

## Br Simon Hill makes Solemn Profession

**O**n the morning of Tuesday January 24 at the Conventual Mass Br Simon Hill made his Solemn Profession.



The Mass was followed by the community having a celebratory cooked breakfast, including prize-winning black puddings brought especially from Rochdale. This is the first time we can remember celebrating a profession in this way.

Br Simon hails from Rochdale in Lancashire. He has a B.Sc (hons) in Economics from the University of London, an M.A. in Marketing from the University of Lancaster, and a D.M.S. (Postgraduate Diploma in Management Studies) from the Scottish Business School of Glasgow University. He is a Qualified Training Officer of Huddesfield Polytechnic, a Chartered Member of the Institute of Marketing (M.C.I.M.) and a Member of the Institute of Management (M.I.M.G.T.). He pursued a successful career in industry, Management Consultancy and latterly as Personal Business Advisor to firms in the small and medium-sized sector, whilst caring and providing for his elderly parents. After they had died he first tried his vocation at Fort Augustus Abbey in Scotland and was a postulant there until it closed. Following a period of reflection, he visited several monasteries before opting to join Douai.

Br Simon arrived as a postulant in September 1999 and became a novice the following January, making his first profession in January 2001. He spent most of 2004 discerning the possibility of a vocation as a Cistercian at Nunraw Abbey in Scotland, but returned to Douai at the end of November that year.

Since returning to Douai, Br Simon has been assigned to the bursar's office as assistant, and given responsibility for the abbey cars and for shopping. He is also administrator of the Abbey Church, and is responsible for its upkeep and cleaning, and is the assistant manager of the bookshop. △

*About profession from the Rule of St Benedict*

"The novice writes out this document himself (the profession chart) ... and with his own hand he lays it on the altar ... he begins the verse 'Receive me Lord as you have promised, and I shall live, do not disappoint me in my hope' RB 58:20-21.

**Douai Abbey Newsletter**



## Our new buildings make progress

The early weeks of this year have seen good progress with the building construction. Bricklayers have been active, concrete floors have been laid, and more recently heating engineers and electricians have been at work.



*The section of cloister and print room being demolished to make room for the service road and to separate the properties.*

In January the section of cloister between the 'Ark' and the monastery entrance area, including the print room, were demolished to make way for a new route by which deliveries will reach the kitchen and emergency services will be able to get to the monastery. A wall has been built from the east end of the 'Ark' to mark the division of the properties.

The new refectories stand to the south of the existing cloister, so that the oak tree, which is all that remains of the hedge bordering the original Beenham path and, which was a small sapling when the monks arrived in 1903, will be in a quadrangle formed by the existing cloister on the north, the monastic refectory on the south, the guest refectory on the west (where the bursary, and later the monastic infirmary, used to be), and on the east side there will be new conference rooms and a quiet chapel available to guests for prayer and meditation.

The scheme includes several enclosed garden areas, for some of which the architect has planned water features.

The official opening and blessing of the new buildings has been planned for Saturday September 30 2006.

### Hospitality

St Benedict teaches that "guests will never be lacking in a monastery" (RB 53:4), and "all guests are to be received as Christ" (RB 53:1). Hospitality is going to have a much greater profile in our future development. It is destined to become a major apostolate. In a society which is more and more individualistic and where people are becoming increasingly stressed by the pace of life and work, more and more people are going to monasteries for periods of quiet and prayer, as well as for organised retreats. Monastic hospitality is rooted in stability. We wish to offer our guests the opportunity to take time out for prayer and silence. Monks will be available to speak with guests and offer guidance and spiritual direction when requested.

Most of the groups who come for retreats have more ladies than men. For example, each year we have a group of young business people and



*The frame for the new guest refectory. Behind can be seen the oak tree, which has been carefully preserved.*

students who come under the leadership of *Notre Dame de Vie*, and another group who are associated with the church of St Mary Moorfield in the city of London. Recently we hosted a group of young Quakers. Until now we have been limited by only having seven rooms available for ladies. When the new building is opened there will be four more twin-bedded *en-suite* rooms which will be accessible for wheelchairs, as a lift is to be installed. Ongoing work will entail the gradual moving of the monks from the south to the north block. The south block will then become available for guests, so that eventually there will be another dozen or so



*The new monastic refectory rises behind the oak tree; on the left will be the new conference rooms and guest chapel.*

rooms. There will be new direct access routes from the monastery front door, and from the church.

The *Pastoral Programme* will also benefit, since often we have had to limit the number of ladies attending events, or some have had to lodge locally.

Although hospitality is integral to monastic life, certain members of the community are entrusted with the direct care of guests. It is essential that the community preserves its boundaries, otherwise there is a danger that we could destroy the very thing guests seek when coming to the monastery. Monastics are called to receive all guests as Christ without exception. Yet monks have to

be faithful to their vocation to a contemplative lifestyle set apart from the world. This is a challenge: if there were no boundaries, monastic life would be threatened. Benedict has the wisdom to add some protective measures in setting up the structures in his monastery. (RB 53:16-24). Someone is appointed to take care of the food needs of guests (RB 53:21-22), and a porter who is gentle, wise and filled with the fear of the Lord is to greet them at the door (RB 66:1-5).

A monastery is not a hotel, There are a variety of reasons guests come to a monastery. For all, there must be some inner urge to experience or search for God. Some come for half an hour to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, celebrate the Eucharist, or simply have half an hour of quiet prayer or solitude. Each person must be respected for whatever reason he or she comes. All come to find peace and balance for their life, to be nourished or enriched in mind and spirit, but all are to be welcomed as Christ. Nearly all our guests share in the community prayer; they appreciate that there is always a monk to guide them, and frequently easy-to-use booklets are provided.

Silence and solitude are other reasons. The world today gives us an overload of television and amplified sound. The monastic guest is seeking a surrounding of silence and the space to find God in the monastery, and in the fields and woods round about.△

## Visit by the Choir of Leeds Cathedral

On Sunday February 5 whilst many of the community were away in France, we were delighted to have one of the choirs of Leeds Cathedral sing at Mass. They sang a *Missa Brevis* by Mozart, and motets by Byrd and Stanford. They stayed the weekend with us and on the Saturday afternoon they went to sing Vespers with the monks at Farnborough Abbey.

At present Leeds Cathedral is being re-ordered, so the choir is temporally homeless. We say one of the choirs, for they have four. It was good to learn that when the Cathedral is re-opened at Christmas, they intend to have daily sung Mass.

Sadly many people, misunderstanding the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, are under the impression that there is no place for Choral music in the liturgy. Nothing can be further from the truth, as the writings of Pope Benedict XVI show us. He teaches us that through the choir's singing "everyone can be led into the great liturgy of the communion of saints and thus into the kind of praying which leads us to the heavenly Jerusalem". (A New Song for the Lord page 140).

We are blessed with having choral music provided by our own Douai Singers once a month and on festivals. Thus it is good that we are able to help maintain this part of genuine Catholic tradition and liturgical spirituality. △

## Community Notes

### Appointments

Fr Francis Hughes OSB had to resign all his offices at the beginning of Advent owing to ill health. He went to recuperate first at Stratford and then in Ireland. He is gradually regaining his strength and is at present in the parish of Kemerton assisting Fr Timothy Kelly OSB, who has dislocated his shoulder.

Fr Boniface Moran OSB took on the office of Prior, as well as becoming assistant Oblate Director and member of the advisory committee for *The Douai Magazine*. Fr Nicholas Broadbridge OSB has taken over the role of Junior Master.

### Election of the Abbot

In the English Congregation abbots are elected for eight years, so we are due to have an election this year. By coincidence it will occur on Tuesday July 25, just a hundred and one years to the day since the election of Abbot Stanislaus Taylor (see *The Douai Magazine* page 16). As the community enters a period of discernment of God's will for the future, we invite all our friends to join us in prayer for this most important event.

Among groups making day visits to the Abbey have been the Reading Anglican Deanery, the leadership team from All Saints, Bracknell, the staff of Livingstones Christian Bookshop from Fleet, the Waverley group, the Anglican ordinands from Ripon-Cuddesdon College, Oxford and a staff group from Boehringer Ingelheim.

### Statue for Maison St-Benoît

The official opening of the Maison St-Benoît in Douai, France has been described in detail in

*The Douai Magazine*. A few weeks afterwards a carved wooden statue of St Benedict, wearing the English Benedictine habit has been sent to the foundation. It is by the Tyrolese carver, Ferdinand Stuflesser, whose work can be seen in Ealing and Downside Abbeys, as well as in many churches in



Germany and Poland. Originally the statue was in our church of St Augustine in Liverpool, now demolished. When that church was closed the statue was lodged in the presbytery at Ormskirk..

### Former School site

Bewley Homes plc. are making good progress with their development. Recent work has been on the 'Ark', which has been enclosed with scaffolding for several months. The garden on the roof of the underground car park has been planted and many of the new houses have



*A view of the houses, now visible over our new garden wall. These are standing where the school art block (formerly laboratories) used to be.*

been completed. Some of the flats have already been occupied, so our new neighbours are moving in.

### Dayschool on Benedictine Spirituality.

A dayschool organised jointly with the University of Reading on *Benedictine Spirituality* had a capacity audience. It was given by Frs Gervase, Dermot and Christopher.

### Refurbishment

Much essential work is being done in the existing monastery at the present time. Both monastery blocks have had to have new roofs, and the whole of the electrical wiring is being replaced. This work involves installing new skirting boards in all the rooms, so the cloister has been turned into a workshop where long lengths of skirting board are being painted by as many members of the community as can be persuaded to volunteer. New fire alarms are to be fitted as well.

### Fr Alban

Fr Alban Hood OSB has completed his doctoral thesis on English Benedictine History, 1795 - 1850, for the University of Liverpool. An article describing some of the research involved appears in *The Douai Magazine*. ◊