

## **Peter Whiston RSA**

### **RSA Obituary transcribed from the 1999 RSA Annual Report**

Peter Whiston was born into a large family of Irish descent, brought up in the tenements of Leith and educated at Holy Cross Academy. His early life centred around playing rugby football and soccer (he got a trial for Hibs but wisely turned them down to continue his studies) and serving as an alter boy at the Cathedral.

Peter served in the Royal Engineers during the Second World War and was posted to India. He rose through the ranks to Staff Captain and spent three years blowing up bridges to hinder a threatened invasion from the East.

As if to atone for this destruction his first years of peace were spent as Chief Architect of Scottish Special Housing, building homes for men returning to Scotland from the war. When it became apparent that council housing was taking a direction of which he Scottish restraint. Thus his materials were local stone, harling, pitch pine, even cobbles recycled from the streets of Edinburgh on which he had played as a boy.

What decoration he allowed in his simple white churches, he commissioned from his contemporaries at Edinburgh College of Art.

Perhaps his most significant building is the Cistercian Monastery at Nunraw in East Lothian, the first new monastery in Scotland since the Reformation. Sancta Maria Abbey was built by the monks themselves with voluntary help from all over Scotland.

Stone was hewn from the Abbey's own quarry nearby at Rattlebags, a strong bright stone of yellow hue which gives the Abbey its prominence high up on the Lammermuir hills. On a clear day the long, two-storey walls surrounding the cloister can be seen in the Highlands. Peter and his wife Kaye, who predeceased him in 1988 had five children.

As Peter and his family had made the greatest use of their Scots education, so too did Peter's children. Like him they "got on" and that, in his later years, gave him much satisfaction and pride.