

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 108

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Dear Pilgrims,

Thanks to all of you who have booked onto this year's ground-breaking trek from Liverpool to Carlisle; the first time our pilgrimage has ventured into the North West of England. Once again the pilgrimage has attracted around 50 pilgrims, with the second week in Cumbria proving slightly more popular than the first week in Lancashire. I warmly welcome you all, especially the new pilgrims, who must 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!

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)
- 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 Liverpool Lime Street Station to Liverpool Central Library where we meet up for registration (and further directions for day one in Liverpool)

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
- (on request) a "Who are We" leaflet to give to interested passers-by
- Prayers to use on the pilgrimage
- a document listing possible alternative transport (trains and buses) for each day

I hope you are ready for the off. It's never too late to get in some practice walks to build up your fitness, and that is particularly important this year. I am afraid it is no gentle start this year as a 17-miler on the first walking day is followed by a 23.5 miler. We always knew this would be a long day but it was only on close inspection that we realised that between Southport and Preston lay a river with few crossing points, and further the obvious looking route to the best crossing point turned out not to be a right of way, and so we are left with no alternative to the longest day for some years. The alternative transport provided by buses might be popular on this day! The following 5 days (2 to the rest day at Lancaster then 3 to the rest day at Ambleside) are fairly normal with mileages varying between 15 and 18.5 miles.

As we relax in Ambleside by the shore of Lake Windermere we will look around and spot that we are surrounded by mountains and suspect that the following days will prove to be a mite hilly. The next day gives a fairly gentle introduction as it is only 6.2 miles long. The significant ascent and descent will give a chance to practice your use of trekking poles if you have them. If you are an occasional user of the poles, this year is certainly an occasion when you want them. The next day is 18.6 miles long and with a greater ascent again followed immediately by a matching descent, and then comes a 14.2 miler in which the ascent and descent are more gradual but on which we reach our greatest height of over 2000 feet; this is the only day where we spend several hours above 1000 feet, so pray for good weather for that day in particular. Then there is just¹

one relatively gentle final hill to conquer on the last day into Carlisle. These days in the mountains could be some of the best walking days in our pilgrimage history, but if the weather is foul they could be some of the worst, so come prepared both with sun hats and sun cream and with serious wet weather gear. Having walked 180 miles in 11 walking days, we will be rewarded with a full Celebration Day in Carlisle.

As is the case every year some of our accommodation is spacious and some of it less so, so expect a tight squeeze on some occasions. On those nights we will have to impose more order on the arrangement of bed spaces. In Chapel Stile we are split between 3 separate halls, so expect to be instructed on which one to go to. The good news on the accommodation front this year is that in Keswick we will be staying in the unprecedented luxury of a youth hostel! I hope you won't miss the floor too much when snug in your YHA bed.

As well as preparing ourselves physically, I would like us all to prepare spiritually by praying/thinking/researching around this year's theme "Peace – the way of St Francis" which we adopt this year in the context of the anniversary of the start of the First World War. Do look at the route cards in advance of the pilgrimage as material on the theme, prepared by Bill Ward, is included at the top of each day, and this will help you prepare; there is no separate document on the theme this year. I reproduce the words from the day 16 route card here as they are particularly relevant for our preparations:

"The First World War produced a torrent of poetry that in its literary form is often so close to prayer in its cry from the heart. Read some if you can and bring a poem that has touched or moved you, with you to the Pilgrimage to share. Bring a favourite prayer or reading too and some thoughts to share, perhaps at a "Prayer Stop". Little Books as background reading might be good too. The "Warhorse" by Michael Morpurgo is great. Now out as Film and in production as a Play showing both in London and Berlin! "I, Francis" by Carlo Carretto (my copy 1982) brings Francis to life. Or just read about him on the web. The Poetry Book I have used mainly: "1914 Poetry Remembers" Edited by Carol Ann Duffy the Poet Laureate: WW1 Poets and Poems chosen by contemporary poets. It has been suggested too that we might plant doves of peace in places that touch us."

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. We will be producing the web diary as we go along via twitter again, like the last 2 years. Pilgrims tweet words and photos and as long as they include the magic word @pilgrimage2012 (yes it is 2012 not 2014) then the tweet appears on the pilgrimage website as well as on twitter. My appeal in this newsletter 12 months ago for more people to take up tweeting had no success, so I found myself acting as, by no means the only, but certainly the chief, pilgrimage photo-tweeter in addition to being coordinator, just like Aidan used to be chief photographer as well as coordinator, and with a Tilly Hat too! Thankfully the web diary gets populated automatically so I don't have to write it up in the evening like Aidan used to. Any new help in tweeting this year will be welcome. Due to varying signal strength, the tweets will not always appear on the web site in a timely manner, so they will appear on the wrong days in the wrong order sometimes, but please bear with us, e-pilgrims. After the pilgrimage is over we will go in and edit it so the diary will be in the correct order when viewed retrospectively.

This is the 6th and final newsletter article that I write to you as Coordinator. Although my tenure continues until after the end of the pilgrimage itself, my valedictory words need to be expressed now. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to take my turn in serving you for 2 years. As the Coordinator, I have to keep the pilgrimage utmost in my mind throughout the year but don't have to do stuff myself most months. The planning has gone smoothly this year thanks to the work of those who are the doers. To name but a few: Bruce Matheson and his team of hall bookers completed their task exceptionally early; Sue Adilz spends endless hours on pilgrimage tasks as Chief Route Planner, Equipment Storage Manager, and so many other things; Clare Gamble has taken over as Bookings Secretary in addition to Chief Printer and Chief Envelope Stuffer; Louise Chenery has had to put up with and soothe the occasionally stressed-out Coordinator. Fr Bill did the pilgrimage proud all those years ago when he set up the system of Coordinators serving for 2 years then passing the baton on, before they run out of energy and inspiration. There is actually a 4-year commitment involved in becoming Coordinator as the 2 central years are preceded and followed by a year as deputy co-ordinator, so I will still be involved in the planning next year assisting new Coordinator Ceri Potts, as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the pilgrimage and the 50th anniversary of our parent diocese. It's going to be another epic.

Turning back to matters at hand, I look forward to seeing you all at Liverpool, or wherever else you will be joining us. At Liverpool, you need to get yourself to Liverpool Central Library between 13.20 and 14.20, as you will read elsewhere in the mailing, for registration. If you get there early, you can relax in the library café, before the fun and fellowship begin. It's just so great to spend 2 weeks in the outdoors, particularly when it involves experiencing places never seen before, which is true for almost the entire route for me as I've only previously been to Liverpool, very briefly, and Lake Windermere a couple of times. Above all, I hope and pray that our pilgrimage this year will in some way make the world a more peaceful place.

Best wishes

John

SOS – Songs of the Spirit!

As you will appreciate the pilgrimage greatly treasures the songs contained in the SOS volumes 1, 2 and 3. But copies have been mislaid over the years (particularly volumes 2 and 3) and the books have long been out of print. So this is an appeal to anybody with their own personal copies of the books who is willing to give, lend or sell them to the pilgrimage to let us know. Or indeed anybody who is willing to scour eBay and similar sites for them! We would really appreciate getting our hands on some extra copies in time for the pilgrimage, so we will arrange collection and return if we can.

Wedding Congratulations

I am sure that many pilgrims will join me in congratulating Helen Parsons on her recent marriage to John Greenfield. Helen and John were married at St. Augustine's R.C. Church in Tunbridge Wells on Saturday 12th July. This is the church that Helen has attended for significant periods of her life and John also comes from Tunbridge Wells.

The very beautiful, sacred service began at 12 noon. Fr. Peter Stodart officiated and through his humour soon put the congregation at ease. Helen was given away by her father and her mother read the first lesson, 1 John 4: 7-12. Those of you who know Helen will not be surprised that the music was very well done indeed. For the entrance 'I was glad when they said unto me' C. Hubert H. Parry, Helen herself sang the psalm 'The Lord is my shepherd' in a modern setting and the local choirs sang 'the Lord bless you and keep you' by Rutter for the signing of the register. Both the choirs and the organist were applause-worthy.

The reception was held at the Spa Hotel, Ephraim Rd, Tunbridge Wells. Prayers were answered and the Lord provided fabulous weather after a rather shaky start. Pilgrims in attendance were Joan Gale, Bernie Magee, Anne Alcock, Maureen Hayes and myself, Ceri Potts. After a jolly fine lunch came the speeches. Pilgrims will be pleased that we learned from the best man that John is thoroughly kind, decent and reliable with very little history to be dug up however hard the best man had tried!

The reception continued with an extremely energetic barn dance which had most of the guests up on the dance floor and having great fun despite any initial reticence. The reception ended pretty late with a disco which left many wondering just where Joan Gale gets all her energy....

It was a perfect, joyous day for Helen and John starting out in married life. We wish them every blessing and happiness for their future together.

Mr and Mrs Greenfield thank pilgrims for the card and good wishes sent by the Pilgrimage committee. Helen will be known as Helen Greenfield when she joins this summer's pilgrimage next month.

Ceri Potts

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