



Pluscarden Abbey

Dear friends,

In 1948 five monks arrived from Prinknash Abbey to begin the work of restoring Pluscarden. Their first task was to make the ruins habitable. They were restorers, not just of buildings, but of a way of life. Their purpose was to establish here a community that would have the same objectives and the same methods as the monks who lived here from the 13th to the 16th Centuries.

It was not a restoration in the sense of simply recreating what had been here before, as if the centuries of abandonment from the 16th to the 20th had not been. The medieval buildings, like the community that inhabited them, had never been static. Succeeding generations of monks built onto and adapted the work of those who went before. The modern community would do the same. The restored Pluscarden would be in visible and spiritual continuity with medieval Pluscarden, and a monastery in and for its own time. Visitors today can see in the Abbey's stones the work of the ancient monks, and hear an echo of them in the plainchant they hear in the Abbey Church, but the monks at Pluscarden now, like all those who lived here before, live with attention to the present moment.

Visitors to the Abbey often say they experience peace in this place. Where does the peace come from? From the natural beauty and quiet of the valley; from its history, the prayers offered here, the presence of long dead monks who live to God and therefore, unseen, to us; and from what is done here now. Not, to be sure, from any special virtue of the human beings who make up the monastic community, but from God's being worshipped and Christ's being sought here.

The buildings here preserve a precious inheritance from the past, and serve what is done here now. Neither are for the monks alone. The buildings, and the community residing in them, are for all who come here in quest of peace. Benedictine monasteries, while oriented primarily towards divine worship, have always been places of hospitality. Monasteries welcome guests who wish to reside for a while under the monastic roof, and visitors who come for the day. A Benedictine monastery without a guest house and without hospitality would be lacking an essential element.

Our present project, to enlarge and enhance the hospitality we offer to guests and visitors, is in continuity with and essentially completes the work of restoration begun in 1948. It will complete the quadrangle of monastic buildings, allow women guests closer proximity to the daily round of worship, and improve the facilities offered to all guests and visitors, including access to our library. The project is a complex and challenging one, given the need to harmonise the new with the old and to extend hospitality without compromising the quiet and peace that draw people here. We undertake it from a sense of fidelity to those who went before us and responsibility to those who will come here after us. We are most grateful to all of you who support us in this.

Yours devotedly,

+Anselm Atkinson OSB
Abbot of Pluscarden