

NEWSLETTER

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Dear Pilgrims,

Back in 1990 when I first followed the orange arrows, pilgrimage founder Bill was coordinator. He was succeeded by Alan, and then Andy, Patrick, Lesley, John, Bruce, Sue, Peter, Aidan and Nick, and now in 2012 it is my turn to have the honour of serving you. Closely assisting me of course will be my wife Louise who has been on every pilgrimage since 1983, so between us that's more than 50 years of experience at your service!

First of all I must thank Nick for leading us so splendidly for the last 2 years. Once again the 2012 pilgrimage successfully delivered the classic pilgrimage brew of countryside scenery, fellowship and spirituality. It all ran very smoothly. The only significant problems were the ones we had anticipated after the wet summer: delays to timings caused by mud and overgrown vegetation. From Bath we headed over the Mendip Hills then dropped down to the Somerset Levels for our first rest day in Glastonbury. Then up again into the Quantock Hills and down to Taunton for our second rest day. Then up again (there's a pattern emerging here) into the Blackdown Hills to finish off with a stretch of the South West Coast Path from Sidmouth to Exmouth, then the Starcross Ferry across the mouth of the Exe and an estuary-side walk into Exeter. The weather on the pilgrimage followed the pattern of recent years with a couple of very wet days and a few partially wet days. Fortunately it was dry almost all the time that we were on the tops of Mendips, Quantocks and Blackdowns. It did rain heavily however on our one day on the South West Coast Path, such that more than one pilgrim purchased a change of clothing at lunch time in a charity shop!

It was all change on the catering front this year. For the first week we were fed by a team consisting of Caroline, Bruce, Hazel, Lauren and Ruth. They organised themselves so that they took turns at catering and walked on the other days. For the second week, Alison provided for us as a dedicated caterer, with pilgrims assisting her on an ad hoc basis. Both approaches were a tremendous success. The pilgrims savoured their food and the caterers must have enjoyed it too, because each and every pilgrim will be gladdened to hear that they have volunteered to run similar split weeks next year. Amongst the new delights that we sampled this year were "pear and chocolate crumble", and a range of sophisticated continental starters.

The design of the pilgrimage crosses, produced once again by Bruce, was the Cross Keys of St Peter from the dedication of both Bath Abbey and Exeter Cathedral, however our theme was the Lord's Prayer. Each day we looked at one phrase from the prayer and gained insight into the spiritual depths behind the familiar words, focussing in particular on living it out in our lives. We benefitted from the preparatory work of our chaplains Fr David and Simon and of the "theme team" - in particular the hymns, readings and prayers which Becky and Patrick had selected and prepared for printing for us. Thanks too to Clare and the rest of the Gamble family who found themselves with the unexpected task of doing this extra printing!

There was a report on the pilgrimage in the October edition of the A&B news, and you can read it on line at <http://www.dabnet.org/Resources/DABNet/Communications/A%20and%20B%20News/AB%20News%20Oct%202012%20with%20supplement.pdf> The pilgrimage article is on page 11 ; there's a pilgrim dancing with a dog on page 2 (did Keith mind?) and on page 9 there's the old picture of Bishop Kieran telling Pope Benedict where our pilgrimage was going to go in 2010! Hopefully I have got the web address for the A&B News correct ... which is more than the A&B News could manage when including the address of our website. If you follow their link, you'll learn all about a Christian male-voice singing group from Seattle, called "The Pilgrims"!

In this newsletter I've drawn attention to some of those who held the high-visibility roles on the pilgrimage itself this year, but the success of the pilgrimage is down to all those who volunteer both on the pilgrimage and throughout the year, and I am relieved and delighted the holders of most of the major roles are remaining in post this year. We do have a couple of outstanding vacancies however. Patrick is standing down as treasurer after so many years' service ... I remember Julian taking over as treasurer while Patrick was coordinator and then Patrick taking the role back but I can't remember who Patrick took over from in the first place way back in time. Patrick is staying on to finalise the accounts for this year and then will carry out a thorough hand over of his procedures and his spreadsheet. Patrick says the handover could be phased with the new incumbent starting off as deputy treasurer. However the new incumbent must be able to act as the treasurer on next year's pilgrimage as Patrick won't be around much (some excuse about using all his leave up on a honeymoon). So Louise and I face the

prospect of something we haven't experienced – a pilgrimage without Patrick! PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU WOULD CONSIDER THE ROLE OF TREASURER.

The other role we need volunteers for is Van Driver. This is a major worry for the coordinator each year: everything else is in place but what if there is nobody to drive the van! This year we were greatly indebted to Howard and Theresa. They were going to drive the van for the first week only, but then at the eleventh hour when Plan A and Plan B for the second week had fallen through – those drivers were not able to drive the van after all - they pulled out of another holiday to drive the van for the entire fortnight. I would like to draw up a list of potential van drivers so that I have a Plan A, Plan B and Plan C in place. Howard and Theresa are willing to do some driving next year but not the whole fortnight. They have suggested a plan for 2013 where 2 drivers (they would be one of them) drive alternate days and walk alternate days. Would this arrangement suit you, or perhaps a potential new pilgrim known to you? I'd also like to know of anybody who would be willing to drive the van for one continuous week or indeed the whole fortnight. PLEASE HELP ME BUILD UP THE LIST OF POTENTIAL VAN DRIVERS.

So where are we going in 2013? The Coordinator does not always choose the destination, but I have observed over the years that if the Coordinator particularly wants to go somewhere then the pilgrims tend to go along with that. In this case I wanted to go to Walsingham, and I thank you for letting me go there. This will be our first pilgrimage to Walsingham since before my time, since Walsingham I was in 1977 and Walsingham II was in 1987. (Louise of course was on 1987 and would be one of the proud wearers of the "I survived the Roxwell Flood" tee-shirt, had anybody designed one.) I've set a challenge to this year's theme team of Ceri, Bill, Sue and Simon by giving the pilgrimage a John Bunyan Pilgrims' Progress theme. John Bunyan was an extreme puritan and the last thing he would have given his approval to would have been a pilgrimage to a Marian shrine! The outline plan for the route is to set off from St Albans into Bedfordshire where John Bunyan lived, worked and was imprisoned many times. After rest days in Bedford and Kings Lynn we will head along a stretch of Norfolk Coast Path and swing into Walsingham from the North West ... all assuming that Accommodation Officer Clare is able to book the halls in the right places.

Two things go in the Autumn mailing: this newsletter and the notice / booking form for the reunion. I thank Gillian and Monica for stepping up to organise that for us. You will be pleased to know that 12 months hence the 2013 reunion is also already sorted thanks to Ceri and Alison – I'll save the details of that for a future newsletter.

I look forward to seeing you all at White City on the reunion and/or on the 2013 pilgrimage,

Best wishes *John*

Walking the Camino

Over last Easter several pilgrims walked with Maurice on the Camino in Spain from Burgos to Pontferrada. They were Carol Anley, Marie Fernandes and Catherine Scott. Next Easter they expect to reach Santiago de Compostella and receive a compostela which is a certificate of completion of the pilgrimage to Santiago. To be eligible to receive a compostela pilgrims must have walked at least the last 100 km to Santiago. Pilgrims provide proof that they have walked at least this distance by carrying a pilgrim credential with them which they get stamped at every place they stay at (usually refugios) en route. The credential can also be stamped at churches, cathedrals, and bars which are visited on the way. However you are warned about getting the credential stamped at too many bars! Many pilgrims choose to walk on from Santiago to the coast at Finisterre.

Best Wishes *Maurice*