House up-date: Metheringham

The CSF house in Metheringham, 8 miles southeast of Lincoln, opened as a result of the Sisters' need to move from Compton Durville. At a meeting of most of the sisters in the European Province, in February 2009, it was agreed that we could no longer manage the work at Compton Durville but that we would still like to have a rural house. This house would need to be near shops and on a fairly good public transport route, and we would like to be in a diocese that did not already have a house of Anglican religious. The Bishop of Lincoln, John Saxbee, invited us to the redundant vicarage in Metheringham, one of a number of houses looked at by the Working Group which was set up to explore the matter.

CSF took possession of the house on 2 July, 2010 and Liz 'camped' there in order to clean it and organise the carrying out of the damp course work and replastering that we knew needed doing as a result of the pre-purchase survey. In the course of that work, several other things were discovered: the drains were all totally blocked by roots that had invaded via the cracks, having had only rainwater through them for a year, a section of house wall had no foundation and needed underpinning and two yew trees needed to be removed because their roots were damaging the house. Liz was able to do most of the interior painting that was required either to brighten up the rooms or after the re-plastering had been done.

Meanwhile, at Compton Durville, a team of sisters and a working guest were sorting through the contents of the houses we had the use of at Compton Durville, and redistributing things. The painting and final clean-up at Metheringham was completed, with assistance from a team of energetic tercaries, just in time to receive the several vanloads of house contents that arrived in mid-October, (van load size being limited by the width of the gate) and Judith Ann and Maureen moved from Birmingham in the following weeks.

We have been given an enthusiastic welcome here, from the diocese, the village, and our Third Order members and also from members of the local Methodist and New Life churches and Catholic religious in the Nottingham Archdiocese. A previous issue of franciscan included a photo of Bishop John during the house blessing in November last year, an event which was attended by about 70 people.
The house has one room for a residential guest, and a number of people have already been to stay for retreat, time out, or for part of a sabbatical. The two downstairs sitting rooms, one of which will seat 12, the other 24, have been used by individuals or groups coming for quiet days, planning meetings, and study days. We would like much more use to be made of these facilities as hospitality forms a significant part of our income and the house and grounds - surrounded by trees - lends itself to that. We are also fund raising to put a single-room log cabin, for day use only, in the grounds to increase our space for individuals.

The sisters may be invited to lead quiet days that are held here, but groups are encouraged to bring their own conductors if they wish. As well as engaging in spiritual direction, the sisters go out to lead quiet days and retreats, preach, or to talk to groups about the religious life. St Francis' "Rule for Hermitages" is the inspiration for us to try to live a more balanced life, so Monday each week is a house quiet day, with more time spent in prayer and reading. Tuesday is the sisters' day off, so Wednesday to Sunday are the more structured days regarding the corporate saying of the offices, and eucharist. "Sanctuary" days on the Wednesdays of Lent were an open invitation to anyone to drop in for silent prayer or just to 'be', for as long as they liked, and a surprisingly large number of people - local residents and those from further afield - availed themselves of this opportunity for stillness.

The move to Metheringham, while forced upon us by the circumstances at Compton Durville, has proved to be a very positive one for the Province and for the sisters involved in the house here, as well as for this area of the country in which we live.