston and Tadley for the airmen stationed at the bases there; later he lectured on the workings and morality of nuclear weapons



A photograph taken in the monastery calefactory on the occasion of Fr Robert's 70th anniversary of ordination, April 24, 2008.

In 1954 he began his parish ministry serving at Cheltenham, Coventry (twice), Alcester and Stratford-upon-Avon. He retired from parish life because of ill health in 1983, and took on a new lease of life in the monastery.

A full obituary will be published in the next issue of *The Douai Magazine*.◇

End of University Link *Stained Glass*

Early in March it was announced that owing to a severe cut in government funding, the School of Continuing Education at the University of Reading was to be closed at the end of the present academic year. This will bring to an end the courses which the school has organised in partnership with our Pastoral Programme since the year 2000. Each term we have held dayschools at Douai organised jointly with the University on a number of monastic, historical, biblical and literary topics, and members of the community have given a number of short (one term) courses at the University.

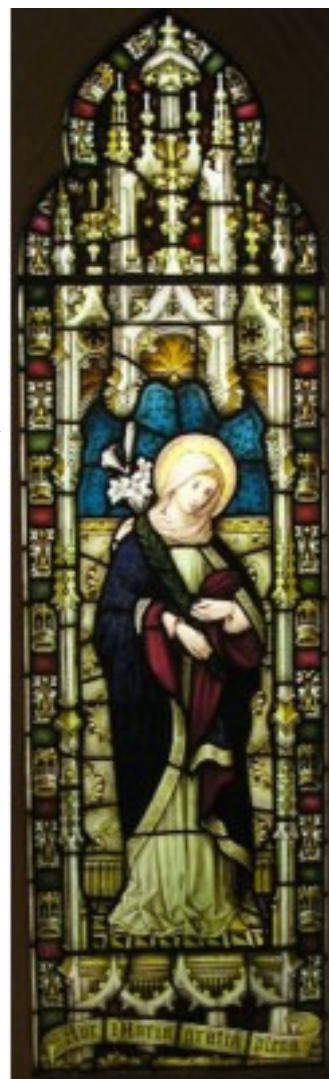
The courses planned for next term will be held as arranged: 'Introduction to the Prophets' at the University London Road campus beginning on April 21, and a dayschool at Douai on Saturday May 17 entitled 'Monasticism and the French Revolution' to be given by Fr Abbot. These courses must be booked as hitherto at the University.

On Saturday February 21 a well attended dayschool, organised by the University in conjunction with the *Pastoral Programme* had taken place in the Bl Hugh Faringdon Conference Centre on 'Christian poetry' given by Dr Myra Cottingham of the University and Fr Oliver.

Rather than abandon this worthwhile project altogether, we are planning to organise dayschools ourselves, in the hope that the support which the joint ventures have enjoyed in the past will continue. These will begin with a course on 'St Paul's Letter to the Romans' on October 24, a topic which it had been intended to cover during a ten-week course at the University. ◇

In March a stained glass window was placed in the Alban Roe wing of the guesthouse. It came from the demolished church of St Mary & St Peter in St Helier, Jersey. It was given to us by the parish priest of St Helier, Canon Nick France, an erstwhile pupil of Douai School. It portrays the Blessed Virgin holding a lily.

Also a series of photographs has been exhibited on the wall of the landing at the top of the guesthouse stairs. They were taken by Alexander Lavarello who has recently been travelling with his camera in Spain, Chile and Peru. Alexander's father, Andrew, had been a pupil at Douai School, and a grant was made toward the expenses of the trip by the Douai Society, using a fund at their disposal, which was made up of money remaining from a prize fund, when the school closed.◇



Future Dates

Apr 25 Reading Bach Choir
May 9 Day of Recollection
May 22 Joyful Company of Singers
May 31 Organ Recital
June 21 Basingstoke Choral Society
June 27 Newbury Choral Society (Haydn's Creation)
July 18 Healing Families
July 20 - 24 IGR
July 24 - 26 Transitions Retreat
Aug 28 - 31 IGR
Sept 5 Day of Recollection
Sept 18 - 20 Healing Grief
Sept 25 - 27 To God through music Retreat ◇

St John Passion

Holy Week opened fittingly with a fine performance of Bach's St John's Passion in the Abbey Church, given by Vox Cordis in aid of the Charlie Waller Memorial Fund.◇

Internet Forum

A new forum for all interested in things Benedictine and monastic is online at: www.benedictineforum.org.uk

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Retreats, Courses and Quiet Days

Since the beginning of the year the guesthouse has been busier than ever. Apart from our own *Pastoral Programme* events, we have hosted, amongst others, a three-day *Spiritual Directors' Course*, a training course *Post of first Responsibility* for the Anglican Diocese of Oxford, a planning meeting for the Bishop of Ely and his staff, a training day for new and acting head teachers for West Berkshire, a planning meeting for the Abbot and staff of St Benedict's School, Ealing, a celibacy workshop for students from Womersley Seminary, meetings for Churches-Together-in-Basingstoke, a psycho-therapy course and retreats for the *Fraternity of St Peter*, *Notre Dame de Vie*, and the Anglican parish of St Luke and Christchurch, Chelsea.

Fr Abbot and Fr Oliver gave a four-day retreat to the Knights of Malta, including the Grand Master himself, who processed into Mass in their robes on the Sunday, and sat in the sanctuary. Quiet Days for Bracknell Anglican parish, the confirmation candidates from Beaconsfield and Bourne End and Wycliffe Baptist Church, Reading have taken place here. Days of Recollection have been given to Goring Catholic parish by Fr Hugh and the Catholic Women's League from Marlow, Catenians and the Union of Catholic Mothers from Wokingham by Fr Gervase. We have given residential retreats to *Teams of Our Lady* from Fareham, St Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, and catechists from the Diocese of Northampton. ◇

Library

Contractors are due on site to begin building on April 27. A Preliminary task has taken place in cutting down a flowering tree at the end of the cemetery before birds began nesting. Unfortunately this tree was the one which Abbot Sylvester Mooney planted on his hundredth birthday in 1986, but we do intend to replace it.

Surveyors have been on site taking preliminary measurements, and towards the end of March Fr Abbot ceremonially dug the first sod, in the presence of the architect's team.

The plan to use clay for walls has been abandoned, as the government does not consider the technology suffi-

ciently proven to give a grant. It has, however, authorised a grant for ground-source heating. So the large quantity of clay which we dug in the meadow at the end of last year will not be used after all, and will have to be replaced in the pit which was left and which is gradually filling with water.

In future editions we shall report on progress. ◇



Community Notes

Change of Prior

At a meeting of the Council of Seniors following the annual Conventual Chapter on February 19, Fr Bernard Swinhoe was appointed claustral prior in succession to Fr Boniface Moran. Fr Bernard had been prior previously between 1990 and 1999. Fr Boniface has gone as Assistant to Ormskirk, Lancs, where he replaces Fr Benjamin Standish who has returned to the monastery, and been appointed Assistant Guestmaster.

Fr Alexander

has completed the Maryvale 'Diploma in Art, Beauty and Inspiration in a Catholic Perspective' with first class honours.

He also visited the Holy Land last August on an In-service Training Scripture pilgrimage with priests of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. In September he visited Norcia.

Fr Paul

has been appointed a Consultant to the Office of the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff.

Fr Peter

After Easter Fr Peter will be leading sessions of *Lectio Divina* based on the writings of St Paul, on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month at *Maison Saint Benoît*, 94 rue des Blanc Mouchons, Douai,

(France) Tel: 03 27 97 17 02, e-mail: maisonstbenoit@gmail.com. No need to book. Fr Peter was interviewed by the *Croix du Nord* newspaper on St Paul.

Novices

Stephen Wilson was clothed as Br Gabriel on January 8. He was born in Queensbury, Middlesex in 1964 and grew up in Harrow, North London. He first visited Douai in 1984 when he was a student at Liverpool Hope University, in company with a fellow student, who is now Fr Alban, his novice master! He was a member of the Worth Abbey Lay Community for six months and spent two years as a seminarian for the Westminster diocese, before deciding that he was called to teach. He qualified at the Roehampton Institute and taught in secondary schools in Watford and Stevenage. He became head of the English Department. As an Advanced Skills Teacher he mentored trainee teachers and acted as an advisor to schools on improving standards. His family home is now in Waterlooville, Hants. A desire for the religious life led him to visit Douai more often recently.

Crucifix

Fr Oliver and the novices drove a van at the end of

March to Lewes, Sussex, to fetch a large outdoor wooden crucifix which has been given to us by the Canonesses Regular of St Augustine of Windesheim. It had stood in the grounds of their former priories at Sayers Common and Haywards Heath, but was too big for their present home. We hope to erect it in our grounds to form a calvary shrine when we have obtained planning permission.

Abbot of Solesmes

During February we were delighted to welcome the abbot of Solesmes, Dom Philippe Dupont, for a short visit. He came to thank us for the loan of Fr Finbar to Quarr. He visited Oxford with Abbot Geoffrey and addressed the community on February 12 about the work of Solesmes.

Vocations Retreat

We are holding a Vocations Retreat May 1 - 4.

If you think you might have a call to the monastic life please contact the Vocations Director, Fr Hugh. at Douai Abbey.

hughosb@googlemail.com ◇

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