

Bishop Auckland: A Spiritual Adventure

*Auckland Castle, the traditional home of the bishops of Durham, is in the process of a radical transformation, largely through the generosity and entrepreneurial flair of one man, **Jonathan Ruffer**. It is now a faith, art and heritage destination of international significance. The castle is being renovated; a museum exploring the history of faith in the British Isles is being established; a Spanish Gallery, home to Zurbaran's masterpieces has been created; the walled garden is being restored; a new Mining Art gallery is in prospect. Kynren, an epic open-air show depicting 2000 years of British History, attracted large audiences in the summer of 2016 and will be repeated this summer. In this article Jonathan explains his motives for embarking on this extraordinary adventure, and reflects on the way different groups have responded.*

I am a child of my time. Having trained as a barrister (good news, I can't stop talking; bad news, I didn't know what I was talking about), I found myself in the City, as an investment manager. One of the quirks of success in the City is that it results in comically prodigious financial rewards, and that creates a conundrum - what does one do with it?

I regard such earnings as a fact of life. Why is Gwyneth Paltrow so beautiful? Why should the Duke of Norfolk be a Duke? It's simply the way things are - but what one does about being an outlier in worldly gifts is what turns an absurdity into a disgrace, or its opposite. I didn't want, before the Lord, to be a disgrace. The obvious

thing, therefore, was to give it away. I reckoned that there are only three things you can do with money: spend it, save it, or give it away. I have never been much of a spender, so there was no obvious opening there, and to save it seemed morally unattractive, so the last option was the only option.



Photo: Richard Gregory

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