

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 98

February 2010

Dear Pilgrims,

I hope that you all enjoyed a Happy and a Holy Christmas, and that the New Year has started well for you.

I was very pleased that so many of you were able to come along to the reunion that I organised in Theale, and from subsequent correspondence it appears that a good time was had by those who came (I use the word “appears”, because at the time I was too busy to really be taking notice!). The pictures of the event on the website do at least depict quite a few happy faces, and I would hope that they are representative of the event – photos that go on the website are, after all, selected for this reason (at least in part). If you have not had the chance to look at the website before now, please do so as you will find a lot of our history on there, and as for the statistics section ... well you will just have to see for yourself.

Since the last newsletter, your planning committee has been hard at work trying to make chaos from an organised plan (or do I have that the wrong way around?). Joking apart, there is a great deal that goes on “behind the scenes” between pilgrimages. On the face of it, the route from London to Birmingham seems quite straight forward but locating suitable halls does inevitably throw up some challenges. Rosemary has been persevering with this, and with some help from team Gamble that part of the jigsaw is nearly done.

Those of you who have volunteered to lead a day will therefore be hearing before too much longer what your start and finish points will be and Jonny will then be “taking the point” with regards to the planning as that particular process becomes critical; please could those who are planning a day try to get going as soon as you can so that this process runs as smoothly as possible. Danny who has handled the church liaison for some time is unable to continue with this role, and if you would like to try your hand at this, please do let me know. The task could be split into two sections; part one being the initial contact with parishes as details come in from the route planning, and the second part being a “double-checking” process each day on the pilgrimage itself.

A Youth weekend is being arranged for early April as a taster session for prospective young pilgrims so if you know of anyone who might be interested, do get in touch with Jonny about this. New pilgrims of any age are of course always welcome, and past pilgrims are always the best recruiting agents as you can describe things from your personal experience. Sue mentioned in her absorbing article in last February’s newsletter that one pilgrimage “job” that she did not feel she had performed was this particular one. Why not take some application forms out with you if you are doing a training walk in a few months time, so that if you happen to chat to other walkers along the way and they seem interested in the idea of pilgrimage if the conversation turns that way, you can take advantage of this?

By the time that I next write to you, it will be Summertime and the pilgrimage will be almost upon us, so if your legs do not like the shock of going straight into 2 weeks of fairly intense walking, do get some walking done a little earlier in the year.

May God bless you all,

Nick

**Young Pilgrims Weekend, 8-10 April 2011 at Burpham near Guildford.
See the website for details**

Gone before us, may they rest in peace

Margaret Howells (nee Archer) walked with us in the late 1970s before starting a similar pilgrimage in Portsmouth Diocese every Easter. She walked with us again from time to time. Having been diagnosed with cancer, she made the pilgrimage to Santiago del Compostella, against medical advice. Margaret reached Santiago as one of the last things that she did. On 12th November 2010 Margaret completed her pilgrimage journey on Earth, but for Portsmouth pilgrims her words will always be remembered “Alleluia! Alleluia! He is risen”. Rest in Paradise, Margaret!

Fr John Bentley came on the Pilgrimage for a number of years before being ordained in 2003 and has been ill for about the last five years with Pick’s Disease a degenerative illness not unlike Alzheimer’s. John was a great musician, and his memory lives on among the pilgrims in his setting of the Holy Holy that we use quite often.

Double Celebration for Patrick and Becky



St Peter’s Church Hall in Hove has been a place of happy and sad emotions for pilgrims of late, with a reunion, Frances Dean’s 70th Birthday party, and the gathering after Frances’ funeral last May. But on 5th February it was certainly a happy event that brought many pilgrims together with local friends and family. We were gathered to celebrate not only Patrick Reeve’s 50th birthday but also his engagement to Becky, after romance blossomed on the 2010 pilgrimage to St David’s.

Patrick has been a permanent fixture on the pilgrimage for over 3 decades. He was soon making an impact after a close encounter resulted in many stings and an ongoing “war on wasps”. Pilgrims from the 80s will remember “bunnies” and water fights: as I searched for photos for the slideshow planned for the party, this was one of the recurring themes! As time moved on the pictures were more likely to involve a glass of cider or a guitar (worn as an offensive weapon, leading pilgrims processing to their destination). Patrick was so often the one crashing back late from the pub or causing mayhem! But in 1996 the committee selected him as the new coordinator – taking a calculated gamble that his passion would make a good leader, which paid off, culminating in the 1998 St Michael’s Pilgrimage. Since then Patrick has worked tirelessly as a committee member and treasurer – but still a lovable rebel! Lots of people have put a lot into the pilgrimage over the years, but probably none has done so much over so long a period. So thanks, Patrick; and just because you’re 50 there’s no need to grow up just yet!

On the 2010 Pilgrimage, Patrick and Becky soon fell into step side by side and (without mentioning it on the website) we soon heard of rumours circulating back in Hove! There were smiles all round when the pilgrimage grapevine spread the news, soon after Christmas, that Patrick had popped the question and Becky had accepted. It was lovely to see them together, and we all wish them the very best for their future together.

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