

# NEWSLETTER

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*Dear Pilgrims,*

We recently held the 2011 AGM, which means that I have now entered my second year “in charge”. It seems barely credible to me that this should be so, let alone that the first of my two pilgrimages as Coordinator was coming to its conclusion a month ago. At first the walk seemed a long way off ... then it was rushing towards me at an unseemly pace with far too much still to be done in too little time ... then it was actually happening, warts and all, to coin a phrase ... and then quite suddenly it was all over, and thoughts were already turning to next year. I can only hope that this did not rub off on my fellow pilgrims! It was certainly a great honour to be Coordinator, and in particular to have Cardinal Newman as the theme.

The good news this year was that all who booked to come did indeed turn up, and we successfully got everyone to their various departure points without loss. There were two pilgrims who on different days did temporarily get lost, but not for long. It was also a fairly injury-free walk; one deep cut to a finger, one dog bite and one case of lumbago being the noteworthy incidents. One pilgrim did suffer a simultaneous twisted ankle and cracked head on arriving home, but I am not sure that counts. The really good news was that we did not end the walk with many kilos of uneaten rice crispies although the van did seem to be sprouting quantities of large tins of grapefruit and other tinned foods towards the end – possibly a variation of the parable of the loaves and fish.

There were a fair number of “day” pilgrims who joined at various stages as evidenced in the website diary; Monica McLauchlan joined us at Birmingham, along with Gillian who had also been with us in London. Monica even brought both her legs with her to prove that she still has possession of them and she and Gillian between them regaled us with the gory tale of her time in hospital. Joking aside, it was certainly a great relief to see Monica being able to get around, albeit with moderate difficulty.

There were other areas of the pilgrimage that stand out for me, and I hope for others too. The services at the key locations of the 3 Oratories (at Brompton, Oxford, and Birmingham) and the Mass and time spent at Littlemore, along with the services at Westminster Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, and evening prayer at St Philip’s Cathedral, Birmingham all stand out in my mind. The parish churches at which we stop also play their part of course, and a couple of these stood out as well.

We were blessed to have Rev. Simon Dommert with us who was supposed to be enjoying a sabbatical but kindly agreed to celebrate a number of joint services along with Fr. David. There were also some new pilgrims alongside the usual suspects and some pilgrims who had not walked for a while who graced us with their presence. Three of the new pilgrims in particular stood out from the crowd, and it is always really pleasing to see newcomers being welcomed into the pilgrim family and then feeling so comfortable that they contribute in ways that cause them to stand out.

At Warwick during the rest day, the opportunity was taken to have a look at the way in which the pilgrimage is being run overall looking at such questions as to whether a full 2 weeks was desired for the walk each year and what each organising role in our structure should encompass. Minutes were taken and will be circulated or go on the website, and if those who were not present wish to add their thoughts, the committee will be pleased to hear from you. I also found myself thinking towards the end of the walk that we are really reliant each day on the orange arrows being well positioned by the front marking team, and wondered if I should introduce some sort of fun competition with a “golden” arrow being presented each year to the team judged to have done the best day. This could cover the accuracy of the arrowing, the spacing between the arrows, artistic merit on any decorative efforts made ... If you have any thoughts on this subject before the next pilgrimage, I would be glad to hear from you; just e-mail me on [coord@thepilgrims.org.uk](mailto:coord@thepilgrims.org.uk).

With the AGM, there are changes in the committee and I would once again pay homage to Aidan for his many years in key roles as he steps back from “frontline” duty – you will continue to hear from him when e-mails have to be sent to all and sundry as he is best positioned to do this through the website. I am delighted that John Chenery agreed to be the new deputy to support me next year, and welcome the other newcomers – since this editorial is getting a bit long, I will say more about them next time.

I look forward to seeing some of you at the reunion. May God bless you all.

*Nick*

## **An update from Monica**

'Stick' walking began slowly after the appt at skin graft clinic in Sept. Gradually increased from pottering outside the house to round the block to increase confidence & strength. The week after I began 'stick' walking I did 35mins out to a local shop, under escort.

Then to & from Church 10 mins up hill on the way back - still getting a bit puffed out.

At the end of September I walked down into Kemp Town - bank then treated myself in the deli to coffee & yummy cake!!!

My hair continued to get thinner & I thought I might have to find the wig I had when on chemo. I got a bit dejected, but was assured by a friend (retired nurse) that it was growing underneath the wispy bits and there were no bald patches. So my hairdresser came & cut it short into a style and already my fringe has grown. G/P has agreed that I should have been warned as it is due to the Septic shock.

I now only lean on the stick occasionally - it is for security & warns others.

Last Friday I walked up to Brighton Station (used to take 20 mins) it only took 30 mins without getting puffed out!!

By train to Shoreham & a friend drove us to Littlehampton to visit Dickie an elderly friend in a nursing home. Gillian met us there for our mini Hosanna House reunion. During tea he reminded us that for a proper H/H do we should have had G & T's!!!

Last Sunday the congregation found out how well I look when I was doing my usual October activity of distributing the Grand Draw tickets for the Catholaity Fair in November, where we will be selling HCPT christmas cards. I stand in the porch & it is the only way out!!

One lady collected a couple of books, went out of the door & then shrieked "It's Monica" - much laughter from all around. What I didn't tell them was that the cat fleas had chewed me again despite Terri's cats being done. Most had healed easily but on Saturday three on my bad leg had blistered, two of which had got scratched in the night. The blistered one on my shin grew during Sunday and by Monday evening the G/P had me back on antibiotics & steroid cream. Looking a lot better now.

I emailed all the Parishes & clergy in the area & beyond who supported Bernadette's over the years to tell them I had taken the decision in July not to go back. I told them of the illness & that I am still doing stairs one at a time. Received lovely replies of support & thanks.

## **Fr Joe Kengah Appeal**

Our Kenyan priest friend Fr Joe, who walked with us in 2000 and 2002 plus odd days since, has moved from Mivumoni to the parish of Kikambala, north of Mombasa. It's a big parish (last Saturday 240 young people were confirmed and there were 4 weddings!) and there is much to be done. The parish runs a dispensary (the local health centre) for the whole community, but this lacks the microscope required for effective diagnosis of many conditions. Joe has challenged me to raise £1,000 to buy a microscope and related supplies. We have £300 from our parish so far - can **you** help us reach the target? *Those who walked with us this year, or who followed online, will have seen the ornate walking stick, a gift after a previous fundraising effort, which we use in processions and at our Eucharist to show our solidarity with the people in Joe's care. We keep them in our prayers, but they need financial support too.*

Please contact me ([www.thepilgrims.org.uk/mail.php](http://www.thepilgrims.org.uk/mail.php)) to donate.

Many thanks, *Aidan Simons*

Pilgrimage Contacts

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