

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 91

October 2008

Dear Pilgrims

Another year, another pilgrimage – but not “just another pilgrimage”: each of our pilgrimages is unique, and stays in the memory for different reasons. I fear that for many this year’s pilgrimage, in the least sunny August on record, will be remembered for grey skies and muddy ground, though I am more inclined to thank God that, despite everything, we only got seriously rained on once. And by the end things were drying out and maybe the memories of mud were fading.

One of my lasting memories will be how well we worked as a group. I recall back in the early days of the pilgrimage we sometimes got rather cliquey, but now there seem to be no barriers, and pilgrims of all ages and backgrounds mix freely. Maybe we now take this for granted, but I think it’s an aspect of the pilgrimage that we should rejoice in. (As Danni said, “My friends in Sweden wouldn’t believe it!”)

It’s good to see so many new (or not-so-new) pilgrims finding a role and contributing to the community. Many of the first-timers were “old hands” by the end! I’m not going to try to name everyone – Peter did that so well at Salisbury – but a few deserve special mention:

- Patrick, for jumping into the driving seat when we were left without a van driver, but with ingenuity and help from Clare still managing to walk most afternoons.
- Clare, Fr. David, Frances, Margaret, Martyn, Monica, and Rosemary – the non-walking support team who keep the show on the road: few of us appreciate how much they do behind the scenes, and we do take them for granted.
- Aruna, for taking on the thankless role (no, not “roll”) of Samie Queen and just getting the job done.
- Peter, for executing the leadership role so effectively despite the touch-and-go situation with his brother Kevin, telecommunications woes on the Isle of Wight (where mobiles don’t work), and the challenge of getting Sarah to the airport on time. [Kevin’s fight for life ended on the 11th September, and his funeral was held at St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Ryde on the 18th September. May he rest in peace].
- The web diary has become an integral aspect of the pilgrimage in recent years, and an important part of our outreach. This year we had more photo contributors than ever (and thus more photos), and an ad hoc committee formed who gave the thumbs up / thumbs down as we reviewed hundreds of photos, and I was very glad of their help and support.

No sooner is one pilgrimage complete than we have to start thinking about next year. A total of 12 options were proposed as we approached Salisbury and voted on at the celebration meal (and subsequently by those not present). The front runners were fairly clear cut, and the September AGM discussed these and agreed that (a) in 2009 we would walk to Lindisfarne from Lastingham, and (b) in 2010 we would walk to Aberystwyth from Bristol (or some variant thereof).

The monastery of Lindisfarne was founded by Irish born Saint Aidan (see right), who had been sent from Iona off the west coast of Scotland to Northumbria at the request of King Oswald around AD 635. It became the base for Christian evangelising in the North of England and also sent a successful mission to Mercia. Monks from the community of Iona settled on the island. Northumberland’s patron saint, Saint Cuthbert, was a monk and later Abbot of the monastery, and his miracles and life are recorded by the Venerable Bede. Cuthbert later became Bishop of Lindisfarne.

Planning is already underway – the proposed dates are 15th-30th August, with the option of using the Bank Holiday Monday (31st – the feast of St



Aidan) if we need another day. Reserve the dates in your diary now! It is possible that logistics may restrict numbers – small villages mean small halls. Lastingham, which was our destination in 2002, was the monastery where both St Chad, and his brother St Cedd were both Abbot, and Chad and Cedd studied under St Aidan at Lindisfarne. The proposed route takes us across the North York Moors, inland of Middlesbrough and the Teesside sprawl, a rest day in the ancient Cathedral city of Durham, then via Jarrow (where St Bede wrote his “Ecclesiastical History of the English People”), under or over the River Tyne, then following the beautiful Northumberland coast (with a rest day by the sea) to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne.

With this newsletter you will find an invitation to the reunion at Epsom being organised by Danny and friends – a chance to relive the Salisbury Pilgrimage (maybe without the mud?), to renew friendships, to catch up, but above all To Be A Pilgrim.

Aidan

WEDDING BELLS



On Saturday 9 August the wedding took place between Bill Haynes and Pamela Pullman (better known to us all as 'Kate'). After 10 years of close friendship they could hardly be accused of rushing into anything. Kate looked stunning in a cream lace dress and Bill looked pretty stunning himself in a cream suit and brocade waistcoat. The ceremony took place in St Peter's Chapel in Chalfont Common with a reception in the nearby parish hall. The wedding was conducted by Rev Charles Overton and the homily was given by Fr Ken Payne.

A number of pilgrims attended and it was good to meet some of Kate's family who had flown in from the USA. During the speeches some of Bill's pilgrim exploits were retold and it was great to see Bill and Kate together at last looking so completely happy. After a short honeymoon, including a visit to Germany with some of Kate's relatives, they have settled back into everyday life in their home in Chalfont St Peter.

Keith Donachie

EVESHAM to SALISBURY August 2008

This year's Walking Pilgrimage, which was our 33rd year of walking the landscape of England and Wales, began at Our Lady's shrine at Evesham, where we gathered and then celebrated Mass on the Saturday evening. On the Sunday morning we set out for Salisbury Cathedral, 2008 being its 750th year, we stopped briefly for morning prayers in the ruins of the old Abbey at Evesham and then stepped out into the beautiful Cotswold countryside making for Salisbury, 166 miles as we walk it, to the south. We passed through and stopped at many places of worship on the way, from minute ancient Saxon Churches, grand Anglican Churches, to bright Methodist churches and even sleeping on the floor of URC churches. We averaged 15 miles a day, with rest days built in. We ate well, fuelling up for a hard days walking. We sang “Our God Reigns” each day but changed the words to Our God Shines! To encourage dry weather and it seemed to work. It often rained hard in the night but by morning it was dry. The mud was a problem at times but didn't stop us. There were often over 50 of us, Christians from the USA, Germany, Belgium, Wales, Scotland, England and three lively New Zealanders. Bishop Kieran last year asked why we do it: we do it to become closer to God, exploring the Spirit in our fellowship, our prayer, our worship and in the joy of our musical celebration. To walk in this green landscape with the beauty of open skies, dramatic hills, vales and waters is to feel the gift of God's precious creation. We are green Pilgrims trying to walk in the footsteps of Christ our guide and “front marker”.



Our Theme was to focus on “Mary in Our World Today“, using the Magnificat for reflection and focus. It was fascinating to explore this from an ecumenical stance.

Bill Ward

P.S. Just a plug for a book that Pilgrims might like to read: "A Little History of the English Country Church" by Roy Strong published 2007 by Vintage Books. It gives a good potted history, very much relating to the world of Anglican churches we pass through as pilgrims and stop for prayers. It's out in paperback now.

FROM THIS YEAR'S WEB DIARY

Caroline

"It's lovely to be able to follow all the walking and the fun you're all having. Higher power helping to keep you fit and strong one day at a time."

Margaret

"Have been keeping up with the Pilgrimage on the diary pages and it provides a welcome relief when I check on your progress. Please can someone put a prayer intention in the box for me good to see Martyn getting involved in the Pilgrimage again - maybe we can have another game of pool sometime!"

Tineke

"Love to see my tail travelling so devoutly. It looks good on you. I told Kester's mother about it. She was touched and sends her regards."

Steve

"Hope you're all having a good time. You seem to be from the diary. It's just amazing how everyone always looks exactly the same (well almost - I won't mention ageing!)."

Stephan

"The website lends another aspect to the pilgrimage that was lacking when I went on the two I did. It is nice to see the faces of some people I recognize from 10 or 12 years ago. And they still look so young and healthy; it must be the English air. God bless you all. I will be following along in my prayers."

Pilgrimage on Social Networks

Find us on Facebook at <http://www.new.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=13203916228>

And on Xt3 ("Catholic Facebook") at <http://www.xt3.com/group/view.php?id=1430>

Remember you don't have to be young to use social networking - just young at heart!