The Companions of the Order of Malta – "Fighting Isolation"

Summer Newsletter – Aug 2019

Dear Companion,

Welcome to our (new look) Summer Newsletter, to bring you up to date on some of our recent activities and highlight upcoming events and projects.

First though, thank you as always for your unfailing support and prayers which enable us to deliver so much to those we serve - the poor, elderly, disabled and downtrodden. Fighting isolation wherever we can.

Lourdes - it was great to see so many Companions in Lourdes on another wonderful Order pilgrimage. Our AGM was hugely well attended and in terms of official business, our Annual Report and budget were approved and annual subscription maintained at its current level. Following the meeting we hosted our Accueil Companions for our customary dinner at the Terrace, for which many thanks to Kate McK, Christina and David D.

St. John's Day – thank you to all Companions who were able to attend the Order's St. John's Day Mass and celebrations. It was a great day for us as Companions as Kate, Christina and Andrew were made up as members of BASMOM. They each have our prayers and congratulations, and deep gratitude for all their hard work on behalf of the CoM.

The Loo – at last I am delighted also to say that we have completed building works at Golden Square to convert the basement vault, so that we now have 2 loos and washroom facilities together with the shower at our Wednesday Breakfast Club. Thank you to Michael and his team for getting the work done, to BASMOM and all those who have helped fund this very welcome addition.

Meantime our homeless projects continue unabated, serving and caring for hundreds of guests a week. In London numbers remain depressingly high, with long queues on Mondays, around 35 at Breakfast on Wednesdays and now 100+ a week on Thursdays (see below).

Even before we've properly launched our new Tuesday evening kitchen at Bethnal Green demand is high, whilst Georgie reports an increase to some 20 guests a week in Colchester and Oxford is always busy too. Would that none of this was necessary, but until the crisis of poverty in our midst is resolved we must and will do what we can.

Elderly/OSJCT – thanks to Charles N (our brilliant new Deputy Chair), Max R, Sarah C and others, and a new head of volunteering at OSJCT it looks as if our volunteering initiatives with the Homes is beginning to move forward (see G&W below). David Dowden our new head in the SE has taken up the baton with great enthusiasm too and is making plans with the care home in Arundel. Whilst I know many of you (Sarah C, Matt W, Alex H) are also working away quietly getting things done on the ground, for which we are all very grateful.

Summer – as always, if I may, a special call to arms over the Summer period. With so many of us (me included) away, if you are still around and can help on any of our projects please do, you will be more than welcome! Also, Mark B and Duncan McK will once again be leading the way (metaphorically) in the Prudential 100 Cycle to raise funds for our partnership with the Nehemiah (drug rehabilitation) project, so good luck to them.

Finally, if you have a chance whilst on holiday, do send a postcard to one of our Lourdes guests (Annie our brilliant Hon. Sec) has the list if you need an address) or to your local OSJCT Care Home wishing the residents and staff well from all of us.

Overseas – spare a prayer too for some of our number, including 2 of our Breakfast Club chefs (Anna C and Helena L) as well as others, ex-OMV and friends who have volunteered to cook and cater on an Order holiday camp for disabled adults in Romania (see above) and are I understand serving up a giant quiche for lunch as I write.

Thank you and God Bless, from your Chair, Deputy Chair, Regional Leaders (see below) and all the CoM Council.

The London Tea Parties

Very marvellously these have become a regular (bi-monthly) feature of our calendar and have undoubtedly been growing in popularity, with increased numbers of attendees from the RHC and a range of different homes.

On 15 May 2019 we had another wonderful event, not only with a bumper attendance and entertained by the excellent Chris T at the piano, but serenaded by everyone's favourite singing In-pensioner, the now famous Colin Thackeray (of BGT fame).

Needless to say we are all looking forward to the next event on Wednesday 11 September 2019. If you can help or know of anyone who might like to attend or at least receive and invitation do please be in touch with Helena on 07798 558109.

And from the Regions:-

London **katemackenzie@btconnect.com** (Thursday Café), **patrick@knollys.co.uk** (Monday Soup Run), **helenaletman@gmail.com** (Wednesday Breakfast Club) and (Tea parties)

All our weekly activities continue, serving what seem to be ever increasing numbers of homeless and poor guests. Special thanks though to all Companions and volunteers who will be keeping open all of our projects throughout the Summer.

Just to confirm the times for everyone, particularly if you are able to lend a helping hand during August when so many are away:

Monday, meet NE corner of Lincoln's Inn Fields, 7.45pm (van arrives about 7.55pm and all supplies distributed by circa 8.30pm, plenty to do handing out sandwiches/fruit/water and picking up any litter to ensure the council doesn't shut this vital resource down)

Tuesday, St. John's Soup Kitchen just opposite Bethnal Greed Tube station, from 6pm to about 8pm, Annie J and Tom would be really pleased to see you, as they battle on until we are able to get the serious amount of building work required done).

Wednesday, Breakfast Club, 24 Golden Square, 6am to 8.30am, do get on the WhatsApp group and turn up at any stage to help, it goes in phases from setting up, serving the cooked breakfast, with lots of clearing up at the end).

Thursday, St. James's Spanish Place, Soup Kitchen, from 6pm to 9.30pm. This is particularly busy at the moment with St. Patrick's Soho and other options closed, so you will be greeted with open arms (as always).

Thanks to Kate and her amazing team this is a uniquely enjoyable and loving place for our guests. We even had a D-Day themed evening (at the suggestion of one of our guests) and a Wimbledon evening; all of which has a serious point, treating people with respect and as we would hope to be treated if we too fell on hard times. Hence also the legal hep and other vital services which Kate organizes from the 'foot doctors' (see below) to the barber.

We have also been blessed with very generous donations, of both funds and fantastic supplies of shoes, from the Johanniter Ordern in London; thank you Pieter and Joachim and their great friends and donors.

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

Birmingham CoM led inspiringly by Adrian devotedly continue their monthly Mass and prayers at the Oratory. All in the area are welcome to join them, just be in touch with Adrian.

We also have a number of local Seminarians interested in becoming Companions as well as exciting offers of support in terms of premises etc. We have ambitions to start both a Birmingham Tea Party and separately a soup kitchen offering; if you think you can help us with this, let's speak. Thank you to everyone applying themselves to the cause.

Cambridge: Matthew Schellhorn mts21@cam.ac.uk - 07545 234848

It is true to say that Cambridge University CoM has been put on the map over the last few years thanks to the leadership of Mathew Schellhorn, getting involved in local projects, distributing our Christmas Parcels to the homeless, first aid training, dinners and other events. Sadly, given his teaching and music commitments in London, not to mention a young family, Mathew is stepping down. We are hugely grateful for all he has done.

Happily, Danielle Cagliuso (post-grad) (dmc66@cam.ac.uk) who has worked closely with Mathew has offered to take the reins. She is aiming to build on the good relations we have with Primark / Wintercomfort in Cambridge and will be keeping the student body informed of all our activities and events, including, when we get there, distribution of the first of the Christmas Parcels at the end of November, before the end of term.

All our activities will appear on our CU Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/pg/COMCambridge/events/. Do ask friends, children of friends, Godchildren etc to be in touch with Danielle and support our CU CoM.

Thankfully too Matthew's amazing talents are not lost to us though, as he sets out on a new project of bringing

music to our elderly, whether in the OSJCT homes or RHC or other homes where we have a connection.

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

Our Colchester Homeless Soup Kitchen is now feeding an average of about 20 guests per week on a Wednesday lunchtime with the help of at least four to six volunteers each week working on a rota basis (12 volunteers in total).

Thank you to all the team, including Adrian R, Caroline S and Sally of course.

Gloucestershire & Wiltshire: Rumney@mail.com - 07590 851417

Many thanks to Julia and Peter B for hosting once again their annual Garden Mass for the CoM. A beautiful setting for a perfect day. Thanks to Fr Christopher Whitehead too for celebrating Mass; after which we were delighted to welcome him as a Hon. Companion.

Max and Charles have now met with the Trust's new volunteering manager, very recently appointed, with the aim of kick-starting the drive for volunteers in Wiltshire. This needs to be a strategy that meets the Trust's needs but also helps build the work of the Companions. As referred to above it does appear that this plan is now back on course. Thank you to both for steering this forward.

Meanwhile, Companions continue to make a difference in the homes. Not least, Anna-Kate F's holiday club at the Lakeside Home is a joy, lighting up the residents' day.

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

Northumberland continue to hold their highly successful tea parties. 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) a call.

Oxford University CoM:

In Oxford, we continue to be overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of volunteers. Our drop-in shower project remains a fantastic activity that is a real treat to be a part of, thanks in no small part to Josh who works tirelessly week in, week out to lead the project.

Many thanks to everyone and particularly Jamie W for his leadership and John Eidinow for his ever present and careful oversight. As Jamie wrote in the last newsletter, we can be confident that the Oxford Companions will continue from strength to strength with such a great group of fantastic people.

If you know of anyone (friends, children, Godchildren etc. etc.) starting at Oxford in October or already there, do tell them about the OU CoM and encourage then to get stuck in. In term time there are some 15 activities a week from which to choose!

South East: Jamie O'Meara
jamie.omeara@btinternet.com – 07771 566 100
David Dowden southeastcompanions@gmail.com

After years of devoted leadership from Jamie O'Meara, to whom there were many tributes paid at our AGM and for which he is sincerely thanked, the SE have a new leader in David Dowden, also ex-OMV and like Jamie known to many.

Picking up on Jamie's great service, David has just visited St. Wilfrid's OSJCT Care Home in Arundel and reports: "The purpose of my visit was to see whether we could host a Companions tea party at the home. Rather surprisingly I was told that there are only 12 Residents in the home out of a maximum occupancy of 24 residents. I asked where the Companions could help. Yes, they would welcome a tea party… so I will try and arrange something for the Autumn.

Also whilst they have most of the equipment they need they would really welcome a donation of parasols and garden furniture for residents to be able to sit in the beautiful gardens. I also believe we should help if we can with increasing the number of residents."

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

Duncan reports: The CoM Council has resolved to continue our support for this annual trip by St Rose's School to the Calvert Trust, and I hope you approve. These severely disabled youngsters would simply not get this opportunity without you.

May I also use this slot to pay tribute to Duncan who will be joining Mark B again this year for our Prudential 100 Ride on 4 August 2019 to support Nehemiah (see above). Duncan is also this year leading our annual Ride to Walsingham (on 13-14 September 2019) to raise money for our work with the homeless. If you would like to join in, do drop him a line.

Scotland (Thomas Steuart Fothringham thomas@murthly-estate.com)

Under Tom's brilliant new leadership and with the super efforts of many others, the Scottish Companions are in good shape, as amply demonstrated from their own report – attached. Need I say more.

One additional news item though, I am sure you will join me in wishing Caroline Paul (a frequent pilgrim with us in Lourdes) a very Happy Birthday (for 27 July 2019).

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains absolutely central to everything we do. A new unified safeguarding policy has been adopted together with the final suite of policies and protocols to accompany the same. These will shortly be available to view on our website.

Shortly, 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. This is in addition to our stated aim of systematically obtaining DBS clearance for Companions.

Data Protection

Under new data protection legislation, we are required to have explicit consent from our Companions for the use of their personal data. For your information, we hold your data securely and use it only to contact you either centrally by Annie or by your regional representatives. Occasionally, details will be shared with BASMOM for the purposes of fund-raising. **We never give out personal data to a third party.**

Website for more information including the application form for membership please see our website at http://orderofmalta.org.uk/companions

I am hoping that with further assistance we might develop this further. You should all also be in receipt of the Order's monthly activities and please do sign up at https://orderofmalta.us16.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=1a883f0941bd169b0ee4ab362&id=dc914680c3

And here's the new loo at Golden Square (well, there's space left)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Next London Tea Party, Wednesday 2pm 11 September 2019.

7 September 2019, Malta Day Mass at Westminster Cathedral

13-15 September 2019, the Walsingham Pilgrimage for BASMOM, CoM, OMV and the Grand Priory.

The Carol Service and Reception, Wednesday 7pm 11 December 2019.