

## Nunraw Newsletter, Christmas 2016

It is sometimes embarrassing to read over what was promised even in the short span of a year. That is exactly what happened in our Newsletter for last Christmas. I was over optimistic then in saying that work on the new guest rooms would begin in January 2016. It is now nearly a full calendar year gone by and not a proverbial stone has yet been laid. To be fair to the architects, they have had many unforeseen obstacles to deal with: various engineers to satisfy, health and safety people to consult, building plans to be altered before being finally passed by the planning department at the local council.

At the time of writing, there will be a final meeting with the architects and project manager before Christmas regarding quotes and furnishings. At the risk of having more egg on our face, we have been told that the work on the renovations should start in late January or early February. We are considering hiring a Portacabin to allow us receive day visitors and serve as a shop until the guest rooms are ready for use.

A new but smallish building will have to be erected to accommodate a Reception area, Tea Room, shop and public toilets. The renovated guest wing doesn't have enough space to cater for these. This building will be situated alongside the present bare wall between the reception room and the Church. This will add a new and, we hope, a more pleasing appearance to the approach to the abbey.

One other change we are planning is a new website and new email addresses. The old ones will continue to function for a period after the changeover to make sure there is no breakdown in our communications. We expect to make this change early in 2017.

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In spite of this past year being a busy one in many ways, not a great deal stands out in the memory. One memorable celebration, however, was the 750th anniversary of the birth of Blessed John Duns Scotus who was born in the town of Duns, just 18 miles from Nunraw.

A Committee set up in the town to celebrate the anniversary and a series of events was organised and spread over a six-week period. It dealt specifically with the life and teaching of John Duns, and there were other varied functions across a spectrum of interest such as concerts, talks on the history and culture in and around the town itself.

During the six weeks there was a small but excellent exhibition of the life and times of John Duns Scotus on display in the Duns Library. A few of us from Nunraw attended the introductory talk. The organisers had to get extra chairs when an unexpected 200 people turned up for it, some from as far away as Glasgow. A week later, a film, 'The Blessed Duns Scotus' was shown. It was in Italian but with good English subtitles. The chairman of the Committee introduced it by asking the question, 'How many people from Duns has had a film made of their lives in Italian and been given the Vatican award for the best film of the year in this category?' The film was excellent, showing the human side of the man and his holiness and cleverly showed how he taught his students how to think clearly.

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Besides the Mass, celebrated on the final day of the anniversary, there was a study day with academics, experts and locals who gathered to hear a series of papers and discussions on the life, theology and significance of John Duns Scotus. Guest speakers come from across Scotland, England, Germany and the United States.

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As many people know, John Duns Scotus, emphasised the priority of will over intellect and love over mind. This has influenced Franciscan theology and the lives of those attracted by the life of St Francis. There is a certain affinity between the spirituality of Cistercians and Franciscans. The early Cistercian writers, 12<sup>th</sup> century, followed a more affective than a cerebral approach in their understanding of the things of God. Their vocation emphasised the humanity of Christ and the love God has for all of creation. They wrote about what they lived and especially of the One they loved in a style that moved hearts as much as, or more than, the mind.

Aelred of Rievaulx, for example, wrote in his Mirror of Charity, (Book 1.19) "Love alone is God's unchangeable and eternal rest . . . God's love is his very will and his very goodness; all this is . . . his very being."

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This may seem to be getting into rather 'heavy stuff' for a Christmas Newsletter, but it lies at the very foundation of what our Christmas celebration is about. God's triune love comes to earth in a small bundle of flesh that we can see, love and grasp to our hearts.

The crib is a visual theology for all to see and understand. It begins there for us and it leads us onward into the rest of life's journey.

*May this message of love and prayer go out  
to all our friends this Christmas  
& throughout the New Year that lies ahead of us.*

*From all the Community at Nunraw.*

Melanie  
+ Ronald  
Leonard



Thomas  
Kent'yeon  
St Anus.

Jr Brendan Mark  
(Nivard)

Patrick  
Furley  
Raymond  
Hugh. Aelred