



July 2017

SUMMER 2017 NEWSLETTER

The Companions – Fighting Isolation 2017

Dear Companion,

Welcome to the CoM Summer 2017 Newsletter – providing a round up of recent events and an overview of the things to look forward to when you return refreshed from your Summer holidays.

As soon as we get into September we will be launching our new Care Homes initiative to encourage new Companions and volunteers from the parishes local to each OSJCT home. We are also making plans for the Autumn and the Winter, including providing more Cribs for Christmas in the homes this year.

Also as you will read in greater detail below, our many homeless projects are going great guns. But these have their costs and we are currently spending about £2,300 a month from our subscription income on food and water, sleeping bags, rucksacks, underwear, socks and other essentials, as well as van hire, laundry, hall charges etc. etc.

Brilliantly we have been offered free surplus clothing from Primark to assist with our Christmas offering, and are looking to BASMOM and others for grant aid to ensure we can cover our costs, but ultimately despite all the generous donations and discounts we get from various suppliers we depend on your continued support.

Please do try to recruit as many Companions as you can over the Summer to ensure that we can meet our expanding commitments; tell your friends, family or colleagues about everything that we are all doing. God bless, and thank you as always for your prayers, efforts and generosity.

AGM & Lourdes

Firstly, just a quick word about our AGM in Lourdes. We had a very well attended and successful evening, at which Sarah Cornell's years of wonderful service were acknowledged. Sarah, who is stepping down at the end of September, was delighted with our present of the small olive wood Madonna and Child gifted by the poor Christian families in Palestine that we help to support.

At the meeting and as required under our rules, our current subscription of £60 was reviewed and the proposed budget for 2017 considered. The subscription was approved unchanged and our proposed budget was also duly approved. In terms of numbers, I am pleased to say that we are approaching the 700 mark and hope that we can add significantly to this number in the coming months.

Homeless Projects - a reflection

"You may recall the rain we had the other Tuesday night, I was even woken sleeping comfortably indoors. It is on those wet mornings that the queue is longest. By the time we arrived at 6am at the church hall on Golden Square to start setting up the Breakfast Club there were already two dozen people, sad and soaked, heads down, standing in line with their soggy bags and few bits and pieces, waiting.

We let them straight in anyway, Patrick making the teas and coffees first and then setting the tables around them. Pots of honey and jam, bottles of ketchup and brown sauce, and the much appreciated menu cards. Then the porridge and cereal and chopped fruit and fresh toast buttered by Anthony and croissants. Jess organizing the list for the hot showers and helping with supplies of dry clothing. More tea and toast served up by Pierre and Peter and friendly chat. Gill busy at the sink.

Within half an hour a warm and cheerful hubbub of conversation as the steam rises off drying guests, Alan, Donal, Gus, John, Paul, Pavel, Mick, JZ, James...Then the main event, the eggs and bacon, black pudding, kippers and beans courtesy of Alex and Anna and our other chefs. Two hours later, we say our goodbyes, sorry to send them back onto the street, but they smile and wave and thank us sincerely, cared for and at least in better shape to face the day."

One thing that would be a help at Golden Sq would be an extra shower, but we still can't find a space. Happily though we have found room for an added WC and washroom and are now awaiting an estimate from the contractors.

Good news also is that we have made some progress with Fareshare to supply food for our London homeless projects. It is a slightly complex system whereby you have to click on your phone to reserve food and then collect within certain times. We will be experimenting on Thursday evenings.

In addition, Patrick Knollys and I have just met with the CFO for Primark and they have wonderfully promised to support us with supplies of clothing all around the country

where they have stores, not only for Christmas but on a regular basis too. This will make a significant difference to our costs for the Christmas parcels and will obviously make a major contribution to our finances.

The CoM and OSJCT

We are now focusing very much on the OSJCT homes as part of our 2017 Fighting Isolation campaign. As well as appealing to existing Companions, we are launching an appeal for volunteers (would-be Companions) in RC parishes local to individual homes. Thanks to Elizabeth Irvine we now have a database of parishes local to the various OSJCT homes, and will be writing to them in early September to invite the involvement of parishioners. Philippa Leslie has been working hard putting together the artwork and photography for a suitable poster/flyer to accompany the mailshot.

Some key dates for various OSJCT events and parties are as follows:

- 19 September - Craft Fair, The Civic Centre, St. Stephen's Place, Trowbridge, BA14 8AH
- 13 December - Residents Christmas Party, The Market Place, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1HS
- Max is organizing a Tea Party, date to be announced

It should not be forgotten though that not all our work with the elderly is in OSJCT homes, nor need it be. We have a weekly bridge club in a BUPA home in Battersea. Whilst residents from St. Wilfrid's, Chelsea and In-pensioners from the Royal Hospital Chelsea make up our guests at our bi-monthly Oratory tea parties. Likewise, our Northumberland Tea Parties led by our amazing Alice are not restricted to just OSJCT residents.

By Region:-

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

Kate reports another busy few months at the Companion's Cafe. In the region of 80 - 95 guests continue to visit on a Thursday evening where food comes from 15 different food outlets throughout the area - all picked up by volunteers. We have a fabulous group of volunteers of all ages who come each week to chat to the guests - a vital part of the evening. We celebrated St Patrick's day with rather a lot of green food, but also continue to try and support the homeless in a few other ways.

We offer a variety of different clothes and toiletries and we have also been involved with the NHS who brought a mobile unit for the guests to have a Chest X-ray and instant treatment if necessary. The unit will be returning in the Autumn to give flu jabs and medical information to anyone preparing for the winter on the street. Last week, we had an amazing team of hairdressers visit us, delivering some 30 haircuts for our guests, it was an absolute triumph and they have promised to come again in

the Autumn. We have also booked in a chiropodist, which will no doubt prove at least as popular.

It is fantastic that our London Facebook page (Companions of Malta – London) is followed by 206 people, with some posts reaching 700-800 people. This enables us to appeal effectively for support when most needed. Certainly, all donations are greatly welcome - books for the soup kitchen library, shoes, belts, trousers and shirts - amongst other things.

Helena thanks all those who came to our most recent Oratory Tea Party on 17 May 2017. These are such happy occasions, with singing and much enjoyable conversation (see below). On Friday 28 July we have been invited back to St. Wilfrid's care home on Flood Street, so if anyone is available do come along for 3pm.



Our next regular Tea Party at the Oratory will be about the third week in September – the date will be circulated and posted on the website and London Facebook group page as soon as it is arranged.

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

Birmingham CoM recently held their annual Newman Pilgrimage at the Birmingham Oratory. We are most grateful to the Lady Mayoress of Birmingham who attended both the Mass and lunch afterwards. We are also very grateful to Archbishop Conti so kindly celebrated the Mass this year and gave such an inspiring sermon, amongst

other things drawing on the origins of the word Companion and the message of sharing that it conveys.

The pilgrimage to Bishton Hall in honour of Bl Karl of Austria will be on Saturday 4 November 2017. As always 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.

May I record here as well our thanks to the Fathers of the Birmingham Oratory for their continued prayers and support for our activities in Birmingham as elsewhere.

Gloucestershire & Wiltshire: Sarah Cornell [sarahcornell@sky.com – 07817 499 829]

On to our spectacular G&W CoM, who undoubtedly merit a report all of their own; it is impossible to do justice to all that has been going on in a few lines. Many thanks to Louise, Lavinia, Max, Pat, and Anna amongst others for their efforts.

We recently had a delightful and much appreciated visit for Athelstan residents to the house of local Companion Anna Longbridge, and of course another home visit to Sydenhams with Mass in June, hosted as in previous years so wonderfully by Julia & Peter Barton. Thanks also to Tuft Dobson for hosting a super coffee morning for residents of Paternoster House.



A group of our finest also recently attended the new OSJ Lakes Home (see above) – and may I make special mention of Elizabeth Grieve (in the centre) one of our devoted volunteers at Paternoster who has recently undergone a very serious operation, our love and prayers are with her as she bravely convalesces.

In addition, several Companions in Cirencester are regularly supporting the homeless there by helping on a Monday night, offering food and friendship to those marginalized in the town.

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.

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

Liam Devlin with the help of a revitalized group including David McClure, the Scottish Delegate, and Tim Hall, Ian Southward, Marc Morris and Liam Hackett, are expanding our work in Scotland. Liam is involved in teaching English as a foreign language to refugees asylum-seekers, whilst other Companions are assisting with the wonderful Coatbridge project for those with special needs, which we have been able to support with a substantial grant.

It is very exciting also that, thanks to Marc's enthusiasm, our CoM group in St. Andrews has got off to such a terrific start. A full report from Liam D (Convener for Scotland) on the many activities in which Scottish Companions are engaged is available on the website. If you know anyone already attending or newly heading to university at St. Andrews, do encourage them to get in touch with Marc whose details are above.

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

Please find attached the OU CoM's most recent Newsletter, slightly out of step because of the end of the academic year but still offering an wonderful window on all the great work which is being done by our many student volunteers in the University. The report contains some impressive statistics about the work that is being done.

In terms of our recent happenings, Hamish reports that 'we managed to continue all 11 of our weekly projects despite the rigors of exam term. On the social side of things, we also had our annual Garden party and end of term dinner, both very enjoyable occasions. Since the end of term, our volunteer availability has obviously dwindled, but we're still working hard to keep the Saturday Shower Project running throughout the vac, as well as a weekly soup run.'

Looking ahead to next term, we'll be restarting our full schedule of projects, hopefully with an influx of new volunteers -- who no doubt will be lured in by our impressive Freshers' Fair stall! In addition, Hamish is trying to set up a regular 5-a-side football game with O'Hanlon House, the local homeless shelter, which we hope can be a good bit of fun for volunteers and guests alike. We are also organising a one-off trip with a group of SEN children and young adults to the Cotswold wildlife park, though this is still in the early stages of planning. Not forgetting the usual events around Christmas time (dates yet to be finalised).

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 when they arrive.

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.

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

The Colchester Homeless meals have now been going for two and a half years and have proven to be very popular and a real success. We have up to 15 men and women attend each week. We also have a great team of helpers – Adrian, Jane, Sally, Gemma, Caroline, Margaret, Sonia and Nick (see below) also helps when he has a day off or can take one.

Adrian Rowley, who is a mainstay of the project, has written the following piece, which touchingly describes the difference that our work with the homeless can make.

[Nick's Story](#)

When we first opened, Nick was homeless with no money and of no fixed abode. He tended to flat hop between friends spending a night here and a night there.

During his time coming in on a Wednesday I took him under my wing. I then arranged for him to do up a friend's garden which was a complete mess and he turned this into a masterpiece. From then on I organised various jobs painting and decorating for him and a complete makeover of my mum's garden. She looked on him as her third son. Nick then met a lovely lady and they both supported each other. Nick now has a full time job doing block paving.

This year Nick and his partner Marie were blessed with a baby son and we all went to the Christening in the Priory Church next to the Hall where we feed the homeless.

Nick now comes and helps us when he is not working as he says he wants to give back all our help we gave to him. This is just one of the few success stories that we have achieved since we opened.

Please join the group any Wednesday lunchtime if you can and, looking ahead, don't miss out when it comes to the Christmas lunch in Colchester, which is always a brilliant event.

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

As part of EA we can also now include our Cambridge University CoM headed up by Mathew Schellhorn. They recently had a very well attended reception that raised some £300 to help them get going.

Mathew is working on developing links with Addenbrooke's Hospital, to offer volunteering opportunities (you should have received an email/letter about this). A group has also been able to visit the Colchester project. Other possibilities include helping at Walsingham (would that we could assist Mgr Armitage perhaps as first aiders).

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.

Plans and Projects

The Nehemiah Project. You will recall that this an existing programme for the rehabilitation of young addicts, often ex-offenders, supported by the Bishop's

Conference. Joanna Whittaker is closely involved with the project and a letter will shortly be going out enclosing a menu of volunteering options.

STOP PRESS!! Under this heading also I should mention that the heroic quadrumvirate of Mark B, Duncan McK, Raphael V and myself will be riding the **Prudential Ride London 100** to fly the flag for the CoM and our involvement in this project. Thanks to all our generous sponsors so far.

The International Holiday Camp. This will take place in the UK from 11 August to 18 August 2018. There will be about 450 participants from over 20 countries. The CoM have been invited to be in charge of transport (meeting/greeting and logistics etc). The first demand upon us is that we raise a substantial sum, this is a big ask and will mean some dedicated fund raising. All suggestions gratefully received. The exact timetable should be produced by the end of the year, so that early in 2018 we can sign up to specific tasks.

And don't forget the **Walsingham Pilgrimage, 15-17 September 2017**. This is a great weekend and a super opportunity for Companions from around the country to come together, as well as meet up with OMV and above all spend time with some of our disabled and elderly guests.

Overseas

On the international front, once again Companions have been closely involved in the Lebanon project. Hannah Palmer (ex-OMV and now a Companion) has just returned from an inspirational trip and writes:

A group of over 30 Companions, OMV and Members of the Order have just returned from this year's fantastic summer camp in Lebanon in partnership with the Lebanese Association, The camp takes place at the new and spectacular, purpose-built camp in Chabrouh, North of Beirut.

Lebanese women and men, suffering from a range of physical and psychological disabilities, enjoy a week away from the institution in which they live. A ratio of 30 patients to one nun is exchanged for one-to-one care, giving them the chance to spend time indulging their passions whether that be reading about British Royals in Hello!, playing football or swimming in the sea. Essentially offering care and great fun (see below).



I loved every minute of the camp, it is an intense but truly unique experience which I would recommend to everyone. Whether your skills lie in caring, cleaning or catering we need you! The more volunteers that we have, the more guests we can invite, so please do join us in 2018.

In addition I am pleased to say that we are maintaining our support for poor Christian families in Bethlehem, as we have before. This as you know is our contribution to support the increasingly threatened Christian communities in this part of the world, and continues the work of Fr. Elvin who established this initiative.

Robert Attwater has visited the project a number of times now and has been extremely moved by the plight of these families. He is full of praise for Anton Mousallam who heads this up locally, and who is punctilious in providing details of the families helped and the destination of our grants. In the light of this we have decided to continue our support for this work.

We have also been able to continue our support for the Order's work generally for the relief of the refugee crisis, and the work of the Order in Lebanon through our support for the Holy Family Hospital and the Lebanon Camp.

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 pletman@3harecourt.com or via Annie, our uber-efficient secretary on secretary.companions@gmail.com.

Securing the Future

Importantly, we need to plan for the future in terms of personnel. We have a brilliant new coordinator in London in Kate, and fantastically Max in Wiltshire, Hamish in Oxford, Mathew in Cambridge, Marc in St. Andrews.

But Sarah as our longest serving coordinator in Gloucestershire has rightly announced that she will retire on 1 October 2017. We need someone just as inspirational to take over, to continue the wonderful work that she has done. That could be you.

In other areas the same applies and we must now actively seek to secure suitable successors to ensure that the CoM continues to grow and prosper. Thanks to you, your involvement and continued support.

KEY DATES

15-17 September 2017	Walsingham Pilgrimage http://www.omvactivities.org.uk/activities/order-of-malta-walsingham-pilgrimage-2017
September 2017	Next Oratory Tea Party, date to be confirmed
19 September 2017	Wiltshire Craft Fair, The Civic Centre, St.Stephen's Place, Trowbridge, BA14 8AH
29 September 2017	Johanniter Dinner (in aid of CoM Homeless Projects)
18 October 2017	London Volunteers Reception, venue tbc
13 December 2017	G&W Residents Christmas Party, The Market Place, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1HS

**And a Date for everybody's diary, our
Carol Service at
St.James's, Spanish Place
Wednesday 06 December 2017**

Many thanks and God bless,



Paul Letman
CHAIR CoM