

# NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 105

July 2013

*Dear Pilgrims,*

Thank you to all those who have booked onto this year's merry jaunt. We are a similar number to last year, with more in the first week than the second week this time. I warmly welcome you all, especially the new pilgrims, who will be wondering what they have let themselves in for. Don't worry, you will find that the established pilgrims are very friendly and you will soon pick up the routine!

The Walsingham pilgrimage is only a couple of weeks away now and I hope you are all ready for the off. It's never too late to get in some practice walks. We start off fairly gently this year with 3 days of 16, 13 and 17 miles followed by the rest day in Bedford. But the middle section of 5 days includes consecutive long (23 and 20 miles), albeit very flat, days on the banks of the River Great Ouse, so here you will feel the benefit of your preparation. We follow that river to King's Lynn just short of where it flows into the Wash, then after our rest day in that town, our final 3 days of walking in the north Norfolk countryside are similar in length to the first three days. Having walked 180 miles in 11 walking days, we are rewarded with a full Celebration Day in Walsingham.

This time last year, we were in the midst of the record-breaking wet summer and full of foreboding as to what the conditions would be like on the Exeter pilgrimage. However now I find myself writing this on the hottest day of the year in a prolonged sunny spell. So I can say at least that it seems probable that the ground will be drier this year, but who knows what the British weather may throw at us, so we must each come prepared for all eventualities, armed with the necessary equipment to guard ourselves against everything from heat stroke to torrential rain.

As is the case most years, a couple of halls are on the small side, so be prepared for a tight squeeze on those occasions. On those nights we will have to impose more order on the arrangement of bed spaces.

In the "mailing" of which this newsletter is a part, you will also find:

- The Route Cards: full information on each day's walking route and other events, which pilgrims carry with them as they walk
- "Come and Join Us for a Day": short summary of the Route Cards, to give to potential "day pilgrims" (people who walk with us for all or part of a day)
- Information on the Pilgrimage Theme, broken down to daily sub-themes
- The Pilgrim Code: guidance for pilgrimage community life
- A contact list of this year's pilgrims, so that you contact ones who live near you before the pilgrimage
- The Equipment List: guidance on what you need to bring
- Directions from St Albans Station to the school where we meet up on the first day, and spend the first night
- a document listing possible alternative transport (trains and buses) for each day
- When you arrive on the pilgrimage, there will be printed copies for you to take of:
  - the Route Cards (laser-printed so the ink won't run in the rain unlike the copy you may have printed yourself – therefore you will be able to leave your original copy with a relative or friend who wishes to follow you progress)
  - the Pilgrim Code

Regarding the theme, it will be helpful if pilgrims who want to lead a prayer stop based on a part of The Pilgrim's Progress let theme-leader Sue know before the pilgrimage so she can coordinate it. I also encourage everybody to read The Pilgrim's Progress, or at least Part I (we won't be concentrating so much on Part II). I have read it in the original language and I was surprised at how easy it was to understand; it is very similar to today's English with just the occasional unfamiliar word. It is out of copyright so you can buy it very cheaply. One passage from Part

2 is important: the words of the hymn from which our theme takes its title “To be a Pilgrim”! The more that we all prepare for the theme, the more we will all get out of it.

This article is mainly addressed to the pilgrims who are physically going on the pilgrimage, but I do not forget our loyal band of e-pilgrims who follow our progress on the web. Since the year 2000 we have produced a web photo-diary, uploaded every night signal-strength-permitting. We have been indebted from that time forward to Stephen Smith and later Aidan Simons who dedicated a couple of hours of their time every evening to putting the diary together: collecting photos from several pilgrims, selecting the best ones and composing words to accompany them. Last year Aidan was only with us for a couple of days so we had to fall back to plan B, which relied on a technical framework Aidan had put together, making use of Twitter. A few pilgrims, including myself, “tweeted” words and pictures to a twitter account and everything sent to that account automatically appeared on the pilgrimage web pages. We are going to be on Plan B again this year. To make this as effective as possible, I would like to encourage more pilgrims to join Twitter and contribute. I had never used Twitter or other “social media” before last year’s pilgrimage. It is easy to join. You can join from your PC and register your mobile number from there, and then tweeting from your mobile is a simple process. Twitter won’t take over your life in the way that Facebook might; you can just tweet for two weeks and then forget about it. And you don’t need to have a smart phone. My tweets last year were from a “dumb” phone – all I had to do was send a normal text to twitter’s phone number including “@pilgrimage2012” in the words and behold, my words appeared on the pilgrimage website. So, e-pilgrims, you might find that the diary doesn’t always appear in the right order, but bear with us and we’ll do our best for you. We are going to be using “@pilgrimage2012” again this year even though it is 2013. Although I now have a smart phone, you might not see too many tweets from me as I may have other matters to attend to now I am the coordinator.

I look forward to seeing you all at St Albans, or wherever else you will be joining us. It’s going to be a great ecumenical “mash-up” this year as we use a book written by a puritan as we travel to a Marian shrine. John Bunyan would not have approved but, praise the Lord, times have moved on. We pass through several Bunyan-related places on the first few days of the pilgrimage and have the opportunity to visit two related museums (entrance fee not included in pilgrimage price). Later on there is a place with a special connection to Thomas the Tank Engine, and also we have a prayer stop in the church that the Queen attends on Christmas Day! I am particularly looking forward to our arrival in Walsingham as I have never been there myself. In the traditional way we will first reach the RC Shrine, featuring the Slipper Chapel. The option is available to walk barefoot from there to the Anglican shrine, but our route will take us along the disused railway track rather than the busy road, so I don’t expect many of us will do that. Or will we?

Best wishes, *John*

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#### THE FARNHAM REUNION FRIDAY 25<sup>th</sup> to SUNDAY 27<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2013

Ceri Potts will be hosting the reunion in the hall of St Joan of Arc Church, Farnham. Put the date in your diaries now. The booking form will be included with the next pilgrimage newsletter.

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#### **BILL HAYNES RIP**

Bill, who founded our pilgrimages back in 1975 and was an inspiration to us all over the years, died before Christmas, with his funeral early in the new year. A memorial service was held in June, attended by a wide range of pilgrims from through the years. After the liturgy, we shared stories over refreshments provided by Gil’s family. We hope to set up a tribute webpage shortly.

#### Pilgrimage Contacts

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