



AUTUMN 2017 NEWSLETTER

The Companions – Fighting Isolation 2017

Dear Companion,

Welcome to the CoM Autumn 2017 Newsletter – with all the news from the last couple of months including Walsingham and everything you need to know about our current activities and upcoming events - not least of which is the Carol Service on **Wednesday 6th December 2017 at St. James's, Spanish Place** at 7.30 pm and all our other Christmas activities.

Walsingham

It was great to see so many Companions present this year from around the country, and particularly to meet up with some of our new (locally based) Cambridge CoM. Many thanks to them but especially to Jack and Roddy Straker and the OMV for working so hard to make the weekend such a success.

After a few prayers to Our Lady of Walsingham, Max, Duncan and I also eventually completed the journey there by bike. It was a tough call. After a late finish on Friday due to west London traffic chaos we were 11 hours on the road on Saturday but after 1 crash, 11 punctures, a burst tyre and a minor case of hypothermia we made it!



With the backing of lots of wonderful sponsors though I am delighted to report that we managed to raise over £2,000 for our work with the homeless. That's lots of sleeping bags, underwear, rucksacks and socks...THANK YOU for your support (we might even try again next year).

Homeless projects in London

Thanks to the fantastic efforts of many devoted volunteers, I am proud to say that we managed to keep all of our projects running during the Summer period including the Breakfast Club. This was a huge achievement with many of us away on holidays but was much appreciated by our guests. Many other projects shut down over the Summer, so attendance was way above the norm, touching 120 per week on Thursdays. In fact we will need to limit numbers next year. But well done to everyone who helped.

We are now in the throes of our Christmas plans; Carols, Christmas parties and parcels. Our objective this year is again to provide about 600 parcels around the country; London 300 (125 at the Party, 175 on the street), Oxford 100, Cambridge 50, St.Andrew's 50, Edinburgh 30, Aberdeen 60, Cheltenham 25, Colchester 25. Patrick Knollys and I had a very productive meeting with Primark and hope to make real inroads into the £12k plus spent last year, though the exact extent of their help has yet to be finalised.

Care Homes & The Elderly

Progress has now been made with our planned initiative to get more Companions and other volunteers (would-be Companions) into the OSJCT homes as part of our 2017 Fighting Isolation campaign. Thanks to Philippa we have printed our small poster/handbill and these will be sent out to all the RC parishes local to individual homes, inviting their parishioners to get in touch and volunteer with us.

I delighted to say also that Cambridge CoM have been able to follow up on the Care Home link established by Johanna during her time in Cambridge, and are planning to renew our volunteering efforts as new undergraduates arrive in the City in the next couple of weeks (see further below). For key dates please see the regional reports below.

In London we have just hosted another delightful tea party at the Oratory attended by the residents of St. Wilfrid's and the Royal Hospital. Thanks to all those who took part and made this such fun.



On the Christmas front, thankfully Sarah C is still helping us by obtaining details of any activity funding with which we can help, as well as numbers for the Cribs which we will be supplying again this year as many homes are still without. The Wiltshire Homes have expressed a desire for one each as they have none, plus the two new Gloucestershire homes and Hamish is checking how the Oxfordshire homes are set. As the Cribs cost about £200 each we will not be able to supply everyone but plan on 7 or 8. I am just about to order these so we can get them to the homes in time.



Other Projects & Events

Nehemiah - you will recall from the last newsletter that Duncan, Mark, Raphael and I did the Prudential Ride London (100 miles) at the end of July. Sporting our 'Companions riding for Nehemiah' shirts we managed to raise several hundred pounds for the cause. On the volunteering front, I am just providing Joanna with a list of 20 (female) Companions who will be targeted to assist in setting up the new primary home, the lease for which I believe is about to be signed.

Birmingham CoM have their **Bishton Mini-pilgrimage** on 4 November 2017 and welcome all comers.

International Holiday Camp 2018, the CoM are to be responsible for the transport. We are proposing a launch in January to engage Companions for specific tasks. Our involvement is being coordinated primarily by Mathew Doran.

Scotland, if I may again mention our continuing support for the **CoM Coatbridge Friends Together club** for teenagers with special needs and our recent £1,000 donation to the Dial a Journey mini-bus appeal.

St.Rose - I'm pleased to say the CoM Council has resolved to continue our support for this annual holiday to the Calvert Trust, Exmoor for the severely disabled youngsters at the school. There can be no doubt that this is a wonderful and important project, and without our support in providing 50% funding it is almost certain that it would not take place.

The Regions

Gloucestershire

There are two new OSJ Care Homes opening this year in Trowbridge and South Cerney, and a further two next year, Thornbury and Stow in the Wold. We have agreed to give each a donation of around £200 to get their Amenity Fund started (Amenity Funds pay for extras for the residents ie hire of coach, perhaps an entertainer at Christmas time etc.)

In Cirencester, Anna Fuller has relocated her after school French Club to Paternoster House. This involves about ten 5 year olds who attend for a lesson at the Home. Residents are able to join in and enjoy the songs at the end. It is a great success and they are loving seeing the children. At half term a full day will be spent at the new Lakes Care Centre where those residents that are able will join in with the craft and the cooking. OSJ have been most welcoming and the parents are very happy about it too.

Christmas Parcels - Signpost who we work with to assist the local homeless, would be delighted to receive as many as possible. We are able to keep the homeless supplied during the whole year.

Special mention should also be made of Julia Barton who has over the last five years had a special Mass in her garden for the Companions. This started with just about ten of us attending but this year there were nearly 40 of us. Since about 2012 Julia has held a wonderful Christmas party too. There is a spectacular tree, a huge open fire and a fantastic tea. Crackers, carols are sung and Peter opens the bubbly. We are so grateful for this.

Special thanks also to Sue Rooker, one of our stalwart volunteers, for her unstinting efforts at Athelstan house and more recently at Paternoster House.

Wiltshire

On 26th September 2017, Wiltshire Companions were invited to the opening of Goodson Lodge, Trowbridge. Goodson is a Care home specialising in dementia and is the 19th home in Wiltshire. It is light and airy with a lovely welcoming feeling.

Wiltshire Companions now have a Facebook page where each month we invite prayers for the residents and carers of one of the County's homes - this month is Coombe End Court, Marlborough:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2028718194081944/permalink/2034917990128631/>

Our Wiltshire Christmas party has already been advertised – **6th December 2017**.

London

What can one say, incredible work is being done. For example, last Monday saw more than a dozen volunteers, the breakfast club is fantastic and Thursday is amazing. Thanks a million to Patrick, Kate and Helena and our army of devoted and wonderful volunteers. Key dates are:

- Volunteers thank you reception is on **1st November 2017** in the Monckton Room below Holy Redeemer, Cheyne Row SW3 5HS after 6.30pm Mass for All Saints.
- Hairdressers coming back to CoM cafe on **30th November 2017**, they are brilliant and we are so grateful as are our guests.
- **30th November 2017** for CXRs and possible flu jabs (if there is a nurse available) at St James's, Spanish Place for our guests.
- Christmas Party for our homeless guests at Spanish Place - **Thursday 14th December 2017**;
- Soup kitchen **closed Thursday 28th December - open on 4th January**, just a short break whilst so many are away and Crisis opens for the Christmas period.

(Contact Kate McKenzie (Thursday Café), Patrick Knollys (Monday Soup Run), Helena Letman (Wednesday Breakfast Club)

East Anglia: Georgie Holtevens (georgie@holtevens.plus.com)

We are now getting up to 20 guests a week, a huge surge since we have recommenced serving the hot meals a couple of weeks ago and a nice pudding normally a tart with custard or cream. They also receive pack ups (sandwiches to order made by us) to take away with them plus fruit, crisps and biscuits each week.

Our Christmas lunch for Colchester is scheduled for **Wednesday 13th December 2017**.

We now have lots of helpers - Jane, Caroline, Margaret, Gemma, Sally, Adrian and myself and have recently been joined by Veniana and Fatima who have fitted in beautifully and who worship at the Church. Plus the lovely Pasquale a trainee for the priesthood has attended and is hoping to help us on a regular basis. Thank you all so very much.

Oxford University CoM: Hamish Hiscock (Hamish.hiscock@lmh.ox.ac.uk)

For full details see the most recent Oxford CoM Term card and Newsletter with the details of our current regular activities, as well as some events we have going on this term.

A very successful Freshers' fair saw over 300 new signups to our mailing list, taking the total to over a thousand. As expected, we've seen a real boost in volunteer numbers thanks to this influx of enthusiasm.

After continuing with a soup run and our Saturday shower project throughout the long vacation, our full complement of activities is now back up and running. We are also hosting a couple of introductory and hopefully instructive talks by externals to enthuse and engage some of the new volunteers with our work with SEN children and the homeless.

Looking ahead, there's of course our annual Christmas dinner for the homeless, and planning is underway for a trip with some of the residents of Isis house to Dorchester Abbey.

Cambridge University CoM, Mathew Schellhorn (mts21@cam.ac.uk)

Mathew Schellborn is doing devoted work steadily building up the CoM in the university. As mentioned previously Mathew has organized a volunteering programme at Addenbrook's Hospital that will offer 10 students each term the opportunity to be involved. Thank you to all those who have signed up already and good luck.

If you know anyone up at Cambridge do encourage them to join in with the CU CoM, the more there merrier.

Scotland & st Andrews [liam@liamdevlin.co.uk – 07968 119 895] and **Marc Morris** [marc_morris@outlook.com - 07961 206436]

Marc Morris is also having considerable success in expanding the membership of the CoM north of the border, and is engaged in a number of different activities including a homeless project in Dundee. The Freshers reception to garner support amongst the new intake took place and we have a further 22 new companions in St Andrews. Thanks to all those who attended.

The Northern Marches: Fred Wyrley-Birch [f.wyrley-birch@andersonandgarland.com – 07790 132 834]

Northumberland continue to hold their highly successful tea parties. Thank you especially to Alice for all her work in organizing these, and thanks to all of you who manage to help. This is a real highlight for our guests, with a sing-along, a very jolly game of bingo and other attractions.

This is such a wonderful project, and has of course inspired the CoM in London to do the same. This is really something we could roll out in every part of the country, so if you want to have a go in your area do give me, or Helena (07798 558109) or Alice a call.

South East: Jamie O'Meara [jamie.omeara@btinternet.com – 07771 566 100]

Having re-established our relationship with St. Wilfrid's OSJCT Home, Arundel, after various changes in personnel, we would very much hope to continue to support them. Unfortunately, we lack critical mass in the SE but if you can help Jamie and Sean Armstrong do be in touch with them direct.

In particular it would be great to visit, offer lifts to Mass, and get involved in the many activities at the home. Certainly, we will be aiming to take an active part in the Advent and Christmas celebrations, details of which Jamie can provide.

South West: Duncan McKechnie, [dajmck@tiscali.co.uk- 07990 594 441]

Duncan reports that the St. Rose School, holiday camp visit to the Calvert trust, Exmoor was again a huge success and much appreciated. Jackie, the principal of St. Rose wrote:

'.. a great big thank you for supporting us once again ,what a fantastic trip it was ! We all really do appreciate your support! Thank you.'

The CoM Council at its last meeting on 18 July 2017 resolved to continue our support for this annual trip, and I hope you approve. These severely disabled youngsters would simply not get this opportunity without you.

Birmingham & West Midlands: Adrian de Redman [blue.candle2@hotmail.com – 07799 188 628]

As always also our BrumComs continue with their monthly decade of the Rosary for the good of the Order and Companions after the 11.00am Pilgrims Mass at the Birmingham Oratory (*on the first Saturday of each month*). All are welcome, so if you are in the area do get along if you can and of course contact Adrian if you need help getting there.

Richard Fynes continues with his efforts on our behalf in Leicester, and would also be keen to hear from you if you are local. And don't miss the Bishton Mini-pilgrimage on 4th November 2017.

Overseas

Overseas, we have resolved to continue our support for the Christian families in Bethlehem. Robert Atwater has now made 5 trips to the area and confirms that the money we have committed (£500 per quarter) is reaching the families, helping them with medical bills and other essential costs.

For example, one young boy who was suffering growth problems due to his impoverished circumstances is now receiving the treatment he needs and has started to grow properly again. This is a wonderful thing, and very much down to the support that we are able to offer. Nonetheless, there are some political challenges in operating in the area and to avoid these we are working alongside the Order of St. Francis as Fr Elvin did in the past.

Funding

As noted in our previous Newsletter, expanding our work has increased our costs, and whilst the subscriptions are increasing as our numbers grow they cannot cover everything that we are now doing. For example, our 'spend' on food and kit for the homeless is now significant, Thursdays is costing about £1,000 per month, Wednesdays about £500 per month and Mondays only a little less.

Additionally as referred to above our Christmas parcels which we mean to repeat this year cost us about £12,000 last year and we will need at least a couple of thousand for our OSJCT projects. We also need to pay for the new washroom at Golden Sq and to meet some bills at St.James's, pay for our Tea Parties etc.etc.

We are looking to some external charitable sources of income as well as potentially a block grant from BASMOM. No doubt also fundraising events from cycling marathons to dinners can play a part. For example, Mathew, wonderfully, has offered to do a concert for us nearer Companions Day in the new year. We are also looking at other

possibilities such as, say, our own charity shop. If you have any other ideas please do drop me a line, all suggestions (and cash) gratefully received!

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains absolutely central to everything we do. The unified safeguarding policy adopted last year continues to be our governing document. Much work has been done recently, however, developing the final suite of policies and protocols to accompany the same, and these will be posted on our website as soon as approved and adopted by the Order.

In addition we will be promulgating a simple volunteer registration form to meet safeguarding guidance, to be completed by those attending our many activities involving vulnerable adults. In addition that is to our stated aim of systematically obtaining DBS clearance for Companions.

Website

We are (v. slowly) working on our website: <http://orderofmalta.org.uk/companions>

If you would like to assist I can be reached as you know on 07730 070403 or at my new dedicated email chair.companions@gmail.com or via Annie, our uber-efficient secretary on secretary.companions@gmail.com.

KEY DATES

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| 1 November 2017 | London Volunteers Reception, Holy Redeemer, Chelsea
6.30pm |
| 4th November 2017 | Bishton Mini-Pilgrimage, Birmingham CoM |
| 6th December 2017 | Wiltshire OSJCT Christmas Party
<u>Our Carol Service at St. James's, Spanish Place, 7.30pm</u> |
| 13th December 2017 | G&W Residents Christmas Party, The Market Place,
Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1HS |
| 14th December 2017 | London Homeless Christmas Party,
St.James's 7pm |

Many thanks and God bless,



Paul Letman, CHAIR CoM