



# The Pilsdon at Malling Community Easter 2013

## A word from the Guardian

The busy-ness of Holy Week and Easter came upon us fairly suddenly this year. Not that we weren't expecting it, of course – after all, we have the whole of Lent to prepare for it – but just the fact that it seemed to come so soon after Christmas and I, for one, felt quite unprepared.

The weather hasn't helped, either. Easter is associated in my mind with spring and all the wonderful emerging new growth, flowers and wildlife. It is the fitting end to the winter season where the old either dies away or is pruned and cut back so that the transformation that is both spring and Easter is encouraged. Yet this year we have struggled with a seemingly never-ending period of very low temperatures and a depressing lack of sunshine. The transformation in nature has yet to take place fully and gardens, both flower and vegetable, are struggling. However, we have been kept very well supplied with vegetables of one kind or another throughout the winter thanks to the hard work and expertise of Tony Bird and those who have helped him in the gardens and greenhouses. This has helped immensely with keeping food costs down. The cabbages have been amazing and people who have bought



some of our excess crop have been very complimentary.

We held the Maundy Thursday liturgy with foot washing in the Barn Chapel in conjunction with St. Mary's, West Malling. On Good Friday we welcomed a very large group for refreshments to conclude the Malling Churches Together Walk of Witness. And on Holy Saturday evening we lit the Easter fire for the Service of Light, renewed our Baptism vows and took part in the first Eucharist of Easter. The joy of celebrating Christ's resurrection was not diminished by the bad weather.

The winter here at Pilsdon at Malling has had the added difficulty of constant plumbing problems. Everyone has been very patient and put up with a huge amount of disruption, lack of heating, hot water and for a few days no water at all. Thankfully most things are now resolved and we have new water tanks, pipes and boilers and the heating works everywhere (apart from the odd old radiator that refuses to warm up).

It is with great sadness that we pass on the news of Sidney Garner's death in the early hours of January 22. He had been ill for some time and in hospital, then for just a few days in a nursing home. He was a great



friend of both Pilsdons and had been an honorary Community Member here since 2007. Please read his obituary on pages 4-5, written by Peter Barnett. Peter and Mary came down for his funeral, which was held here in the Barn Chapel on February 15. Peter led us in a Requiem Mass which was a great tribute to Sidney. The Barn Chapel was packed with friends, family, colleagues and many people who had been helped by Sidney over the years. The tributes to him were a great testament to his unfailing friendship, concern and dedication to those who struggle with addictions and the anguish of post-traumatic stress disorder. He was a very special man and we miss him enormously.

The cracked wall at the top of the property has finally been repaired and we are just awaiting the fixing of new oak gates to complete the work. We now have plans for our two 'log cabins' which we hope to place near to the Cottages and

which will offer further accommodation, wayfarer accommodation and a recreation room. We are just awaiting informal comments from the conservation officer at the Borough Council and then the plans will be formally submitted for approval. Our next big project, which we hope to be able to begin in the near future, is the renovation of the Cottages. Because this is a listed building it will be quite an undertaking.

If you would like to donate towards this or any other aspect of the life and work of this Community, please make cheques payable to 'Pilsdon at Malling' and if you are a taxpayer please consider gift-aiding your donation. Thank you to everyone who has supported us so generously in so many ways.

We wish you a belated but nevertheless joyful Easter and pray that you will be blessed throughout this Eastertide.

PAM

## Obituary

## Sidney Garner – 1922-2013

There cannot be many Anglican laymen who have been awarded the Bene Merenti medal for services to the church by Pope John Paul II. Sidney Garner, whose funeral was held at the Pilsdon at Malling Community Barn Chapel last month, lived for almost 91 years, of which this award was just one notable event in a rich and varied life. Those who gathered for the Requiem Mass in West Malling mainly remembered Sidney for his work since retirement with those suffering from addiction, particularly to alcohol, and its consequences. He founded, together with the late Roger Hill, the Mainstay Trust based at St Francis RC Church in Maidstone.

Thousands of people, often ex-servicemen, are grateful for the support, advice and practical help they received, often when in crisis. His link with the Pilsdon communities began twenty years ago when he began to refer clients to the community in Dorset. In the past ten years he became closely involved with the new Pilsdon at Malling Community, not only referring people, but also becoming a Community Member in his eighties.

Sidney Garner was a very talented and creative person. His education was at Denstone College in Staffordshire when his parents lived much of the time in India. He joined the Merchant Navy and served in the Far East during the war. He then took up acting and stage direction, touring the country and often working with stars such



as Laurence Olivier and Edith Evans. He later went into making films. One such film involved him sailing a yacht to the south of France, not by sea but through the canals and rivers of France.

Sidney was also an artist, author, art and furniture restorer, calligrapher and a great story teller. He was a wise friend for many, old and young alike. Undergirding all that he said and did was a profound spirituality. He said the Divine Office daily, whether on his own or leading prayers at the Pilsdon at Malling Community. He loved the Eucharist and found great sustenance from Holy



Communion. During the period of his life when he worshiped as a Roman Catholic he was a much appreciated Eucharistic Minister. Like all lives lived to the full, not everything was plain sailing. Some of his experiences during the war were difficult and the theatre and film industry were often hard and stressful. These took their toll and he often found solace in alcohol. This in turn affected his family and relationships.

He became estranged from his wife and four children. But in time Sidney, as a recovering alcoholic, used this and other experiences for the benefit of others. He

expresses his philosophy as follows: "In the course of my own work these past 25 years I have seen thousands of people in various degrees of distress, on a one-to-one basis and in groups. In every single instance when someone has forgotten their own troubles sufficiently to be able to offer a helping hand to another, I have known at once that their recovery is already well established and, in these circumstances, relapse is a rarity."

We thank God for this life of creativity, faith and service. May he rest in peace.

**PETER BARNETT**

## Writing our own books

**F**airly recently I was reflecting on the story where Jesus comes towards his disciples by walking on the lake. My favourite part is when Peter cries out to Jesus, "Lord if it's really you tell me to come out to you on the water." And Jesus replies, "Come!" Then Peter leaves the boat, and tries and fails to walk on the water, before Jesus rescues him by lifting him out of the lake.

Whilst reflecting on this story I was reminded of Jackie Pullinger, a British missionary who felt called to serve God in the walled city in Hong Kong. In the same way Peter left the safety of his boat, and exposed himself to the elements by walking towards Jesus, so Jackie chose to exchange her comfortable life in England, for the dangers of the drug addicts and gangs of Hong Kong. A few years ago when her biography "Chasing The Dragon" was republished, in the introduction Jackie challenged us as readers to take risks and write our own books.

A couple of years ago I had become very dissatisfied with life in general, but especially unhappy with life at work, which led me to question the direction my life was going. After much thought, prayer and reflection I decided to risk leaving the security of a regular income, and explore life in Christian community. This led me to spending a year at the Lee Abbey International Students Club in central London, before moving here to Pilsdon last summer.

Admittedly neither communities are on the same scale as walking on water, or living amongst the Triads, nevertheless they still have their own unique challenges. Whether it's the idiosyncracies of other community residents, or coming to terms with one's own shortcomings, like Peter, instead of trusting Jesus, I find myself easily distracted by the winds of life. Yet it is in the weakness and the vulnerability that I have experienced God pour out most of his



blessings. For all the difficulties at Lee Abbey I now have many valuable friendships with people from around the world. For all the challenges at Pilsdon I have discovered a newfound confidence, whether it's getting to know new people, rediscovering my love of catering or having to look after animals for the first time, Pilsdon has been a real life-giving experience for me.

Although I have a very real sense of where God is leading me, I nonetheless look ahead to my long-term future with a sense of both excitement and trepidation. In those moments where I'm able to trust in God I'm overcome by a real sense of joy and peace, but at other times I'm overwhelmed by fear and anxiety of things not working out! But that's ok because even in those moments of doubt Jesus is always there to lift us up as he lifted Peter up. I have also found that the times of trial are nothing compared with those moments of blessing. So come on, let's get out of our comfort zones, and, in the words of Jackie Pullinger, "Write our own books!"

**JAMES RACE**

## Spring fever

**W**hichever way you look at it, this so-called spring has been a strange affair. It's gone through a long and difficult gestation and has been reluctant to manifest itself. This newsletter is a lot like spring – it threatened to emerge, but never really arrived. We've had occasional hints – a couple of crocuses, a diminutive display of daffodils, the occasional wink of sunshine through leaden clouds, but nothing more than a tease. Perhaps we should have seen the signs in the long, cold winter, when we suspected Max the ram wasn't firing on all cylinders. Worried that we would have no lambs this year, we brought on a sub, a youngster lent to us by friends. Max, like all aging centre forwards, might have lost his pace, but he knows that everything is in the timing. And so, as the weather warmed, three of the ewes produced five lambs (although one did not survive). Max scores again!

If the months since Christmas have been remarkable for anything, it has been the cold. We're not just talking about the weather, rather, the lack of heating caused by problems with our boilers and plumbing. That has been the story of our

year so far – the main boiler (installed two years ago and just outside warranty) packed up, and two old boilers were condemned when inspected for gas-safety certificates. And in the loft, something nasty was lurking – the water tank was breaking up and had to be replaced, along with extensive pipework. So for four months we had no heating in the chapel, office, and some bedrooms, and for a shorter time there was no water or heating in the cloisters at all. Now, spring is usually marked by the arrival of swallows. We've had no swallows yet, but we did have an egret camped down in the meadow. But we were particularly pleased to mark the arrival of the lesser-spotted plumber, which was seen occasionally in the cloisters' bathrooms, basement and loft. And with his arrival, warmth was restored.

Finally it's mid-April, the sun filters through a hazy sky, slowly temperatures rise. I wander down to the meadow to make certain that spring is here. And it is – there, in full glory, the daffodils are blooming, along with celandine, hyacinths and the most delicate of violets. And still no swallows. But no egrets.

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## Looking ahead

### MAY

**Friday 24 7.30pm**

Performance of musical “Mary Magdalene”, by members of Leybourne Church, in the Barn Chapel Entrance free. Refreshments will be served. Retiring collection towards work of the community.

### JUNE

**Tuesday 4 8.00pm**

Duo Isaria perform in the Barn Chapel. Rebekka Hartmann, one of Germany's leading young violinists, is accompanied by the harpsichord of Caroline Bergius, who is from Scotland. They will perform works by Geminiani, William Byrd, Biber and J.S.Bach.



Tickets £12 on the door

(under-18 free). Refreshments will be served.

**Fri 7-Sun 16**

Bazaar returns to the Barn Chapel, 10am-6pm daily, except Monday 10th. Refreshments available.

**Friday 21**

NSPCC concert in the Barn Chapel (provisional)

### SEPTEMBER

**Saturday 14**

Heritage weekend—lunches and cream teas served. Friends of Kent Churches “Ride and Stride”

**Sunday 15**

Heritage weekend—lunches and cream teas served.

**Friday 27 12noon**

Music@Malling concert in Barn Chapel.

## The Pilsdon at Malling Community

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