

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 106

September 2013

Dear Pilgrims,

DEAR PILGRIMS,

I find myself echoing the incredulity expressed by Nick in this newsletter two years ago, brought on by the realisation that the pilgrimage and the AGM are complete and so all of a sudden I find myself over half way through my tenure as Coordinator and writing the 4th of my 6 newsletter articles!

I was very pleased with how smoothly the pilgrimage to Walsingham went, all thanks to magnificent team work. I don't know if it has always been so, but this time I found the two weeks of the pilgrimage itself to be the enjoyable part of the co-ordinator's year. I guess this was because all the pilgrims are close by and eager to lend a helping hand, and also because there are no pilgrimage versus rest-of-my-life conflicting priorities.

We had a fine selection of halls this year. Accommodation Officer Clare Gamble had gone the extra mile in maximising our comfort in some places e.g. finding a second hall in Barton-le-Clay. One hall which stood out was the building used by the Downham Market Christian Fellowship: this was a unit on an industrial estate which they had converted to use half for worship and half as a sports hall. We could have fitted in 200 sleeping pilgrims that night, but that would have been a bad idea as there was only one wash basin in the gents and one in the ladies! At the other end of the hall size spectrum, we had been particularly worried about the capacity of Nelson Memorial Hall in Burnham Thorpe, and indeed our worries were well-founded. It would have been a case of beds down and bags back on the van, had it not been for the local vicar, who we had met in the afternoon in his other churches in Burnham Market, offering us use of the local church floor as overspill. So it was that one pilgrim found himself sleeping on the grave of the father of Admiral Nelson!

Jonny helped his mother find the halls, acting from a route perspective, ensuring that we avoided the dreaded Hundred Foot Drain, before handling the chief route planner role on to Sue Adilz. In the time which had passed since Sue had previously held that role, certain technologies had come into widespread use: the Internet and Home PCs. Sue took on the new "methodology" of Anquet route-mapping software and Excel spreadsheets, and is staying on as Chief Route Planner for another year with the intention of packaging up the methodology into a form where it will be easier for future chief route planners and day planners. The tools are there to help, but sometimes they put up such a fight that one feels like Christian battling against Apollyon ...

... which brings us on to our theme "To Be a Pilgrim". Sue was also theme team leader and, closely helped by Tineke, organised a daily programme of readings from an abridged version of "The Pilgrim's Progress". We wouldn't normally have the majority of our prayer stops scripted in advance but this year it was appropriate and worked out well, with most pilgrims taking a turn to read. Another area that was more planned in advance than normal was the music for our daily eucharist. Helen had planned hymns for each day. These were not set in stone, but in most cases they were what we went with. Unfortunately some of our music resources have been mislaid somewhere: we have lost two black folders containing music and also most of the copies of the pilgrim songsheets, so please come forward if you know where these are.

The timings for the walk worked out well. The going under foot was mostly good so the only things to delay us were the teas and cakes provided by several churches (good work here by our church liaison officers Ceri and Roger). It would be that the longest day, the 23 miles from St Ives to Ely, was the only one where we got slowed down. I had imagined that the Great Ouse riverside path would be similar to the Thames Path but this was not so because it runs along the top of the levee. This was OK at first, apart from some pesky cattle getting in the way, and I thought we would be coming in ahead of time if anything, until we came to the first of the stretches that those cattle had not yet grazed. Now, faced with long grass, weeds including thistles, and concealed mole hills, we realised that those beasts had in fact been our allies. Just at this time some horizontal rain swept in too. Thus it was that the valiant back markers came in in the dark. Overall the weather was good: drier than the average pilgrimage, not too hot and not too cold.

On the pilgrimage, you do get to visit towns that you would never otherwise visit, and indeed experience whole landscapes which you might otherwise pass by. Walking along those levees, the river was below us to one side and the agricultural land of the Fens stretched away into the distance on the other side, and that land was noticeably lower than the level of the river! We passed a series of fascinating information boards telling us of the history of man's endeavours to drain the Fens, both by building additional channels (including the aforementioned "Hundred Foot Drain" aka "New Bedford River") and by pumping, powered first by wind then by steam. We learnt a great deal about John Bunyan's life and times in the museums at Elstow and Bedford, and at King's Lynn we learnt about local sailor George Vancouver who got a city and an island named after him on the Pacific Coast of Canada.

Our theme became Marian of course as we approached Walsingham. We took two weeks to walk there, but once we arrived our programme packed everything into a very short space of time. We reached the Catholic national shrine soon after 3 p.m. on the Friday then after time to explore the café, shop, and Slipper Chapel, we had mass in the Chapel of Reconciliation (part of the new build here since the pilgrimage last visited in 1987), including prayers for Bill Haynes and all departed pilgrims, before setting off along the disused railway line. We processed into the Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham and then gathered around the outdoor Altar of Light for further worship, arriving here dead on time at 6 p.m. Then we joined the multitude of other pilgrims who were there that weekend for dinner in the refectory (which was much more akin to a work canteen than a monks' dining room) but we weren't done yet as we had another service at 8 p.m. This was an Anglican Eucharist celebrated by the shrine administrator Bishop Lindsay Unwin (formerly the Bishop of Horsham) and we included our traditional litany of all the churches and pubs that we had visited on the pilgrimage. Finally after all that we could lay out our bed-spaces, which were either in the Pilgrim Hall within the Anglican shrine or in the village hall down the road. All of the Saturday was free time, and most pilgrims went to Wells-next-the-sea, many via the steam train on the narrow-gauge railway.

My plea in the pre-pilgrimage newsletter for more tweeters didn't bear any fruit but we did our best and more pictures were added into the web diary after the pilgrimage, so the result is more complete than last year's – do take a look.

So that concludes the coordinator's random thoughts on this year's pilgrimage. In addition to those mentioned above, I thank chaplains Fr David and Rev Simon, van drivers Howard and Peter, van drivers' mates Theresa and Sarah, caterers Hazel, Mary and the gang (week one) and Alison (week 2), Clare and Monica in the drinks car, and everybody who played a part in the success of this year's pilgrimage.

In this newsletter there is no need to say too much about next year's pilgrimage. It is suffice to say that it will be from August 9th to August 24th 2014, starting in Liverpool and finishing in Carlisle. The theme that we have selected, bearing in mind the centenary of the start of the First World War - as well as current events in the world - is PEACE (the way of St Francis). All the roles for next year seem to be covered but we are always looking out for additional volunteers. Planning is underway. Chief hall booker Bruce and his team are looking to get most of the halls booked before Christmas. Meanwhile Althea is going to make us a pilgrimage banner which we will bear aloft at the start and end and other significant bits of the journey. Althea reckons the banner will be about 30" x 20" and will come with a foldable pole about 60" long. She is looking for a volunteer to source or make the folding pole: any takers?

Two things go in the autumn mailing: this newsletter and the notice / booking form for the reunion. I thank Ceri for organising the reunion (hall booked more than a year in advance!), and she will find this good practice as I am delighted to announce that she is to succeed me by being Coordinator of the 2015 and 2016 pilgrimages.

I look forward to seeing you all at Farnham on the reunion and/or on the 2014 pilgrimage, Best wishes, **John**

THE FARNHAM REUNION FRIDAY 25th to SUNDAY 27th OCTOBER 2013
At St Joan of Arc Church, Farnham. Application form available at www.thepilgrims.org.uk



This year's cross, designed once again by Bruce, was based on a cross pattern from a Christian Roman mosaic, and suggests the (metaphorical) chains binding John Bunyan in his years of imprisonment. Bruce would like to know of any pilgrim who possesses the craft-skills and suitable equipment to take a turn at making the crosses in future years.

Thanks Bruce for all your labours on our behalf.

More Pilgrims reach Santiago de Compostela

Last April several A&B pilgrims completed their camino to Santiago de Compostela; i.e. Maurice, Catherine Scott and Carol Anley (A&B day pilgrim). They started in Le Puy in France way back in April 2008. Since then they have gone out to France and Spain for 2 or 3 weeks at a time to complete a section of the route. The final section was from Ponferrada to Santiago, When they finally reached Santiago they were awarded a certificate of completion otherwise known as a Compostela (anyone who has completed the last 100 km is awarded one). To view photos taken on this Camino go to: www.stfrancisramblers.ukwalkers.com *Maurice Hickman*

Please Pray For

- **Fr Rob Taylerson** is happy to be back in his Parish. He is making good progress in his recovery from severe pancreatitis but it will be some months until he is back to full strength.
- **Ewa Knebloch** is recovering from surgery & treatment for a malignant brain tumour.
- **Monica McLauchlan** is about to begin treatment for secondary breast cancer.
- **John Carmody** who is fighting a serious infection after a footbridge collapsed as he crossed it.

May they rest in peace

- **Robert Marshall RIP.** We have learnt of the sad death of Robert, who walked with us in the early 80s with his sisters Jane and Nicky.
- **Martyn Thornton RIP**(see below)

Martyn Thornton



For those of you who were on this year's pilgrimage you may remember that we received information at Bedford of the sudden and unexpected death of one of our pilgrim brothers, Martyn Thornton.

I first met Martyn playing basketball in Cardinal Newman school where Father Bill was the then school chaplain. Although Martyn wasn't into religion as such, he ended up being part of the Young Christian Workers (YCW) that Father Bill had set up in Portslade and then also came on one of the early pilgrimages in the 1980s Often seen trying to beat the queues at the stiles by scurrying through a gap under a hedge.

He went off to join the army and unfortunately, ended up having to be involved in the first gulf war. It was while bringing supplies to the front, one of his friends was shot through the throat and he had to hold him as he died. He also saw some other horrific things while out there and this undoubtedly left him scarred. He promised himself that if he survived this war with all of the possibilities of chemical weapons being used, he would come on another

pilgrimage. An American Padre had jumped into his little dug out hole and had given him a little prayer card called "A Cross in my Pocket" which he told us about when he did a God Stop on the 2nd Glastonbury Pilgrimage in 1991. Anyone who was there would remember this incredibly moving prayer stop.

Martyn also had to struggle with his wife the birth of their son. He was trying to work within the army. It was during this hit the vodka which was something he his life and sometimes he was sadly woes, his beloved wife Vicki passed away

Martyn came back to help us on the as we had found ourselves without a van in at the 12th hour as the previous had dropped out very late indeed.



having to go on dialysis after care for her, his new son and his period that he sadly started to had to fight with for the rest of unsuccessful. To add to his due to her illness.

pilgrimage in 2008 to Salisbury driver. He had literally stepped person who had volunteered

Martyn used to still meet up with some of the old Portslade and Hove pilgrims on a Wednesday and Sunday night to play pool and to be involved in a charity quiz. Tragically, he passed away on a park bench in Victoria Park,

Portslade on Wednesday 14th of August in spite of a long and valiant attempt to revive him by the paramedics. As it happens, the closest house to this incident belongs to another A & B pilgrim, Linda Eason (Green) who was on plenty of pilgrimages in the 1990s who quickly established that it was Martyn who had passed away and let our pilgrimage family know of what had happened.

They found that he still had that prayer card in his wallet.

I carry a Cross in my Pocket A
simple reminder to me Of the
fact that I am a Christian No
matter where I may be

This little Cross is not magic
Nor is it a good luck charm
It isn't meant to protect me
From every physical harm.

It's not for identification For
all the world to see It simply
is an understanding
Between my Savior and me

When I put my hand in my pocket
To bring out a coin or a key

The Cross is there to remind me
Of the price He paid for me.

It reminds me too, to be thankful
For my blessings day by day And
to strive to serve Him better In all
that I do and say.

It is also a daily reminder
Of the peace and comfort I share
With all who know my Master
And give themselves to His care.

So, I carry a Cross in my pocket
Reminding me, no one but me
That Jesus Christ is Lord of my
life If only I'll let Him be.

Martyn's funeral was at Woodvale Crematorium in Brighton and pilgrims gathered with family and friends afterwards at the Blue Lagoon pub adjacent to Hove lagoon. *Patrick Reeve*

Pilgrimage Website

As John mentioned in his piece above, a lack of Tweeters and poor network coverage meant that this year's "live" diary was a bit limited, but we have been bolstering it retrospectively, so it's worth a visit. You can still contribute photos and recollections, so long as they are "date stamped" so we know where to insert them.

We hope to backfill the 2012 diary in a similar way, so if you have relevant photos please contact me for details of how to send them in.

We've also brought some of the history up-to-date. *Aidan*

Pilgrimage Contacts

The Pilgrimage can be contacted via: **DABCEC**, 4 Southgate Drive, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 6RP

Co-ordinator – John Chenery - [email: coord@thepilgrims.org.uk](mailto:coord@thepilgrims.org.uk)

Bookings Secretary – Clare Gamble - [email: bookings@thepilgrims.org.uk](mailto:bookings@thepilgrims.org.uk)

Newsletter editor – Aidan Simons - [email: newsletter@thepilgrims.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@thepilgrims.org.uk)

Mailbase manager: Aidan Simons, [e-mail: database@thepilgrims.org.uk](mailto:database@thepilgrims.org.uk)

Web Site: <http://www.thepilgrims.org.uk>

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