



The frame of the monastic refectory was erected in October: through it the end of the existing monastery south block can be seen. The wall in the centre will be the division between monastery property and the housing development. In the foreground can be seen the roof of the underground carpark, and houses under construction lie beyond on the site of the school science block. The photo was taken from the top of the 'Ark' building.

A lot has happened since our last issue. Work is progressing visibly every day on the monastery. During October the link between the Conference Centre and the monastery cloister was re-opened for use, so that we no longer have to go through the church and the garden to reach the monastery from the refectory: at first it was open to the elements, but gradually the walls and roof have been built.



The 'folly' under erection.

At the beginning of November we vacated our refectory and kitchen in order to allow the developer to proceed with work in these areas ahead of the planned schedule. We had used the refectory since early in 1945. Although the room had been designed as a refectory when it was built in 1916, it had

been used as library and calefactory until the fire of 1942, the monks sharing the boys' refectory. *The Douai Magazine* for 1945 reports that the monks had started using it as a refectory, but its decoration had to wait until several years after the war. The coats of arms on the eight shields and the ceiling decoration were only completed in 1955. The arms are our current and former ones, and those of Bury St Edmunds, from whom we took our patron, Reading Abbey and those of the four Cathedral Pories of which we

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Maison St Benoit established



The Maison St-Benoit, Douai, France

After Vespers on All Saints Day the community prayed for Fr Finbar and Fr Peter who were to depart next morning to make our foundation in France. After the antiphon: *“May the Almighty and merciful God direct us in the way of peace and prosperity. May the Archangel Raphael accompany us on our journey so that we may give and receive peace and joy and come to know God’s saving power,”* the *Nunc Dimittis* was sung and the ceremony ended with the collect: *“God our Father, you made a dry path through the sea for the children of Israel, and showed the way to the Magi by a guiding star, grant to your servants, our brothers, a safe journey and a fruitful ministry in that same place whose townsfolk welcomed our fathers and provided them with a home.”*

Early next morning, Frs Finbar and Peter were driven over to France by Fr John in a hired van, together with their earthly goods. On arrival at the presbytery, the parish clergy took them straight to the chapel to give thanks for their safe arrival, after which they were given lunch.

Unfortunately the workmen had not completed the work on the monastery building, so for several days the community lodged with the sisters of La Sainte Union. It was not until November 12 that they were able to move into the monastery.

The community is living on the top floor. A chapel has been set up on the ground floor and Mass was celebrated there for the first time on St Edmund’s Day. Lauds and Vespers are celebrated daily in French.

The local people have been most obliging in assisting in cleaning, painting, driving the monks to various out-of-town shopping malls in order to buy furniture and kitchen equipment, and in many other ways. For the first few weeks the only cooking facility has been a microwave so one meal a day was eaten in a local restaurant.

A group of monks and the school choir from Downside Abbey visited the town to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the establishment of St Gregory’s community in Douai. That community had occupied before the French Revolution the monastery buildings, which we took over in 1818.

We are grateful to the many people who have donated to the appeal or who have given objects for the monastery. Our neighbour, Marie Endean, for instance gave a beautiful alabaster bust of St Joan of Arc.

The formal opening by the Archbishop of Cambrai will take place on February 5. A full account of this and the little community’s early days will appear in the next issue of *The Douai Magazine*. ◊



The alabaster bust of St Joan of Arc given by Marie Endean for the Maison-St-Benoit.

Sing for the Homeless *Recent Deaths*

The sixth 'Sing for the Homeless' concert in aid of the Cardinal Hume Centre Trust took place on November 19. The programme consisted of Haydn's 'Nelson Mass' and Handel's 'Ode on St Cecilia's Day'. About 300 singers took part including members of Southampton, Fulham & Hammersmith, Pangbourne and Waynfleet Choral Societies, St Paul's church, Tadley and our own Douai Singers. The conductor was Dr Christopher Robinson, recently retired from St John's College, Cambridge. The audience numbered about 200, rather fewer than on previous occasions. The total raised for the trust was £6,300.

During the interval, Cathy Corcoran, Director of the Cardinal Hume Centre, spoke of the work that the Centre which is now in its twenty-first year. At the end of her address she challenged the audience: whenever you come across homeless people, speak to them, ask their names, tell them yours. They are people not statistics, and more than anything else they need recognition and human fellowship. It was appropriate that the Gospel next day was the parable of the Sheep and the Goats.△

Building Progress continued from page 1

had the right of nomination at that time, Winchester, Gloucester, Ely and Peterborough. The stained glass fragments in the great east window were from bombed churches in France, collected and assembled by a Woolhampton parishioner. As a temporary measure, refectories and kitchen have been set up in portacabins north of the Abbey church. The large montage photograph of the old cloister behind which they are hidden was a condition of the planning authority, and has led some to name the place 'the folly'.△



The houses on the site on the former laboratories and the Art Department.

Peter Farmer OD

We were sad to learn of the death of Peter Farmer on August 23. He had been a frequent visitor to Douai over the years, and was the only person who sang in the choir at both openings of the Abbey Church: in 1933 he was a treble in the choir conducted by Fr Aloysius Bloor OSB, and he sang again when the completed church was consecrated in 1993.

During the address at his funeral in Southwark Cathedral, his brother David said, "... His was the life of a diocesan priest who was also a good musician. I say 'priest' first and 'musician' second; if he were here today I am sure he would agree with this. Peter could have been a full-time soloist entertaining many by his skilful organ playing, but he used his musical gifts for the glory of God and the highest attainable standards in the liturgy. This was realised in his choir-training not only at Southwark Cathedral, but also in the parishes in which he served. At South Norwood, for example, his choir of 20 boys and 12 adults was especially successful...".

Fr Desmond Schlegel OSB

Although a monk of Quarr Abbey in the Isle of Wight, Fr Desmond, who died recently, had served for many years in our erstwhile parish of St David's Swansea. He was there in the days before and during the 2nd Vatican Council and his care for the celebration of the liturgy made St David's a model, not only of how liturgy should be celebrated, but also of good adaptation of a Victorian church to modern usage. St David's had been heavily damaged in the bombing was turned to its liturgical advantage. Where other churches had been restored to the state they were in before the blitz, St David's was prepared for celebration facing the people, with a separate Blessed Sacrament Chapel even before the Council. In this Fr Desmond worked happily with his far-sighted parish priest, Fr John Grimbaldeston OSB.

Anne Arkwright

Fr Leo's sister, Anne, died after a long period of ill health on November 27. We offer him our condolences and request prayers for her.△

Community Notes

Retirement of Fr Romuald

Poppy Dixon writes: "On August 27 about 70 parishioners from all four areas of Douai parish, gathered at St Luke's Theale, to wish Fr Romuald well for his retirement. Fr Romuald and Fr Benedict concelebrated the 5.30pm Mass, after which St Luke's hosted a buffet supper in the Kirby Room. Food for the celebration, including a retirement cake, was contributed from different parts of the parish. During the evening Fr Romuald was thanked for the extra working years of devoted service he has given to our parish. He received a card signed by many parishioners and was presented with a cheque for £1,109 as a mark of our affection and gratitude, with best wishes for a long and happy retirement. It was an occasion when the whole parish came together and which we all able to enjoy with Fr Romuald, getting to know each other better in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere."

Fr Francis

has gained an MA in Canon Law from Heythrop College, University of London.

Fr Szczepan Sztuka OSB

who had spent a year with us while studying Newman at Oxford, returned to his monastery of Tyniec in Poland on August 1.

New Appointments

A number of new appointments have taken place. On September 1 Fr Benedict Thompson became parish priest of Woolhampton in succession to Fr Romuald Simpson who has become Subprior in place of Fr Bernard Swinhoe. On September 30 Fr Richard Jones became parish priest of Alcester, Warwickshire, in succession to Fr Boniface Moran who has returned to the monastery. Fr Richard had been administrator of the parish of Broadway, Worcester-shire, on behalf of the diocese of

Birmingham. Fr Boniface now says Sunday Mass at Winchester College. Br Simon Hill has been appointed Abbey church administrator in succession to Fr Oliver. Br Christopher will take over Guestmaster administration in succession to Fr Bernard, effective from January. Sadly, ill health has made Fr Francis resign all his assignments, to allow him to go away to recuperate. Fr Boniface has been appointed Prior and Fr Nicholas has taken over as Junior Master.

Church Cleaning

On September 5 all the resident community were engaged in giving the Abbey church a thorough clean. It is intended that this should be an annual event. Br Simon is responsible for the day by day cleaning and maintenance of the church.

University of Reading

Our link with the University continues. This term several of us have given a course on *Christianity Today*. On October 29 Fr Abbot and Fr Bernard gave a most successful Dayschool for the University of Reading in our Conference Centre, on the topic of the Lindisfarne Gospels. The event was over-subscribed. Next term Fr Gervase will give a course *Introduction to Biblical Studies* and on February 11 there will be a Dayschool at Douai entitled: *What is Benedictine Spirituality?*

Talks & Retreats

Br Placid gave a Day of Recollection for the parish of Our Lady of Peace, Burnham, Bucks, in the Conference Centre. Both Fr Nicholas and Fr Gervase led retreats for groups of *Sisters of Jesus & Mary* at Felixstowe. Fr Gervase also gave a talk on *Benedictine Music Past and Present* in the Silverman Room at Reading Town Hall on October 22 for *The Friends of Reading Abbey* of which Br Placid has

been elected a committee member. Fr Nicholas gave another retreat at Langport, Somerset, for *Le Chemin Neuf*.

Fr Dermot has spoken on the application of the Rule of St Benedict for workplace spirituality at Bonnington, Kent; on its teaching on the spiritual qualities of leadership at the *Monos* conference held at Mount St Bernard Abbey in Leicestershire. He led a workshop to explore issues about work-life balance, for a group of graduates from *IESE*, the European business school based in Barcelona, Spain, who came to Douai. This visit was reported in the *Independent* MBA education supplement. On August 3 he gave a talk on developing spiritual awareness in organisations to a group of women executives and entrepreneurs belonging to *Network North* in Manchester. In September, at the invitation of its owner, M Robert Ouimet, Fr Dermot made a visit to the Tomasso Corporation in Montreal, Canada, to see first-hand how a business can be run using the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and at the same time expand and be profitable. In October he spoke on the relevance of Benedictine Spirituality to new forms of community to 70 delegates at a conference entitled *Building Bridges of Hope* organised by *Churches Together in Great Britain and Ireland*. More recently he facilitated a workshop focused on *Finding Personal Wholeness in the Changing World of Work* for the *St Paul's Institute* at St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London. Fr Dermot led a *Cursillo* at Cold Ash Centre and facilitated a meeting of the Regional Leadership Team of the *Daughters of Mary & Joseph*. ▢

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