

The Pilsdon at Malling Community

Christmas 2014

Wishing you all
a blessed Christmas
and a happy New Year



A word from the Guardian

As Advent progresses and the days become shorter I always feel a great sense of expectancy that seems heightened by the increasingly early darkness. Whether this is a hangover from my years in South Africa where there is very little difference in the length of the days and Christmas is in the heat of summer, or whether it is a childish excitement about the approach of Christmas, I don't know. But I have to say that I quite look forward to the clocks going back and the long, dark evenings. The animals and birds seem to adapt well to the change. The chickens, ducks and geese happily go to bed by 4pm and the pigs really prefer a long lie-in on the dark mornings. It does make it easier to get their food into the trough before they get there, all eager and hungry.

We had a good harvest this year with loads of produce from the garden. It is such a privilege and a pleasure to be able to cook and eat our own veg fresh from the garden.

Being closer to the earth, as we are

here with our smallholding, and being perhaps more in tune with creation, gives its own sense of holiness. Each season is different and special and somehow brings our faith and trust in God more into focus. Because we aim to be as self-sufficient as possible we need to be aware of the rhythms of nature, all of which link into our human rhythms of work: planting, growing, nurturing our livestock and harvesting; celebration: worship, eating and play; and rest.

Sadly, we have had to say goodbye to our beautiful willow tree that stood guard over the stream and our main entrance for many decades. It succumbed to honey fungus over the summer and has now been cut down. We hope to plant another further along the stream. On pages 4-5 are a poem that Sidney Garner wrote about the willow tree and some photographs.

We are immensely grateful to all those who support us in so many ways and especially the generosity of local churches in sharing their harvest gifts with us and all



those who support us financially. Many of the harvest gifts went to restock the Food Bank which is proving to be very necessary, even in this apparently affluent area. We have given out more than a hundred food parcels this year via social services and local churches. The government's promises of even deeper cuts to welfare and public services are profoundly worrying, especially with our experience of the difficulties that some face over benefits and help with other social and health problems.

In June we finally received planning permission and listed building consent for

our new accommodation which will now go on part of the site of the large greenhouse. We demolished one of the three bays in the summer – managing to keep all but one of our marvellous grape vines – and have had to meet some conditions set by the local council and English Heritage, but we hope we will very soon be able to get the cabins delivered and constructed, weather permitting.

We wish you all a very blessed Christmas and many good wishes for the New Year.

Pam Rink
Guardian

The Pilsdon at Malling Community
27 Water Lane, West Malling, Kent ME19 6HH
Tel 01732 870279/01732 870434
www.pilsdonatmall.org.uk email: **pilsdon@pilsdonatmall.org.uk**

In an attempt to save money—and the environment—we try to send newsletters by email to as many readers as possible. If you have email and do not already receive a digital copy of the newsletter, please drop a line to pilsdon@pilsdonatmall.org.uk

Pilsdon at Malling Community is a charitable company limited by guarantee

Company No. 6218667 Reg Charity No 1123682

 Find us on  Facebook

Requiem for our weeping willow tree



THE WEEPING WILLOW

I could not fail to see the grace of her,
 Although now stripped by nature of all
 That would, in time, reveal the face of
 her,
 That time which some still call the Fall
 When trees begin to show their winter's
 shape
 Which I would see as tracery, stark
 and bare
 With no green mantle for a cape,
 No place of shelter where birds may
 share
 The morning glory of their song
 With us, mere mortals to whom

winged flight
 Is only in our fancy, for we belong
 Upon the ground imagination's height
 Is just for dreams to help us through
 The dull, dark starkness of the winter
 scene,
 Engendering hope for all things new
 In that pale, uplifting froth of green
 Which tells us spring is here again
 Soft with scented breath and gentle
 rain.
 Now stands the willow in all her glory,
 Weeping no more, no more forlorn,
 This is her time, the kernel of her story
 Broadcasting each day the chorus of
 the dawn

While birds, urgent in their haste to
 reap
 The harvest in this year of grace
 To bring their twigs and straw to keep
 Strict time with Mother Nature's pace,
 Telling each other in their morning
 song
 'Didn't we tell you? We were not
 wrong,
 We told you in the sting of winter's
 rain
 That she would rise in beauty to shelter
 us again.'

Sidney Garner, 2006



Paresh Chandra Chakraborty RIP

Paresh Chakraborty, who painted the Crucifixion that hangs on the east wall of the Barn chapel at Pilsdon at Malling, died this year aged 80. Paresh was a friend of Peter and Mary Barnett since Peter was the curate at St Peter's Church in Wolverhampton during the 1970s. Paresh was an artist and teacher in the Fine Art Department of what was then Wolverhampton College.

Paresh collaborated with Peter on several parish projects, including an interfaith photographic exhibition entitled "Ways people worship" in Wolverhampton Art Gallery, and also for a mural painting for St Michael's Caldmore, Walsall. When Peter and Mary moved to the Pilsdon Community in Dorset, Paresh gave them the painting of the Crucifixion. This work, which depicts Jesus on the cross with Our Lady and St John, is painted in oil on

canvas. Paresh said he had tried to give the painting the quality of an icon, and that it should be lit from below by candles.

For the past 20 years Paresh and his wife, Fay, have supported the Pilsdon communities. Paresh and Fay visited Pilsdon, Dorset, one November some years ago and the community celebrated Divali, the Hindu festival of lights, in their honour.

Helen Whitaker, one of Paresh's former pupils in Wolverhampton, designed and created the stained-glass windows in Pilsdon Manor's dining room as part of the major restoration project in the late 1990s.

We remember Fay and the family in our prayers and give thanks for the artistic gifts of Paresh and for his Hindu and ecumenical spirituality that he generously shared with the Pilsdon communities.

May he rest in peace.

Peter Barnett, Former Guardian

Reflections on an eventful year

It was wonderful to welcome Jo Hall and Bazaar back to Pilsdon at Malling this year in June and November. In the summer we provided ploughmans' lunches and hot pork rolls, as well as cakes and cream teas over the two weekends that the Bazaar was open. In the winter there is a little café in the Barn with teas and cakes— a great opportunity to introduce Pilsdon to the wider community.

We were open again this year for the Heritage Weekend in September, which coincided with the Friends of Kent Churches Ride and Stride. We had loads of people who stopped by on their way around the local churches, as well as a good crowd to see and hear the history of the Barn. We had a very successful Café in the Barn, once again selling cakes and teas. We also had a small stall where we sold some of our produce—fresh bread, jam, pickled beetroot, eggs and grapes.

We have hosted a number of wonderful concerts over the year. Duo Isaria, which comprises Rebekka Hartmann (violin, pictured right) and Caroline Begius (harpichord), returned to Pilsdon in June to play various pieces, and this year they were joined by the soprano Kirsty Hopkins. It is a great privilege to hear such wonderful musicians.

In July the Italian tenor Yuri Sabatini performed a selection of Italian operatic arias and songs from Mario Lanza's repertoire.

Once again we again took part in the Music@Malling Festival at the end of September, hosting a lunchtime recital by



Chamber Domaine on the Friday and a jazz workshop on Saturday. In October Julian Milone and the London Violin Ensemble performed works by Verdi, Puccini, Paganini and Rossini to a large and appreciative audience.

This month, on Thursday December 18, we are looking forward to Jeff Bonner and his Shanghai Syncopated Orchestra playing syncopated jazz. Join us if you can for a rousing end to an eventful year.



The joy of raking autumn leaves ...

For about eight weeks, from mid-October to mid-December, leaves fall and cover swathes of Pilsdon.

Although the bright autumnal colours look pleasant spread out over the grounds, paths need to be made safe, the stream kept flowing, lawns raked and open grazing land kept clear for the sheep. There are more than 100 mature deciduous trees around Pilsdon, some over 100 feet tall. Probably well over a couple of tons of dead leaves are collected each year and composted into valuable leaf mold by some of the residents.

Surrounded by nature, raking leaves is a pleasant way to spend the day.

Robins are often flicking red in the nearby branches waiting for their next meal. A startled frog may leap from under the exposed leaves, and sheep may ease up beside you wondering what you are doing in their meadow. And a row of different-coloured ducks will regularly waddle past.

With the unusually warm weather this year daffodils are sprouting through already, and the magnolia trees are budding at the beginning of December even though all their leaves have fallen to the ground! The trees are now almost completely bare and the grounds are ready for winter.

George Noble