

# Creation: In search of healing for the planet...

– *Sisters Jess and Isabelle visiting Stanbrook Abbey*



We went because it was the first 'green monastery' in the world. Maybe we could learn from it. The Stanbrook Benedictine sisters had wanted a simple and tranquil space which would aid prayer as well as being an eco friendly monastery for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We found just that.

Locally sourced stone and sustainable timber had been used for the main building, solar panels and LED lighting installed, there was a woodchip boiler using locally sourced timber from sustainable forests, a green roof, rainwater harvesting, thermal insulation and a system of reed bed water purification for the sewage system. The hens had unfortunately been got by the local fox. The nuns are hoping eventually to do more to grow their own produce. For now the chapel has been finished but stage 3 of the building needs to be completed, the guest house and space for their extensive library. It was impressive and indeed very 'green'.



But we went away with something else as well, a sense of beauty and spaciousness, the quality of light, a clarity and radiance, gently suffusing the chapel and cloister, the purity of the air, an uncluttered simplicity, the wide horizon with the Yorkshire Moors, hills fields and trees as we looked far into the distance, sheep in the foreground. The community is putting down roots in their new home, a praying presence

high on the hill, a counterpoint to the wide horizon stretching into the distance all around. And the community expressed so well Benedictine hospitality, it was harmonious, free and seemed full of sisterly affection, it was evident they had respect and affection for one another. They looked together towards Christ. There was a quality of light in the relationships too.

It seemed there was a recipe for living in all that. We need light and space, and a wide vision as well as a rootedness. We need quality of relationships and purpose, and all this is part of the healing of the planet at the deepest level.

*Sr Jess r.a.*

