

## Autumn Newsletter

October 2021



James, Mary, Sue and Silas pleased to welcome more people to the community

### *Hello dear friends of Pilsdon*

This comes to you with a wondering about how you all are as we all manage the tricky movement out of lockdown into a future that still holds a lack of certainty about the progress of Covid-19. For those who have lost loved ones over this time we continue to pray that the cruel grief you bear finds solace in the people around you and that you feel held by our ongoing prayer.

Here it has been a head scratching exercise. Our desire to open up, challenged by the very small leadership team with the responsibility to keep ourselves well, Mary, James and I have been grateful for your encouragement and prayers.

We have been able to take two weeks leave simply due to willing volunteers who came to stay and support us. Marian and David, Andy and Ianthe brought new conversation and willingness along with their love of Pilsdon. We are tremendously grateful to them.

We have been able to welcome new Guests who are settling down and making a super contribution to the life of the community. Wayfarers who are willing to comply with our request to have had both vaccinations and to be tested on arrival, have been a joy. To catch up and hear their personal stories of lockdown and to share some of ours has been a privilege. Guests who have been here for a longer time continue to model to all of us how to live in community. Their knowledge and wisdom threads through our daily lives and is an essential force of good will and generosity.

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR**

We have been wondering about how we might celebrate our Anniversary on 17th October. Last year, you will remember, it was just members of our household.

***This year*** we do want to invite more of you, but know you too will be concerned about gatherings of large numbers in enclosed spaces. We have decided to limit the numbers. If you would like to come for our 12 midday service we ask to you phone us on 01308 868 308 or email me on [suelangdon@pilsdon.org.uk](mailto:suelangdon@pilsdon.org.uk)

***It will be on a first come, first served basis*** and we apologise now if you are disappointed. We will expect you to have had both vaccinations and to take a rapid flow test before you leave home. We will offer tea/coffee with homemade biscuits on arrival at 11am and ask that you bring a packed lunch, .. we will be glad to give you a piece of cake for your pud!

There will be a gathering after lunch for you to find out more about our life and to ask questions.

Our thanks to those who make ongoing donations really does encourage us and the financial support you are giving is essential. For those who responded to my request in an earlier newsletter, thank you. To those of you who may not have 'got round to it', a gentle reminder, especially if you receive our posted copy of the newsletter, even £5 would make a big difference to the cost of sending it out.

With practicalities out of the way, I want you to know we are in good spirits our prayer life and deepening conversations enthuse us to hold the vision of this most beautiful place and to bring all that we have to this gift of a life here. Our concern for our planet shapes the way we endeavour to live and the heart break we feel at such suffering in our world leads us live life as simply as we can and be a place, a beacon, for those who we come into contact with.

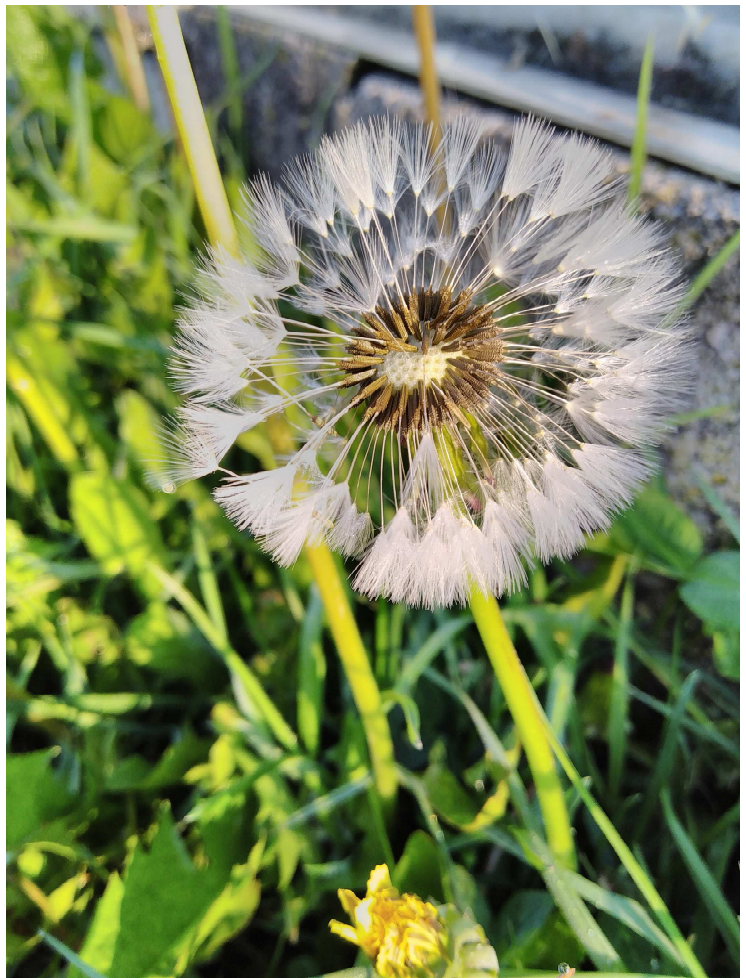
We feel confident about Pilsdon's future, with our active group of Trustees who care for us, some of whom, led by Andrew Davey (former Chair) are well on the way with our new building project to replace our two cabins with essential habitable accommodation for Members. More of which in future newsletters.

We are though, extremely keen to bring new people to serve here as Members, it is a serious stretch with such a small leadership team. Please will you be on the look out for mature Christians with a deep spirituality, who might 'get it!', and who are willing to take the risk of living and loving this life with us. It is more rewarding than I can say to be part of this community. I feel as if I have been given a gift beyond measure to come to the end of my working life here. For those desiring 'The Work of Transformation' and an opportunity to serve, there is no better place to find an authentic opportunity.

To end, I offer an invitation to those who are being called here, though they may not yet know it; and to those of you called to live out your gift in the world. The following blessing written by Jan Richardson comes from her book *Circles of Grace*, I hope touches you as it did me.

With my love and blessing to you all.

Sue





**Blessing for those who have far to travel**

If you could see  
the journey whole,  
you might never  
undertake it,  
might never dare  
the first step  
that propels you  
from the place  
you have known  
toward the place  
you know not.

Call it  
one of the mercies  
of the road:  
that we see it  
only by stages  
as it opens  
before us,  
as it comes into  
our keeping,  
step by  
single step.

There is nothing  
for it  
but to go,  
and by our going  
take the vows  
the pilgrim takes:

to be faithful to  
the next step;  
to rely on more  
than the map;  
to heed the signposts  
of intuition and dream;  
to follow the star  
that only you  
will recognize;

to keep an open eye  
for the wonders that

attend the path;  
to press on  
beyond distractions,  
beyond fatigue,  
beyond what would  
tempt you  
from the way.

There are vows  
that only you  
will know:  
the secret promises  
for your particular path  
and the new ones  
you will need to make  
when the road  
is revealed  
by turns  
you could not  
have foreseen.

Keep them, break them,  
make them again;  
each promise becomes  
part of the path,  
each choice creates  
the road  
that will take you  
to the place  
where at last  
you will kneel

to offer the gift  
most needed—  
the gift that only you  
can give—  
before turning to go  
home by  
another way.

*Jan Richardson*



Alison communing with nature



Mary communing with the pellet boiler

### Intangible Pilsdon?

I became a Trustee in March this year, though I've known Pilsdon, on and off, for about twenty years. What I hadn't experienced until the first week of August was staying at Pilsdon and being part of the daily life.

Over the years I've often heard people expressing Pilsdon as intangible, something which can't quite be explained. In contrast, my stay evolved into a much clearer take on it. I found Pilsdon is three things: sheer hard work, shared hard work, and moreover, prayed hard work.

I knew of course about the prayer rhythm. During my stay I didn't quite make it to every morning prayer at 7.30 am, mid-day 12.45 pm, evening 6.30 pm and Compline 8.30 pm, but I knew it was going on regardless of who or how many turned up. When I did get there I found that this prayer rhythm was certainly not simply routine, or formulaic or functional, or intangible. This was about heart and will: a depth of care and compassion for brokenness and beauty, often in silence, sometimes with liturgy, or poetry, or blessing.

This is prayed hard work. It takes energy, attention, and great vulnerability. Spreading muck is much easier.

I spent one morning, along with two guests, weeding and pruning beside the path and archway between the front walled garden and the church. I felt compelled to clear this route between house and church: a practical expression to ease the way for the path to prayer. The following day as I said my goodbyes one of those two guests said 'Please pray for me'. We had worked hard, in hot sun and heavy rain, we'd done it together, and this made way for prayer. This is tangible Pilsdon.

Just to add, there is a lot of fun too, just in case I'd made you think it was all a huge slog.

Alison



## News from the garden...

The garden is perhaps a little more wild these days than some of you might remember. We have been working hard to leave it alone as much as possible in order to encourage wildlife and promote a healthier environment for the soil and plants...and it *has* been hard for some to watch weeds creep in and see the grass on lawns lengthen. We travelled through No Mow May, Let it Bloom June, and Thigh High July before feeling the need to cut a few paths through our veg plot. It might be our imagination but it seems as though there are more butterflies about. Our hives too have been very productive thanks to the extraordinary work of the honey bees and the faithful care of Caroline, Cyrus and Georgina—once they had extracted the honey we were able to share in the abundance.



We find our vegetables by picking through the undergrowth and there have been bumper crops of many things this year so far. The rhubarb was riotous, Henry's beans have been prolific, and the damson bounty was vast. Salena, chief harvester (...and chief consumer of semi-ripe fruit), spent days filling bowls with purple fruits that cascaded down heavily laden branches. We moulised and pureed, juiced and jammed. We picked and processed, strung, blanched and froze all manner of fruit and vegetables—and have ensured that we will all get at least one of Jack's home-grown brussels sprout each for Christmas Dinner.

So many people have played a part in gathering the harvest in, and we continue to feel such gratitude for all we have been given here to tend, and to enjoy eating and sharing...yes, even those beautiful marrows. We have some ideas about the future of our garden which we hope will involve more tree planting and less soil disturbance.





## ...and the farm

James has been enjoying his first few months as our farmer. Just two days in he took one of our beef cows to the abattoir and had an eye-opening introduction to the demands of the job and the idiosyncratic ways of the trailer. He has been well supported by the vets at Synergy who are helping him navigate his way through the ups and downs of animal care.

Snowdrop gave birth to the beautiful Alphonse (Alfie) on 31st July with very little fuss and bother, and he has been a delight to all who pass him in the paddock. He loves escaping from his side and hanging out with the sheep next door, though we are not sure they love his exuberance as much. Our two year old heifer Meadow was inseminated in the summer and is due to give birth to a jersey calf next spring; our hope is that she —following Meadow—will eventually become our second new milking cow. We welcomed 24 chickens (12 Light Sussex and 12 Lohmans) in June and they have been settling down together enjoying their newly refurbished surroundings; Henry tells us that they are now up to full production!



A big thanks to all who helped bring in the hay this year. After some initial “glitches” with our vehicle, and a lot of voluntary assistance from neighbours and friends, the hauling, stacking and storing got under way on the hottest couple of days of the year. We are ever grateful to Nich and Georgina Bailey for sharing their hay with us, for Andy Davey and Rob Bailey who leapt to our assistance when we were short on numbers, to Ian for helping shift our old truck and to James and his new truck who came to our rescue. Thanks to you all: our barn is now stuffed full and we are ready for the winter months.



## And finally... We welcome our new residential volunteer Gabrielle

I've just finished my masters in London and feel so fortunate to now be a part of Pilsdon Community. What drew me to Pilsdon was how it incorporates its social and environmental responsibility so perfectly together and it has been wonderful to see this in action. My first two weeks here have been jam packed and I can't wait to share in more with this community—I already feel like part of a big extended family!

