

# FISHER HOUSE NEWSLETTER 2010



*Photo: Nicholas Lash*

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## Chaplain's Message

The academical year just ended has offered much to remind us of the important role Fisher House plays in the lives of Catholic members of the University. Numbers registering rose yet again, along with Mass attendances throughout the year. There are now four Sunday Masses and it has become necessary to increase the weekly confession times. Though receptions into the Church have been fewer than last year, there has been an increase in people returning to the practice of the faith or making a late start after having been baptised as children but never having been brought up as Catholics.

Our contribution to the university's 800th anniversary celebrations took place in November with three fascinating lectures about St John Fisher delivered to a packed hall and emphasising Fisher's critical contribution to the life and modernisation of Cambridge University. Professor Eamon Duffy, Professor of the History of Christianity and Fellow of Magdalene, lectured on *Fisher's Context in Cambridge and Beyond*. Mr Malcolm Underwood, Archivist and Fellow of St John's College discussed *Fisher's Patron: Lady Margaret Beaufort*, while Dr Richard Rex, Reader in Reformation History and Fellow of Queens' College, spoke on *Fisher's Theology*.

In Easter Term, we had the pleasure of a public lecture at Fisher House given by perhaps the most distinguished moral philosopher in the English-speaking world. Professor Alasdair MacIntyre spoke on *The Irrelevance of Ethics*, drawing attention to the irrelevance of

much professionally taught ethics to the critical human problems of our time. Fisher Hall was filled to capacity for this unique occasion.

Visitors to Fisher House approaching from the newly laid out Fisher Square, which is part of the Grand Arcade development, now see high on the chapel wall, the words 'Chapel of St John Fisher', along with a plaque stating that Fisher House is the Catholic Chaplaincy of the University of Cambridge (see front cover of this newsletter).

Much time and energy over the last year has been spent on the question of enhancing the hall to make it a more worthy place for the celebration of Mass. A local firm of architects has been employed to devise a re-configuration not only of the chapel but other spaces in the public parts of Fisher House, in order to improve the facilities available to students on a day-to-day basis. If we are able to get the financial support we need, future generations of students will benefit from a greatly improved chaplaincy building. Through a more rational use of space, Fisher House will be in an even better position to make a distinctively Catholic contribution to the life of the university. The president and treasurer of CUCA, Professor Eamon Duffy and Dr Claire Daunton, have written on this important and exciting subject later in this newsletter.

Fisher House weddings continue apace, both here and around the world, and larger than usual numbers of infant baptisms at Fisher House and elsewhere have taken place this year. The full Easter Liturgy was celebrated once more, including our now famed Easter Vigil beginning at 4.00am,



*Portrait of Fr Alban McCoy by Louise Riley-Smith, now hanging in the dining room*

followed by dawn breakfast for all. This year's Fisher Dinner took place with record numbers attending. The Catholic screenwriter and broadcaster, Frank Cottrell-Boyce delivered a superbly inspiring and stirring after-dinner speech.

I know I speak for everyone in expressing our great gratitude to Sr Mirjam, who has reached the end of her time with us. She has generously placed her many gifts at the disposal of the chaplaincy and her generosity has borne much fruit. We wish her well for the future.

*Fr Alban McCoy OFM Conv*

*Professor Alasdair MacIntyre  
(Courtesy of Caroline Stone)*



# President's Message



*Eamon Duffy*

To follow Jonathan Riley Smith in any capacity is to step into a very large pair of shoes indeed. As President of Cambridge University Catholic Association (CUCA), Jonathan has been his inimitable warm, energetic and ebullient self, and he has presided over a hugely successful appeal. He will be a very difficult act to follow, and we are all hugely in his debt.

The major news, and the greatest challenge for CUCA this year, has been the decision to renovate and

re-organise our buildings to provide Fisher House and its chaplains with the best possible environment to support and promote the Catholic faith within the University. The generation of Cambridge Catholics who created the hall and chapel, which have served us well for more than thirty years, operated in circumstances and under constraints which no longer apply. The then meagre financial endowment of Fisher House meant that they had to design a building whose main space could earn its keep during the week by commercial lettings, doubling up as a temporary chapel on Sundays. Managing that commercial use of the building, however, came to demand a disproportionate amount of the chaplain's time. Meanwhile, changes in the area around Fisher House meant that important parts of our building could not easily or safely be used. One of the main objects of our recent appeal to raise a permanent endowment for Fisher House was to liberate us from the need to let

the building commercially. The success of that appeal means that we can now consider how best to use our existing buildings in a new century, and a new situation. We can now move to provide a more beautiful, dignified and permanent setting for the liturgy and private prayer throughout the week, in the area that once had to double up as a trading space. And the creation of a permanent chapel in what was once a trading hall will in turn allow us to make better use of all the other spaces.

We are aware that this is not an auspicious time for further fundraising, but CUCA is convinced that these improvements are urgently needed, and will make a vital contribution to the work of the chaplaincy. The members and friends of Fisher House who created our modern buildings in the 1970s made a visible gesture of hope, and a lasting investment in the future of the faith in Cambridge. In adapting and improving their work for the twenty-first century, we need to match their generosity and vision.

*Professor Eamon Duffy  
President of CUCA*

# Treasurer's Report

I would like to start by thanking those who have offered unstinting help and advice during the past year: Jeremy Howe, as retiring Treasurer, always a source of sound advice, for his continuing support; Ashleigh Bridges, Assistant Treasurer, whose hard work and good humour has been invaluable; Anna Bates for her sterling administrative assistance. Anna has now taken on other roles and been replaced by Marta Janko whom we welcome to the team.

I am pleased to report that the persistent problem of intruders, reported on last year, has been overcome by the installation of additional security and by positive actions on the part of the City Council.

Now that the hall is used as a chapel and designated as a place of worship for council tax purposes, and advertised to the public as

such, it has become important to signal clearly on the exterior of the building the chapel's presence. Members of the public have commented favourably on the effectiveness of this signage. There has also been associated repair and refurbishment work to the exterior to make good damage and improve the external appearance of the building, including the roof garden.

We've been pleased to welcome onto the Finance Committee Dr Julie Smith, CUCA Council member, along with Mr Nigel Brown, member of the University's Council and Chairman of its Audit Committee, as an investment adviser. Nigel and I meet regularly with CUCA's investment manager at Barclays Wealth. Our overall financial position has remained stable thanks to the continued generous support of members – crucial to the work



*Claire Daunton*

of CUCA – and the work of our investment advisers.

We are faced with a challenging year ahead on account of plans for refurbishment and the difficult national and global financial situation. We hope to weather all storms with the continued generosity of members and supporters.

*Dr Claire Daunton  
Treasurer of CUCA*



*Artist's impression of the new entrance*

Familiarity breeds affection. Probably relatively few members of the chaplaincy consciously notice that for the last thirty-five years, term-time Sunday Mass at Fisher House has been celebrated at a movable altar squeezed into the corner of the hall, for a congregation seated awkwardly round it on stackable chairs. And few may have noticed that, till the arrival of our glorious Cimabue crucifix two years ago, that hall lacked any permanent symbol of Catholic faith. The existence of a small and beautiful chapel for weekdays has compensated for this lack. Nevertheless, for more than a generation in Fisher House, there has been a strong element of make-do-and-mend about Sunday Mass, the most important aspect of Catholic life.

That situation had something to do with the theological ethos of the 1970s, but it was mainly the result of financial necessity. When our modern buildings were created, the chaplaincy had no significant financial endowment, so the new buildings were designed to earn their keep by doubling up on weekdays as the venue for commercial lettings – book-fairs, craft-markets and

*Top right: Proposed ground floor plan*

*Right: Proposed first floor plan*

# Fisher House Redevelopment

the like. That commercial use dictated the shape and layout of the building, the positioning not only of the sanctuary, but of exits, lavatories and other facilities. And over the years it has taken its toll. Brickwork and concrete have become shabby, fittings and flooring worn, and the fan-driven heating-system long since surrendered to the arctic

freeze which prevails for what seems half the year. Even if we had gone on as before, we would soon have had to face expensive renovation and refitting.

The success of the recent CUCA appeal to create a proper endowment has however put an end to the need to hire out our hall. So we are at last in a position to rethink the use of all our public

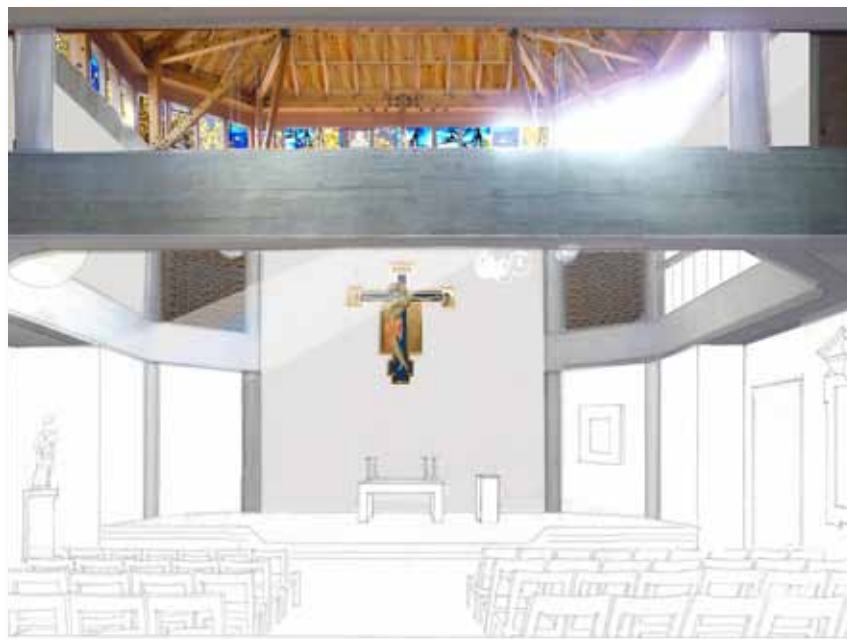




spaces. The Council of CUCA have agreed to turn the large hall into a permanent chapel, as a worthy and beautiful setting for the liturgy all the year round, and also a peaceful and suitable setting for private prayer.

After a competition in which six architects outlined schemes, this work has been placed in the hands of the Cambridge firm of Freeland Rees Roberts, whose sensitive conversions of existing Cambridge buildings will be familiar to many members of Fisher House. The plans include the replacement of the current tunnel-like entrance passage to Fisher House by a wider entrance-hall, opened through one of the arches of the present small chapel. A glazed portico and enlarged courtyard will provide a more spacious and welcoming approach to the new chapel, as well as space to gather before and after Mass. The altar, tabernacle and enlarged sanctuary will be re-sited at the end of the hall nearest Fisher Square, and a choir and organ loft will be opened at first floor level, releasing floor space for congregational seating.

*Current ordering of the sanctuary*



*Outline sketch of proposed chapel reordering: altar, lectern and tabernacle are indicated here schematically and will be designed separately*

New wooden seating, a stone altar and appropriate imagery will make the chapel a worthier setting for liturgy and private prayer. A lift will be installed near the entrance, making the library, Great Chamber and roof terrace accessible to wheel-chair users for the first time.

The creation of a large permanent chapel means that the present small chapel can return to its original identity as the Fisher Room, equipped with catering and IT facilities, so that it can become the normal venue for meetings, talks and social events. This in turn will ease pressure on the library, which till now has had to serve many of those purposes. The library itself will be renovated to make it a space more conducive to reading and quiet study; and an office with computing and photocopying facilities will be created in this part of the building. Heating and lavatories will be renewed and improved.

These are ambitious plans, and the improvements are expected to cost in the region of £500,000. This money will have to be raised as a separate venture, since we

cannot draw on our endowment capital for this purpose, nor divert regular donations intended for the ongoing work of the chaplaincy. The renovations will therefore depend on the fresh generosity of members and friends of Fisher House, and in the coming months CUCA will be exploring ways of funding these very necessary improvements. Plans will be displayed at the Alumni Mass, and we will keep you informed.

*Images of proposed changes courtesy of Freeland Rees Roberts.*

## DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

**26<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

You are warmly invited to attend the **Alumni Mass on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September at 11.00am**, which will be celebrated by **Cardinal Murphy O'Connor**. Mass will be followed by drinks and a cold buffet lunch. There is no charge for the lunch, but booking is required (see enclosed sheet). Donations to cover the cost of food and drink will be most welcome.

# Fisher Society



*Emma Kirby  
Madzia Kowalski*



2009-10 has been another excellent year for the Fisher Society, providing a social and spiritual home for all Catholic members of the University.

Members of Fisher House continue to recognise how fortunate we are with the high standard of Liturgy celebrated here. Once again this year we were able to celebrate the annual Fisher Mass in the University Church, and earlier in the year we welcomed the Bishop of Nottingham, Malcolm McMahon OP, to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. Three students were confirmed on this occasion, and throughout the year the chaplaincy has welcomed many new people into the faith and the Fisher House community.

Many students have taken an active role in the discussions surrounding the potential alterations to Fisher House. We eagerly look forward to the improvement of student facilities and most of all, the development of Fisher Hall into a dedicated place of worship at the centre of our spiritual lives.

The schedule of talks and discussion groups held at Fisher House continues to grow, as does the level of student

participation. The weekly 'Catholicism for the Curious' talks given by Fr Alban continue to be popular, as do the 'Poetry and Faith' and Aquinas discussion groups. The SVP has continued its work in the local community through its soup runs and visits to the Hope care home. The Medical Ethics Forum has hosted a number of outside speakers and provided an arena for the discussion of increasingly significant and high profile issues.

In addition to all of these events, the social calendar has been full to the brim. On top of the usual 'Saints and Sinners' party and the frequent opening of Cambridge's best and (unofficially) cheapest bar, we have held two very successful ceilidhs and reintroduced the 'Parents' Formal', where a number of students, their parents and the chaplains spent a pleasant evening at St John's College. As always, the Fisher Dinner, Leaver's BBQ and annual Garden Party provided a relaxing end to the academic year and allowed us to say goodbye to our many friends leaving Fisher House this year. However, as this newsletter proves, and as has been frequently said as we come to the end of another year, 'You never really leave Fisher House!'

# Graduate Society



*Daniel Coughlan  
Lucy Underwood*



This year has seen a series of successful speaker meetings for the Graduate Society, with first class speakers, consistently strong attendance and lively discussions. The year began with Professor Sir Anthony Kenny speaking on Newman and the idea of a university. In Lent Term, Lord Guthrie, former Chief of the Defence Staff, gave a lecture on the theory of just war, provoking much thoughtful discussion on this sadly ever-relevant issue. Cambridge, of course, has plenty of home talent, and we were fortunate to hear Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith give a masterful exposition of the history of the Crusades and crusading theory; Dr Eric Griffiths on the distortions of history created by the illusion of historical ages, and Professor Philip Allott on the largely unrealised potential of Catholicism to change the world. Professor Nicholas

Lash spoke on the anglophone heresy of science, and Dr John Casey gave a talk on the nineteenth-century Spiritualist movement. In Easter term, John Cornwell came to speak on Newman, and Professor Robin Kirkpatrick, Dante scholar, who has recently produced a new Penguin translation of the *Commedia*, gave a stirring talk on passages from the 'Inferno' and 'Paradiso' dealing with the tension between human aspects of the Church and the divine institution. The last talk of the year was given by the distinguished authority on international relations, Professor Paul Kennedy, from Yale, who spoke about the appeasement controversy on the eve of the Second World War.

There have also been plenty of opportunities for socialising, with drinks after each meeting and dinner, trips to pubs for Sunday lunch or an evening pint, and a beer-tasting event at The Elm Tree in November. We look forward to building on the past year's success.

# Thanks to our Benefactors

Donations made between 1/7/09 and 30/6/10

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| Dr F Cuss                 | Howard Trust              | H K Mercer               | J F Scrope              |                         |
| R Daniels-Dwyer           | Dr & Mrs L S G Howard     | P G Meredith             | H J Scrope              | We have received a      |
| Dr C Daunton              | Mr & Mrs J F Howe         | W P Merrick              | Sir Reginald Seconde    | number of donations     |
| Dr A-M De Bono            | M Hughes                  | G W Miller               | Rev Dr F Selman         | from people who wish to |
| Dr J P De Bono            | G J Hughes                | Rev Dr P G Miller        | M R Sharman             | remain anonymous, for   |
| I B P de Minvielle-Devaux | P J Hughes                | M Mitchell               | J S Sheldon             | which we would like to  |
| R G F de Stacpoole        | J F C Hull                | Dr K J Moriarty CBE      | F H W Sheppard          | record our thanks.      |
| Mrs C. Debray             | E C Hutchinson            | Rev A R Morris           | Rev J Sherrington       |                         |
| J L Dobson                | Dr C R Hutchison          | A J Mulholland           | Mrs M Shivanandan       |                         |



# Please pray for deceased members of Fisher House

*Since the last newsletter, we have received notification of the following deaths*

*May they rest in peace*

P W Avery OBE (K 1958) H F Bowdler (K 1949) Mrs H C Brown (G 1970) M Child (CHR 1953)  
Brig J R A Clemow (JN 1930) M P Dineen (K 1948) A E D Elmsley (K 1949) R English (SE 1966)  
Prof C F Fahy (Q 1945) Ms L E Fletcher (HH 1993) A M Frank (CTH 1937) M Geddes (CAI 1993)  
A H Gomme (CAI 1951) J Hartigan (T 1952) Ms M Harvey (HO 1977) Miss C M Havell (K 1979)  
G Howard-Kyan (CHR 1935) M F Hughes (CHR 1966) M J L Jurgens (K 1951) Ms C J Levierge (HH 1956)  
B G Marchant (JE 1945) C P J Martin (Q 1947) Rev F P McCarthy (DOW 1949) J R Midgley (K 1953)  
Prof P O'Higgins (CHR 1957) Dr E Perreau-Saussine (F 2000) G J Pellegrini (F 1972)  
R S Rowe CBE (DOW 1945) P A M Samuelson (M 1943) S J V Smith (CTH 1977) Dr N J Unsworth (F 1971)  
N J Webber (JE 1994) M P Whitlock (CL 1935)



*Fr Alban celebrates the Fisher Mass in the University Church, May 2010 (Courtesy of Madeleine Bridges)*

## **LET US KNOW**

If you have an email address, or have changed your email address during the past year, **please let us know**.

Send the details to [cuca@fisherhouse.org.uk](mailto:cuca@fisherhouse.org.uk)

If you wish to make any amendments to the list of benefactors or to the list of deceased, please write to us at the email address given above or by post. Please note: an email message or a letter is always preferable to a phone call since the office is not staffed on a regular basis.

**Cambridge University Catholic Chaplaincy, Guildhall Street, Cambridge CB2 3NH**