August 2018

SUMMER 2018 NEWSLETTER

The Companions – Fighting Isolation 2018

Dear Companion,

What a fantastic effort, thank you very much to everyone for working so hard over the Summer and keeping all our projects in full swing. From the IHC to our thriving Colchester soup kitchen, tea parties, bumper numbers of guests at all our London operations and volunteering as ever in the care homes. As you will see below it has been a busy time.

Looking forward, refreshed and reinvigorated by the summer holidays, we are now planning for the colder months ahead, including some new and extra services, all exciting stuff.

Thank you as ever for your continued support and prayers as we strive ever 'to practise our Faith and to practise charity.'

Summer Round-Up

Many congratulations to the whole team who helped with the International Holiday Camp. The IHC was an amazing triumph thanks to the incredible work of the OMV and its dedicated leadership, and the Companions were absolutely delighted to help. Meeting and greeting at the airport (see your very own brave secretary (far left) below with other happy greeters) and in the following week with the London outings.

Special thanks though to Antonia Teixeira who worked extremely hard coordinating our efforts over the 3 days in London, meeting up with guests at the London Eye and then taking them via Westminster for more fun at Covent Garden, negotiating everything from the traffic to the suspected terrorist attack on the Monday.

On top of this we have managed to keep all our homeless projects running throughout, with new and old hands doing valiant work whilst others (the writer included) were away on our hols. Thanks again to everyone who kept the flag flying.

The importance of continuing through the Summer is not of course to be underestimated, given the fact that many others e.g. St.Patrick's, are closed during August and September. The extra numbers demonstrating the acute needs on our streets, with longer queues on Mondays in Lincoln's Inn Fields (LIF), guests overflowing onto the street for breakfast at Golden Square and well over 100 a week at St. James's on Thursdays.

Not to forget of course another fantastic CoM Tea Party at the Oratory, and last but not least the 'CoM Cycling Team' turned out once again in support of our collaboration with the Nehemiah Project and to raise money for our work. Mark, Raphael and myself all did the ride, which was a tough call, as you may recall this was the one (very, very) wet day of the season.

Still we all made it, cheered on by the Nehemiah project leaders and spurred by the thought of the funds raised and the warm welcome that awaited us at the end. Thank you to our stalwart supporters (inc. Solomon) for hanging in there and waiting for us at the gates of Green Park.

OSJCT Care Homes & Elderly

The summer also presented a number of seasonal opportunities for us to support the OSJCT Homes. Through a series of £250 donations to their amenity funds we have helped improve some of the outside planting and spaces at the Grace Care Centre, Thornbury, Edwardstow Court, Orchard House and Wyatt Stroud. The before and after pictures make great viewing (but sadly are not available in digital format for this newsletter).

Further, Peter and Julia Barton once again generously hosted Mass for Gloucestershire Companions in their beautiful garden. Thank you also to Canon Tom Gunning (who we were delighted to welcome as an Hon. Companion) for celebrating the Mass. Over 50 of us (Companions, supporters and guests) enjoyed a glorious day, with lots of prayers offered up for our work.

As for our initiative to get more Companions and other volunteers (would-be Companions) into the OSJCT homes by targeting local parishes this is still very much on the agenda, but timing and working with the Homes has proved sensitive. Guided by Charles Nicholson we are working on this and I very much hope we will be able to get going shortly, targeting parishes close to specific Homes that are short of volunteers.

In Cambridge, with the start of the new term in a few weeks we will get going again visiting residents in a local care home (contact Matthew Schellhorn **mts21@cam.ac.uk**).

Plans

As well as the developments above (and below) we are looking for suitable office type premises to open 'Companions Assist' a 2hr drop in advice clinic, to assist homeless and disadvantaged people fill in forms, write letters and work on CV's and job applications. The inspiration for this has been efforts we have been making recently to help some of our guests into work.

We helped one of our regulars get a job interview at the Delaunay the other day, and although he didn't get the job it was a constructive exercise. After breakfast last week we worked again on his CV and another job application. We have other guests, like David, who need time on a computer to enter photographs in competitions and so on.

It would be a great thing to offer this kind of assistance and support on a regular, structured basis. First task, some (free use) premises and then let's see how it develops.

Regional Updates:-

London Kate MacKenzie london.companions@gmail.com (Thursday Café), Patrick Knollys patrick@knollys.co.uk (Monday Soup Run), Helena Letman helenaletman@gmail.com (Wednesday Breakfast Club)

Where to begin, apart from heaping praise on all our fabulous volunteers? But perhaps I should start with special thanks to Patrick and the Monday teams, particularly given that we have just passed out fifth anniversary of the soup run to LIF. Well done one and all of all ages who turn out to drive the van each week and to care for and chat to the guests.

Particular thanks also to the Notre Dame University Freshers Programme, who have each week this Summer sent along half a dozen cheery and willing students to help at St. James's on a Thursday. It is exciting that other organisations e.g. Hoares Bank, have also added us to their volunteer programmes, which is a great thing all round.

With Kate always working on new ways to help our guests, it is fantastic to note all of the following:

- Gabriel (an experienced housing lawyer) is now attending every 2 weeks to offer legal advice and support
- Over the summer we were able to entertain our guests with mini-recitals from a great visiting pianist, as well as a World Cup evening with live matches on the radio.
- Plus we now have regular visits from our specialist volunteer podiatrists, manicurist and hairdresser; a huge thank you to each of them.
- We are also introducing art classes from students from North London art school.

London Companions and Thursday helpers were key, as detailed above, in helping the IHC (in pouring rain and after Westminster terrorist attack!) on their visit to London. All fantastic stuff.

Even if you can't make it along for any of the soup runs or kitchens, and many of us cannot, you can still get involved; currently Kate says we need some more books for our very popular mini-library at St. James's. In addition, we are always in need of (nearly new) shoes and clothing for our guests, if you have anything cluttering up your wardrobes and cupboards. If you were able to send or drop in any items that would be great.

Other good news, we have just placed the contract to build a new washroom and WC in one of the front basement vaults at Golden Sq (The Church if the Assumption & St. Gregory) where we run our Breakfast Club, which should be a great help with our early morning queues for showers and the loo. Some of the money is coming from the Parish, but this project would not be possible without the generous support of our major donors and we and the rough sleepers who we welcome into the cosy warm at 6.00am each Wednesday morning could not be more grateful.

Upcoming also. Our next Tea Party at the Oratory (for our guests from St.Wilfrids and the Royal Hospital) is on **Wednesday 26 September 2018**. Whilst the weekly bridge club restarts on 10 September for residents at a Care Home in Battersea. Contact London.companions@gmail.com or Helena on 07798 558109 for details of these activities.

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.

It would be wonderful of course if we could develop our activities in or around Birmingham, for example, replicating our successful tea party formula if not offering some provision for

the homeless. If you would like to help us take this forward, do please contact Adrian or get in touch with me.

Gloucestershire & Wiltshire: Max Rumney [rumney@mail.com] (and Sarah Cornell still helping with Gloucestershire – 07817 499 829)

In addition to the matters reported above, Companions attended the Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Volunteer afternoons when OSJ give us a fantastic tea and put on an entertainment to say thank you. These are fun events and much enjoyed by all. There are about 130 volunteers in Gloucestershire alone.

The summer also saw the opening of the new Grace Care Centre in Thornbury and we were pleased to able to offer initial support for its amenity fund. Four of the homes each received £250 for their Amenity Fund which benefits the residents directly. Two were for specific projects and two were to the new care homes to start off their Funds.

In total, there are now 21 homes in Gloucestershire alone and it would be fair to say that each of them requires more volunteers. Hence the importance of our planned initiative in the local parishes, which subject to liaison with OSJCT will be rolled out as soon as possible. We will also be repeating this winter our Cribs for Christmas programme, progressively ensuring that each home has a beautiful Crib to adorn their celebrations.

Meanwhile the Companions are continuing their commitment on a Monday night to our work with Signpost in Cirencester, when about 40 or 50 people of all ages gather for a hot meal and support. If you would like to get involved do be in touch with Max or myself.

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

Northumberland continue to hold their highly successful tea parties and had a brilliant Christmas doo. Thank you especially to Alice for all her work in organizing these, and thanks to everyone who devotes their Wednesday afternoons 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 Fred a call.

Scotland [thomas@murthly-estates.com]

Welcome to our new Scottish convener, Thomas Steuart Fothringham, who reports from Scotland as follows:-

NORTH

A prolonged drought in Caithness, where many people are dependent on private water supplies, became a crisis when about 400 families in the county ran out of drinking water, and neither Scottish Water nor Highland Council were prepared to help. With £500 of funding, the Wick-based Companions began to make relief preparations when, at the very last minute, the Scottish Government relented and made funding available to local councils to deal with the problem. The exercise was very useful and we will be better prepared for next time.

NORTH-EAST
Companions have made contact with the pastor at River Church in Banff, and we plan to deliver Companions' parcels there at Christmas. This will be in addition to the Christmas supper for the homeless and parcel deliveries at Aberdeen Cathedral.

FIFE
Companions took part in the annual procession through Dunfermline in early June to honour Queen Margaret, the Patron Saint of Scotland. The procession was led by Archbishop Leo Cushley.

With the new University term about to begin at St. Andrews, new group leader Henry Kirk is busy making preparations for carrying out the extensive activities carried out by students both in St. Andrews and Dundee. Special thanks to Henry.

LOTHIAN
Companions took part in a Day of Recollection, led by Archbishop Leo Cushley and held at Dundas Castle in July, courtesy of Sir Jack and Lady Stewart, helping to serve at Mass and make lunch a sociable occasion for all.

Companions will also be helping in various ways at the forthcoming Mass and Investitures in Edinburgh on **10 September**, which will be the Order's main event in Scotland this year, with guests including consulates from countries with which the Order has diplomatic relations. (Mass will take place at St Margaret's Chapel at the Gillis Centre, 100 Strathearn Road, Edinburgh EH9 1BB at 11am celebrated by Archbishop Leo Cushley. This will be followed by investitures in the Order "Pro Merito Melitensi" by H E Richard Fitzalan Howard. Thereafter, a reception will be held in the Gillis Centre grounds (if wet in the lecture hall).

SOUTH WEST
The social club in Coatbridge for people with special needs continued its monthly meetings, with the most recent taking place in early August.

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

Firstly, a huge thank you to Hamish and the whole OU CoM team for all their brilliant work over the last year. We are delighted now to welcome Jamie Wilmore (Trinity) who is taking over as lead of the OU CoM.

Preparations are underway for Freshers Fair, to recruit new volunteers for our many term time activities: a dozen weekly activities in all including homeless outreach, Companions Cafes and our museum project for children and young adults with special educational needs. There will of course be the term dinners as well and I look forward to seeing everyone there.

Many thanks again to Hamish, Sina and all the OU CoM for their amazing efforts (including keeping the accounts). Please do encourage everyone you know at Oxford to sign up and help.

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, please 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's holiday camp visit to the Calvert trust, Exmoor, early this Summer 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.'

You will also see the attached 'Thank you' page illustrating the many fantastic activities on offer. The CoM Council at its last meeting in July resolved to continue our support for this annual trip again in 2019, and I hope you approve. These severely disabled youngsters would simply not get this opportunity without you.

East Anglia: Georgie Holt-Evans (georgie@holtevans.plus.com)

Georgie reports that "we have had a steady flow of guests over the summer (approx 10-15 each week) at our Wednesday lunchtime 'soup kitchen' which has been wonderful. We have been serving them delicious salads and sandwiches with cold drinks during the heatwave."

Further positive things to report. Adrian Rowley has a meeting in Clacton coming up with a view to possibly setting up another smaller soup kitchen there. He is hoping we can get this organised and ready to start by early 2019. The idea is to delegate a Clacton based person/s to run this.

Recently, a couple of our homeless regulars were interviewed with Adrian by the local press and an article printed in the Essex County Standard and Colchester Evening Gazette. This has led to other homeless charities/volunteers within the Colchester area making very positive contact with us and donations of duvets etc. One called OpenDoor Colchester and the other an online forum called Help the Homeless. We plan to meet up with them in the Autumn.

Finally, we will shortly be organising a date for our Christmas lunch and continue to have an excellent rota of volunteers (at least 4 -6 each week).

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

Many thanks to our CU Companions and especially Danielle who have been at the forefront of our plans to provide a defibrillator for the Walsingham Shrine. Using both locally raised monies and central funds we will be donating the necessary funds (£2,500-3,000) to Mgr Armitage on the Saturday evening. Thanks to all those who have supported this project.

Meanwhile, Matthew is making plans for the start of the new term, to develop our volunteering work and opportunities both with the homeless, hospital visiting and in a local care home. If you know of any relatives, friends, godchildren etc going up to Cambridge this year do point them in the direction of the Cambridge CoM.

Matthew has also very kindly agreed to organize a fundraising recital, to take place in the new year in London. We are currently investigating possible venues, details to be announced in due course.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains central to everything we do in caring for those with whom we work, as is emphatically restated each week, for example, at the outset of our Thursday soup kitchen. All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with in accordance with the Unified BASMOM/CoM Safeguarding Policy (available on our website or otherwise on request).

In this context, may I report, therefore, that having received a safeguarding complaint from Scotland in March, the party concerned was immediately suspended and a safeguarding investigation instigated. The matter has now been fully investigated in accordance with Safeguarding Policy and a final report prepared in July 2018.

The report concluded (1) that there was no sustainable allegation or ground of complaint and (2) that there was no justification on safeguarding grounds for the suspension to continue. Accordingly, the complaint has now been dismissed and the suspension previously imposed has been lifted. Nonetheless, appropriate measures have been taken to guard against any repeat allegation, to learn from this incident and to improve our processes.

Overseas

As reported previously 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 Atwater has visited the project a number of times now and has been extremely moved by the plight of these families. He is also full of praise for Anton Mousallam who heads this up locally.

Additionally, some of the proceeds from the Christmas Carol Service and Reception on **12 December** will once again be dedicated to the Holy Family Hospital, Bethlehem and to support the Order's Lebanon Projects.

Website

Not to be missed, please see our new updated website (with thanks to Andrew Cusack) at the following address: http://orderofmalta.org.uk/companions

If you would like any further information do be in touch with your regional coordinator or of course I can be reached on 07730 070403 or at chair.companions@gmail.com or via Annie, our uber-efficient secretary, on secretary.companions@gmail.com.

KEY DATES

8 September 2018	**Malta Day, Westminster Cathedral 2.30pm (contact James Casha, jncasha@msn.com)**
10 September 2018	**Order of Malta Mass, Investiture and Reception St Margaret's Chapel, Gillis**
14-16 September 2018	**Walsingham Pilgrimage (inc. Chairman's 100 sponsored cycle)**
26 September 2018	**Oratory Tea Party, contact Helena on 07798 558109**
October 2018	**Companions (London Volunteer) Evening tba**

AND EVERY MONDAY, WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY AND MORE AND OF COURSE

12 DECEMBER 2018	**CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE & RECEPTION 7PM AT ST JAMES'S**

Many thanks and God bless.

Paul Letman
CHAIR CoM