

By Robert Kyriakides, CEO Genersys Plc

Contemplating Sustainability

In the part of London made famous by the film "Notting Hill" is an oasis of calm and contemplation. In the midst all the London life, near the Portobello Road street market, schools, homes factories and businesses and all the other hurley burley of London, there exists a Victorian built monastery where the Carmelites pray and contemplate.

The Carmelites are a catholic order of nuns, friars and lay people who trace their roots back to the ancient hermits who prayed on Mount Carmel in the very early thirteenth century. The order has been established in England since 1241. Prayer and contemplation is central to the order and although they, like other religious people of all creeds, do good works, prayer is central. The order comprises friars, nuns and lay people. The nuns are contemplative and live in monasteries, of which there are two in London. Their web site (www.carmelite.org.uk) points out that the nuns

"...do not forget our needy brothers and sisters in the world outside the monastery walls. We pray for their well-being always and try to live simply so as to have something to give away; we are concerned with the trials and sharing in the sufferings and crises of the modern world."

Our task for the Carmelite nuns was to provide their monastery with solar powered water heating and replace a gas boiler which was beyond repair. They were also very concerned about the spiralling hot water bills that they were receiving. The Mother Superior and Sister Mary, the Bursar, showed me around the monastery and told me about the life of nuns in their order, so that I could get some insight into the way in which they used hot water and the amounts they used.

I was struck by the simple and peaceful lives that the nuns lived, so

unconcerned with materialism, so ordered around the concept that the less that you consume the better and yet in their commitment to the environment they are so very well informed of the issues that affect us and so willing to play their part.



There are many ways that people can make a contribution to the well being of the world and the Carmelites have chosen their way. The common thread that runs through all people who are committed to improving the environment is the understanding that consumers consume too much and we must work together to reduce consumption of every material resource.

We installed six of our vacuum panels linked together on a slate south facing roof. As you can see, the colour of our panels against the slate blend well together and the whole picture is nicely framed by the red roof ridge tiles., as you can see form the pictures. The small square structures below the panels are Velux style roof windows. The Nuns have a very beautiful building and I do not think that our panels have damaged its architectural integrity. They have made a statement that sustainable solutions can be integrated into many types of buildings.

Of course no thermal solar technology can provide a 100% solution in this country and so it was important to back up the solar hot water with a fossil fuel powered water heating system. Using a modulating condensing boiler that operates at more than 95% efficiency provides the best solution.

The Carmelites are a good example of how all kinds of organisations can make a contribution to the environment and in doing so make a contribution to society as a whole. Over the longer term their system will pay for itself and should provide several decades of trouble free service. Many people spend much time in contemplating sustainability; the Carmelites have achieved it.