

Sir Peter Quimsley, FRIAS.

Design Champion

City of Weelainge, Scotland



The Church of Scotland's Mount DeCastle Abbey of Nuns, whose name derives from the imposing castle built on the highest point in Weelainge (at the same elevation of Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh), has been an architectural landmark in this city for more than a century, when the castle was first constructed.

The Abbey school, situate adjacent to the grounds of Weelainge Kirk University, educated children from around the world at a time when international students were a rarity in surrounding schools, and the brilliance of its educational offerings in foreign languages, music, and the arts were the envy of other local primary and secondary schools. Many of the nuns who taught at the school and attended the Abbey devoted most of their lives to enriching

the school and their students, and many spent their last

days there, and were buried in the private cemetery on the castle lawn, which is, under Scottish law, hallowed ground.

Unfortunately, Bishop Brownfields, of the Diocese of Weelainge—Charlton (who by Church of Scotland rules has complete autonomy over church property in Weelainge) has unilaterally decided that Mount DeCastle shall be home to the Abbey nuns no more, and that the castle itself will be sold to another holding of the Church—the Weelainge Foundling Hospital—in an rumored effort to boost the financial position of the Weelainge Foundling Hospital in order for the Diocese to be able to sell it advantageously to an outside concern, perhaps the United Presbyterian Medical Center (U.P.M.C.).

Worse, the intent seems to be to demolish Mount DeCastle, at an estimated cost of (3,000, 000

pounds sterling) Oh, yes, I know. You have listened to my ranting on buildings with architectural significance in Weelainge before (most recently in the February issue of *The Commentaries*); heard me discuss the preservation of buildings with significant cultural and historical significance; suffered my railings at the lack of “green consciousness” in destroying a building of such historically compacted energy; but arguments such as these often amount to just whistling in the wind.

“Show us the cash to save it,” say the sayers.

But we reply:

“Is there no one left in the Church of Scotland hierarchy who is willing to take the long-view on the history of the abbey or its adjoining university, indeed, on this place of education itself?”

In the case of the Mount DeCastle, most would agree that the property's

natural successor should not be Weelainge Foundling Hospital, but the adjoining Weelainge Kirk University, whose property is so entwined with the Abbeys that most people consider the Abbey to be part of the Weelainge Kirk University campus. Most appropriately, the castle could in future years serve as a Humanities building, or the location of the new Highlands School of Law, which is now being discussed at the University—even if the buildings need to be mothballed now until more propitious times, financially speaking.

Although the university was said to have been interested in buying and preserving the property for future educational use, the university today is plagued by financial constraints, and the Bishop was said to have refused to cooperate in a sale to the University—presumably because the Diocese's own financial pressures led to what in this author's opinion is an ill-conceived business

Design Champion - con't.

judgment to “short” the value of the castle to the nuns and the university in favor of increasing the bottom-line value of the Weelaine Foundling Hospital to potential suitors.

Weelaine Kirk University is only 56 years old, and not as rich as other older and better endowed universities in the Church of Scotland system. But the Church of Scotland and its then Bishop Swift (said to be a descendant of Dublin born Jonathan Swift) were not looking at its founding for the university to be a “money-maker,” but were dedicating themselves to the “long’ view on higher education for children of the Highlands; the same “long” view we think the present representatives of the Church


of Scotland should be considering with respect to the castle and the university’s educational mission.

As usual, the circumstances surrounding the sale and motives are shrouded in secrecy. Public pronouncements have been limited to the fact that the sale has been completed but no ultimate decision on the Castle buildings fate determined. But the pundits say it is already too late. Already a “done deal.”

But it’s never over until it’s over, and in matters of Preservation, that means until the wrecking ball arrives— usually on a weekend, unannounced.



Any resemblance of the city of Weelaine to any existing city in the United States of America is strictly coincidental.

So we ask the Church, the Hospital, wherever the process lay (a sale can be un-done), to enter into discussions with the University again, and consider long-term moth balling, or other options short of demolition consistent with the long-term educational commitment made to the Weelaine Kirk University founders by the visionary Bishop Swift in 1954, when he blessed the marrying of the location for the new University with the then thriving Abbey School. 



Off the WALS:

News of the Wheeling Academy of Law & Science (WALS) Foundation

As we like to say, “If those who believe in the Justice System don't educate the public, those who don't will.”

Well, we are in our 8th year for the Mock Trial Project and about 8,000 students have participated so far in Ohio, Marshall, Hancock, Jackson, Kanawha, Tyler & Wetzel counties.

This school year we will be in all Ohio Co. 5th and 8th grade classes with NEW

scripts. The topic, RX drug abuse, will remain since statistics show it is in an epidemic stage among our youth today.

In September and October students from Clay, Braxton, Barbour & McDowell counties will be able to participate

and also learn about the dangers of RX use/abuse.

*A SPECIAL THANKS
TO ALL LAWYERS WHO
VOLUNTEER TIME TO
MAKE THIS PROGRAM
A SUCCESS!!*

