

# The Pilsdon at Malling Community

Easter 2015

## A word from the Guardian

**A**s I write the sun is once again pushing through the clouds and sending away the heavy rain of this morning. We were so spoilt by the beautiful weather of the first two weeks of March that the rain, although much needed in the gardens, and the dull cold of these past few days has dampened our spirits somewhat.

But Spring is definitely here, the last of the snow drops are still flowering, the aconites and crocuses have been magnificent and the daffodils are beginning to open. It won't be long before the meadow is a mass of yellow. The magnolia trees are in full bud – let's hope we don't have another heavy frost to damage them.

The changes of Spring are not the only ones. Pilsdon is beginning to take on a different appearance in preparation for the new

accommodation which we expect to arrive in five to eight weeks' time. As was mentioned in a previous newsletter, the large greenhouse has lost one bay and now the garage that housed all our freezers (they're in the Cottages' sitting room) has been demolished along with two dilapidated little buildings that stood behind it. Many thanks to Sean, Ian, Wasantha and others who did the hard work of demolition and to the team that moved all the heavy concrete and rubble into the skip. It's still a bit of a shock to go out of the kitchen door and be met by this new big open space. But it won't be long now before it's filled with the log cabins. Following the initial planning permission and listed building consent we had to meet various conditions relating mainly to archaeology, the materials to be used and the final appearance of the cabins,

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but both English Heritage and the local authority are now satisfied with everything. The order is in and the next big thing is preparing the site to receive the cabins. It has been such a long haul and to get to this point is just wonderful.

Dennis and I will be leaving Pilsdon at Malling at the end of

October after what will be nine and a half years of my involvement and five and a half of Dennis's. We will be sad to leave, but look forward to another chapter and further challenges elsewhere (don't know where yet!). The process of finding a new Guardian is well under way and the response we've had is promising.

The tenth anniversary celebration that we had hoped to hold last September will now be held on September 19 this year. Bishop James Langstaff will be here to celebrate with us and we will hopefully be able to welcome our new Guardian. More details will be published on the website and we will be writing to all our friends and supporters about it.

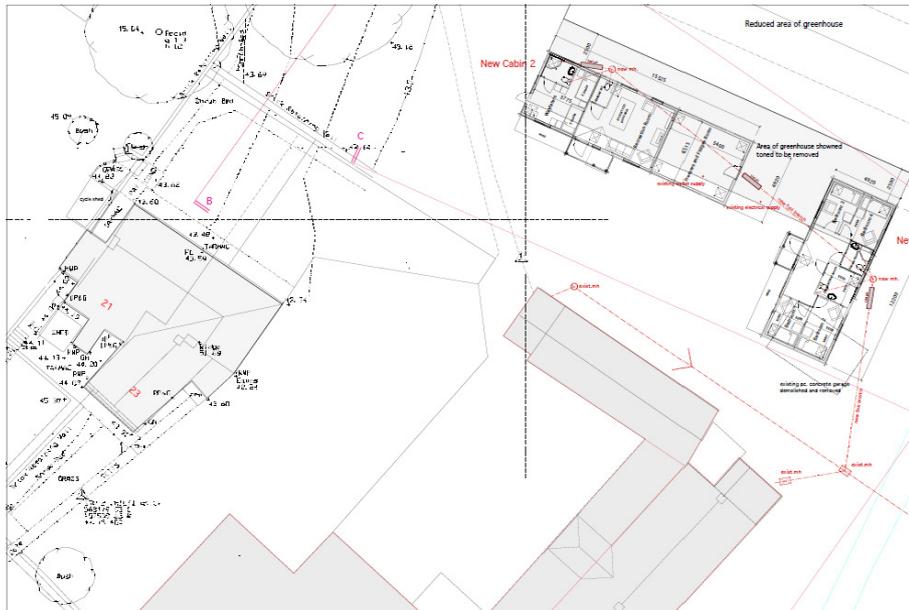
The generosity of our supporters is amazing and we have benefitted so much from all that is given to us, practically, financially and in prayer. Our heartfelt thanks go to all of you.

Please continue to keep Pilsdon at Malling in your prayers as we go through this time of change and renewal.

Easter is approaching and we will keep Holy Week as always. Please see the back page for Holy Week and Easter services in the Barn Chapel and other forthcoming events.

We wish you all a blessed and joyful Easter.

**Pam Rink**  
Guardian



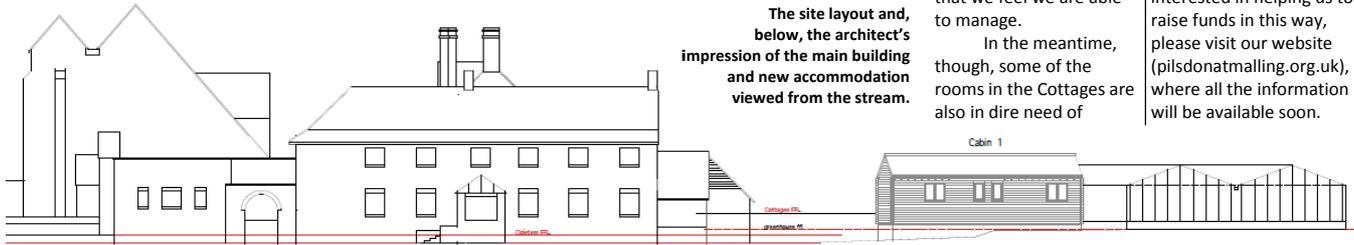
## And finally, all the way from Scandinavia, our log cabins

As Pam has mentioned earlier in this newsletter, our new log cabins will be arriving at Pilsdon at Malling in the next few weeks. In an attempt to bring down the costs of the construction, we will undertake some of the work ourselves – mainly the decoration of the cabins, as well as any other small (or large) jobs that we feel we are able to manage.

In the meantime, though, some of the rooms in the Cottages are also in dire need of

renovation and redecoration. We would like to ask for your help with this work and so, alongside our plant and produce sales this year, we will also be producing a list of items that people can “buy” to help our project—anything from small items such as paintbrushes to pots of paint or even a washbasin. If you are interested in helping us to raise funds in this way, please visit our website ([pilsdonatmalling.org.uk](http://pilsdonatmalling.org.uk)), where all the information will be available soon.

The site layout and, below, the architect's impression of the main building and new accommodation viewed from the stream.



## “I don’t like Mondays…”

*Ian, accompanied by Dennis, attends a pseudo-medical assessment to determine whether he can continue to claim Employment Support Allowance:*

It was 0800 on a beautiful spring morning when Dennis and I unlocked the gates and left Pilsdon bound for Chatham. Traffic was surprisingly light, which meant we had time for a Costa coffee and tactics talk before presenting ourselves, as ordered, at precisely 0850.

Above the front door the classic Royal Navy fouled anchor shone in stained glass, a reminder of Chatham’s happier days. What would this discrete town-centre building have been? An officers’ mess, suggested Dennis; more likely, given its present use, a Naval provost’s slammer.

The small entrance lobby sprouted security cameras around a reception office. From behind the counter a matronly lady supplied a blank ID form, to be completed please, while a bored G4 security man fiddled his fingers.

We are told: “Go through to the waiting room, but there will be a delay.” Apparently the staff begin-the-week-meeting had overrun so hard cheese on us clients.

After an hour’s wait we are

summoned to an interview room where the ‘assessment nurse’ bids us take a seat and plonks down behind her computer screen, fingers poised over the keyboard.

I am hoping to be asked questions like: “How does your addiction/depression prevent you from working or seeking work at the moment?” Or: “Is staying at Pilsdon providing the environment you need to build and sustain your recovery?” Perhaps even: “Do you anticipate being mentally robust enough to start looking for work later this year; and is continuing on ESA the best way to enable your stay at Pilsdon so as to bring about such a positive outcome?”

Instead, we open with: “You should have been assessed three months after starting ESA (that was 16 months ago) but we just don’t have enough staff, you see.” Hmm, here we go.

“What was your last job?”

“I was a seasonal lock-keeper.”

“What, like looking after keys and things?”

“No. On a canal.”

“And why did you leave?”

“Because it was seasonal, as in, just for the summer season.”

At some point we finally get around to my addiction. I explain that I struggle to stay away from booze, and



**Welcome to Chatham: a naval officers’ mess or a provost’s slammer? Hard to tell.**

the real fear/danger is that as soon as I drink any alcohol I go into blackout.

“What, you mean the lights go out and you keel over?”

I describe how alcoholic blackout is far more sinister than that. How an alcoholic in blackout continues to function — to do things, to converse with others — but later has absolutely no recollection of what they did or said, or of people they may have verbally abused, threatened or worse.

She then insists I describe in detail what a normal day is for me, although trying to convey the idea of Pilsdon as a working community with animals, greenhouses, vegetable and fruit gardens proves difficult.

“Do you go shopping?”

“Well no, not really. I have no need to while I’m living and working in the community.”

“Do you keep your room tidy?”

At which point, I kind of gave up. The type of question I hoped for never arose and Dennis’ final intervention — mentioning that an earlier assessment had been cancelled at the last minute and that stress was the kind of trigger Pilsdon was trying to keep me free of — fell on stony ground.

The upshot was that after 30 minutes of banal questioning and much frantic typing, we could not believe the assessment nurse had any more clue about the validity of my ESA claim than before we walked through the door.

No, that decision now rests with an anonymous, non-medically qualified civil servant at the Department for Work and Pensions — who will base the decision on the weird and wonderful report knocked up on a sunny Monday morning in downtown Chatham.

## Happenings ...

### HOLY WEEK

- Wednesday 12 noon** The Eucharist  
**Maundy Thursday 8pm** The Liturgy of Maundy Thursday with Washing of Feet, Stripping of the Altar and Vigil
- Good Friday 11am** The Walk of Witness begins at St Thomas More RC Church, and will conclude here with refreshments and hot cross buns
- Holy Saturday 8pm** The Easter Vigil, the Service of Light, lighting of the Paschal Candle, Renewal of Baptismal Promises and the First Eucharist of Easter.

## ... and other things

- Sunday April 19 3pm** The New Foxtrot Serenaders concert in the Barn Chapel. "Bless 'Em All" will be a celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and will include the music of Glenn Miller, Vera Lynn, Gracie Fields and many others.
- Saturday April 25 8pm** Gary Briley and his band in concert in the Barn Chapel.
- Friday May 29** until Sunday June 7. Bazaar will be in the Barn Chapel daily (except Monday June 1)



## Born-Again Bikes

We are still collecting old bikes so that we can restore them to help us to raise funds for Pilsdon at Malling. If you have an old, unused bike lurking at the back of the garage and want it to be given a new lease of life, please call us on 01732 870279. Also, if you are in search of a good second-hand bike, you know where to come calling ... We even do repairs and mend punctures.