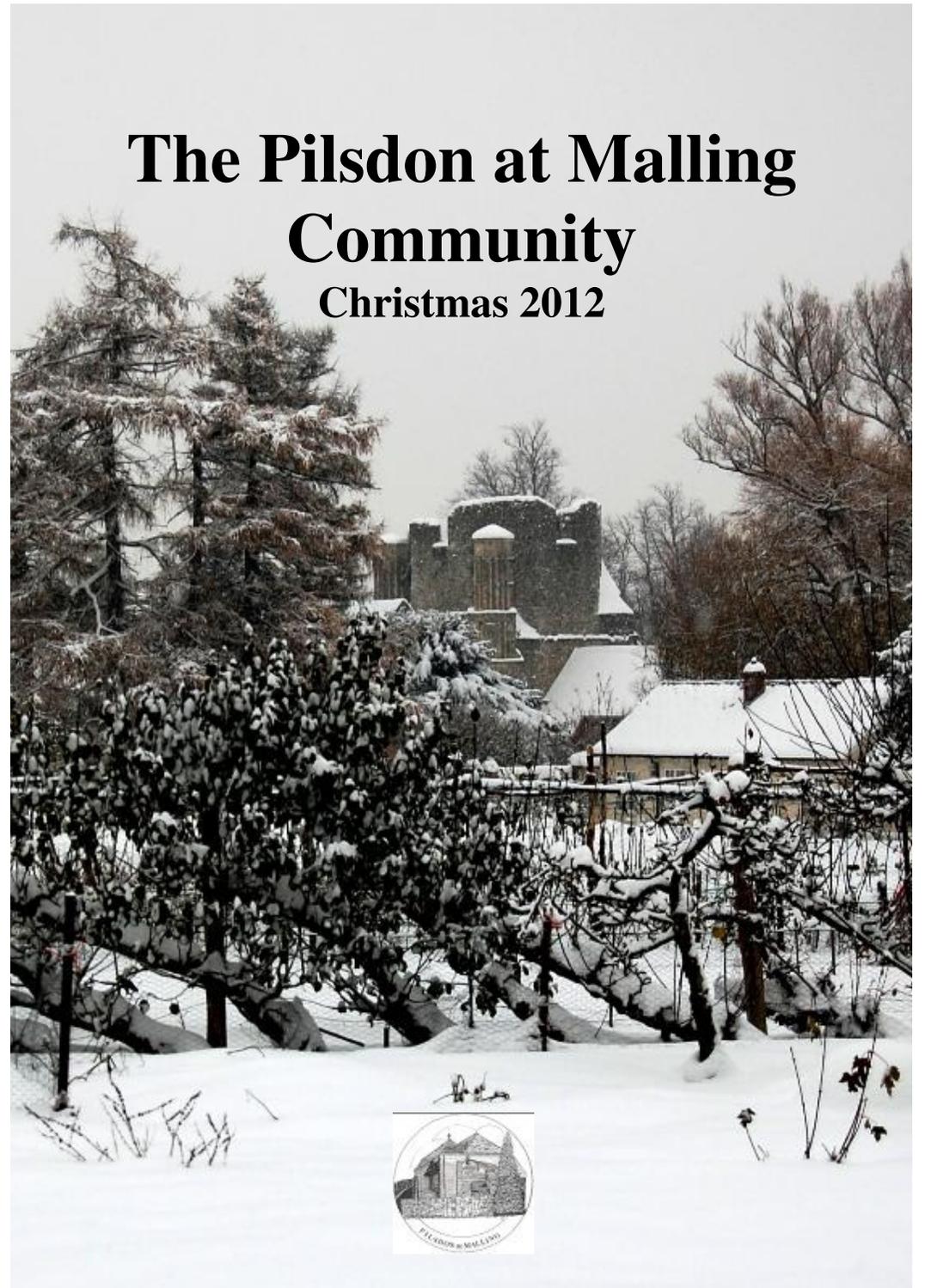


The Pilsdon at Malling Community Christmas 2012



A word from the Guardian

Christmas seems to have come upon us so quickly this year. Perhaps it has something to do with the lack of proper distinction in the seasons that we have experienced. Summer was so cool and wet, September better and then suddenly, it seemed, we were plunged into winter. Although there have been the beautiful colours of autumn and the fall of the leaves, we have had few proper autumn days.

This has been a year of contrasts for Pilsdon at Malling. In some ways it has been a very frustrating year and yet it has also been very fulfilling, and we have enjoyed the events that have taken place here. It was a great privilege for me to be ordained priest in our Barn Chapel by Bishop James in September. The support from clergy, the Abbey, parishioners, friends and family was wonderful – it was an amazingly special occasion. We also hosted Joanne Parker and friends in concert over the Heritage Weekend in early September and a lunchtime concert as part of the Music@Malling Festival at the end of the month. “Bazaar” was back for ten days in November. It was

wonderful to welcome Jo and all her helpers again and feast on the colours, smells and sounds of India.

We have, once more, been very blessed by the generosity of local churches, schools and individuals that have brought their Harvest gifts to us. We are very grateful to all who think of us at this time. There are so many, even in this apparently affluent area, who are in very difficult circumstances. We received such an abundance of foodstuffs that we have been able to give away some to others who are struggling to provide for themselves and their families. We have been talking to local churches, the Malling Lions and others about the possibility of starting a food bank here. If you would like to be involved in this initiative please contact me at Pilsdon in the new year.

Much of the year since Peter and Mary retired has been a steep learning curve for me, not only in terms of Pilsdon but now also as a new priest. Being able to lead our Eucharistic worship at Pilsdon has been and continues to be a wonderful experience and a great privilege but also

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How would you like to raise money simply by shopping? You can help the Pilsdon at Malling Community every time that you shop online by logging in to your favourite shopping website through the Easyfundraising link. It doesn't cost you a penny - the retailer simply donates a percentage of the sale price to your chosen cause (which, we hope, will be Pilsdon at Malling). Many big brands and major online retailers, from Amazon to Zizzi, support this way of fundraising. All you need to do is register yourself at www.easyfundraising.org.uk and select Pilsdon at Malling as your chosen charity. Then just get shopping.

very humbling. I am constantly amazed, and frequently filled with trepidation, that God has called me to this work of Guardian and priest.

The changes to the benefit system are a cause for concern. We have seen so many people struggling in this economic climate and with the jobcentre and work capability assessments, which cause such anxiety. Many would like to get back into the world of work and independence, but for whatever reason are not yet equipped to manage the changes and responsibilities. We find that they are being pushed before they are ready, which is counter-productive and often damaging to all concerned.

There is much talk of “sharing the burden” and us all being in this together. But if one doesn't have much to start with, there is so much more to lose when the cuts bite. Just a small decrease in income can have devastating consequences. A post-war election poster shows four men standing on a ladder. The one at the bottom is neck-high in the rising water. The one at the top is well clear. The message is “let's all take a step down together”. No prizes for guessing which one goes under.

In the developed world, Christmas

EQUALITY OF SACRIFICE?



has become a prolonged mega-feast of spending, jollification, over-consumption and consumer pressure. As we journey through Advent may we become more aware of this culture of consumerism that blinds us to the larger demands of global poverty and injustice. May we be mindful that Christ, the Light of the World, came to bring good news to the poor. May we find ways of celebrating Christmas that are good news for the poor and disadvantaged around us.

We wish you God's richest blessings and His peace this Christmas.

PAM RINK

On being a volunteer at Pilsdon at Malling

It was with great trepidation I approached the front door of Pilsdon early one morning in the autumn of 2011. I had been invited for coffee by Pam, a long-time friend, who had been newly installed as the Guardian of Pilsdon. She wanted to talk to me about maybe lending a hand with the office work, which she freely admitted she would avoid at all costs, preferring to be working out in the grounds or with the other community workers and guests.

To put this in context, I had never worked in an office and I was myself beginning to come out of a nervous breakdown/depression on the back of long-term sickness caused by problems at work. I had agreed to coffee but could not envisage myself being any use to them in any way.

Nobody will ever know how difficult it was for me to come into a strange environment, but in hindsight, I now know I did not need to have worried.

Kerri, a volunteer, met me at the door and welcomed me in. To be honest I can't remember much about the rest of the day but I was overwhelmed by a sense of inner peace and the atmosphere of spirituality and prayer which touched me. I knew I would be back.

All at Pilsdon at Malling would like to say a very big THANK YOU to everyone who has helped and supported us over the past year. We are exceptionally grateful to those who have donated money, as well as gifts of food, furniture, linen or clothes, and even hay to feed the sheep. We also appreciate all those who give of their time and talents and we especially value the support you give through keeping us all in your prayers. The community would not be what it is without all of you—

So what do I do? No two days are the same. The office is sometimes hectic and buzzing and at other times empty for hours on end. I answer the phone, deal with queries, invoices, redirect mail, respond to donations and correspondences, filing, livestock movements, selling produce, process purchases, helping fill in documents, take rent, collect the post, work with the treasurer, take minutes for the trustees meetings, show people into the chapel for private prayer, photocopy, listening, cleaning and tidying up! – The list is endless.

The most important part of Pilsdon though is the people here. It continues to be a privilege to work alongside them all. I am humbled by the experiences that have brought them to the sanctuary of Pilsdon, and I enjoy seeing them develop and eventually move on. I know I only pop in and out, staying initially all day twice a week, so cannot fully understand the strength and difficulties of community living. The mutual support guests and members offer each other is amazing; the patience they find is commendable as is the tolerance they display on a daily basis. It reminds me of some of the most difficult days of family life at home!



Pilsdon at Malling
27 Water Lane
West Malling
Kent
ME19 6HH

If you prefer to receive your newsletter electronically, please email pilsdon@pilsdonatmalling.org.uk

I found it difficult to say goodbye to the first lad who I experienced leaving. He had been a bit of a rogue, had a quick fiery nature, and was well used to playing one community member off against another if he did not get the answer he wanted. During his stay with us he had learnt to smile again, control his temper, cook and laugh at himself, and was ready to live independently again. I remember hugging him and thinking Pilsdon would never be the same again – but it carries on, people come and go from time to time, the essence of the community is embedded in the principles which underpin its existence.

Equally I was thrilled to welcome the first new guest here. I had been involved with anticipating their arrival. He looked so vulnerable and fragile as his family shared lunch with us. We sat and talked a lot over the weeks once he had settled, and as the “newbies” felt we had a little in common. Sadly his stay was fairly

short as it was not the complete answer to his needs and he was gone. I still wonder how he is fairing. Kerri, who had greeted me on my first day, left to follow new ventures and that was a sad day. She and I shared a lot of the same humour. With every new change at Pilsdon, the group soon adapts to the current situation, the chores etc are reallocated and everything carries on.

So to the future, Pilsdon is a part of my life now. I can't imagine not being here. I am returning to work part time but will continue to be at Pilsdon at least once a week. My friends and relatives have to endure hearing little bits about my days as I try to explain the joy I get from being here. So, thank you Pam for encouraging me to come to Pilsdon, thanks to everyone who has made me feel so welcome, and to you for reading this, and I give thanks for the support we give the community in our own ways.

DENISE

Forthcoming events

December

Monday 24 11.30pm Midnight mass in the Barn Chapel

Services at West Malling churches:

Sunday 23 6.00pm Carol service, West Malling Baptist

Monday 24 4.30pm Christingle service, St Mary's

4.30pm Children's crib service, St Thomas More

6.00pm Vigil mass of Christmas, St Thomas More

11.15pm Midnight communion, St Mary's

11.30pm Vigil of carols & midnight mass, St Thomas More

11.30pm Midnight communion, West Malling Baptist

Tuesday 25 8.00am Holy communion BCP, St Mary's

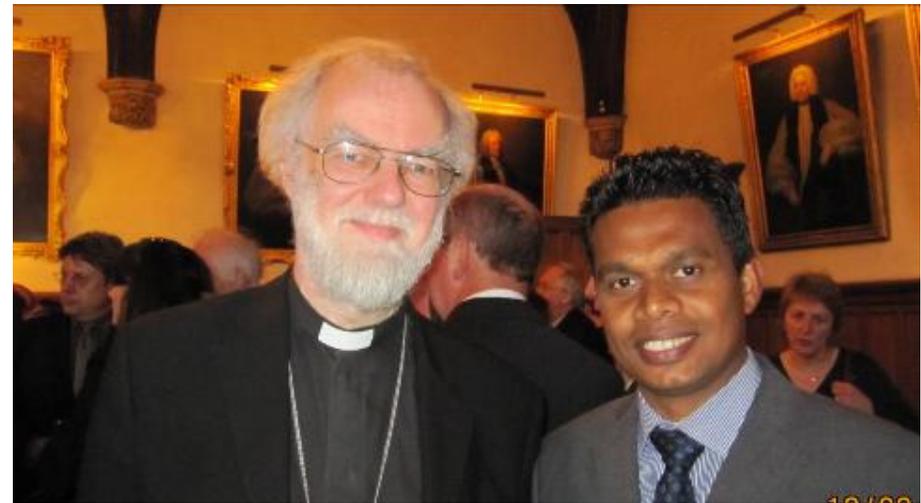
10.00am Family Christmas mass, St Thomas More

10.30am Christmas morning service, West Malling Baptist

11.00am Christmas Day family service, St Mary's Church



A completely foreign affair ... Tim and Phil stand guard outside the citadel built by Louix XIV, the Sun King, during a recent community day-trip to Lille, in France



Last month Wasantha threw off his wellies, spruced himself up in his best suit and tie and sallied forth to London for an audience with Dr Rowan Williams, the outgoing Archbishop of Canterbury. Waz, a Pilsdon at Malling community member, is also a trustee of the charity Christians Aware. He was fortunate to be able to attend a gathering where Dr Williams said farewell to all the charities that he has been involved with during his time as archbishop. "It was privilege to meet the Archbishop of Canterbury," Waz told us. "This was one of the remarkable moments in my life and I am so glad about that. I want to thank Christians Aware and Pilsdon at Malling Community for giving me this opportunity." Justin Welby is next in the queue for an audience with Waz.

Hello! We are George and Lin from Essex. We have been volunteering one day a week at Pilsdon, West Malling, since March this year, having felt for some time that we were being called to become involved in a community in some way. Whilst we both have a background in counselling, Pilsdon has called us to learn new skills, from tending the herb garden to cooking a meal for 17 people! It has been good to draw alongside guests and members, and to feel welcomed and accepted. The daily rhythm of Pilsdon life and the peace and beauty of the place has encouraged both of us to slow down and

to live in the moment a little more. There is a sense of belonging and of being a part of something larger than ourselves. Working in London can often have a harsh and competitive feel, and we have found Pilsdon to be enjoyably counter-cultural, somewhere where skills can be learned and differing gifts can be valued. We are grateful for our time at Pilsdon and the welcome we receive. George (the dog) can often be seen taking George (the volunteer) for regular walks in the park! Both of us are looking forward to our year ahead.

GEORGE & LIN

**Happy Christmas
and best wishes for 2013
From all at the
Pilsdon at Malling Community**

Sony Buck
"Timbo" (Timhoder)
+ Alex
Paul
Doris (Wasantha)
Phil
Robert
Barlow
Mike
Alex
Worley
line
Dennis