

Spring Newsletter

May 2022

Dear Friends of Pilsdon

Late in writing my part of our bumper Newsletter, I've changed what I've written three or four times in an effort to keep up with changing events. The world situation, our own government beyond the rubric of integrity and decency, unsustainable pressure on almost every institution, and Universal Credit going down and prices going up. To top it all the environmental crisis is largely ignored by a human race whose focus is on the chaos of a new war and all that could mean. Tragically, the Church in Russia, 'led' by Archbishop Krill appears to have disowned the transforming spirituality and wisdom of the Orthodox Church.

Then I remember these lines from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*,

*'The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell a Hell of Heaven'*

This shifts something and gives me a choice to 'see' differently, it doesn't change what is happening in our world but enables me to experience a deep gratefulness in my heart for everyone who makes up this community and for all of you who are connected in love and prayer.

I still hold out for a human race growing out of its 'adolescence' and transforming into its 'young adult', a wonderfully cooperative, creative phase, and wonder if the attacks on Ukraine are but the last stand of something that will soon shift. It will take more of us to sound the alarm and make a stand in the areas we can find to work in and pray about.



Our newly repainted welcome sign before it was returned to the driveway



Our lovely Jersey heifer Meadow gave birth to her first calf Lily in April

There is so much to sound the alarm about. Several people have come or been sent to share their desperation and concerns, feeling utterly powerless to make a difference. It can be hard to live alone and away from the rhythm of prayer we are held in here.

Protest has always been the way when governments refuse to take brave decisions. Now, even the right to peaceful protest is seriously at risk, the organisation Liberty has a petition under their 'take action' tab.
www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/takeaction

St Mary Euphrasia

"Correct with kindness and love but also with zeal and holy freedom. If you do not speak out, if you do not sound the alarm when it is needed, you will be justly convicted by your silence."

Change is hard and we change best out of love, the sacrificial love Christ showed in going to the cross; yet I still have to face the hypocrite in myself when making some choices. In saying this I mustn't let the awareness of my own hypocrisy disempower me, .. I need to cut through the sham, expose my reluctance to change and still speak out in protest. We need support and encouragement to change. Our MP's need to hear from us to give them confidence to make the urgent changes needed or it will be forced upon us.

To help us and those in power to be courageous Martin Luther king tells us:

' Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.'

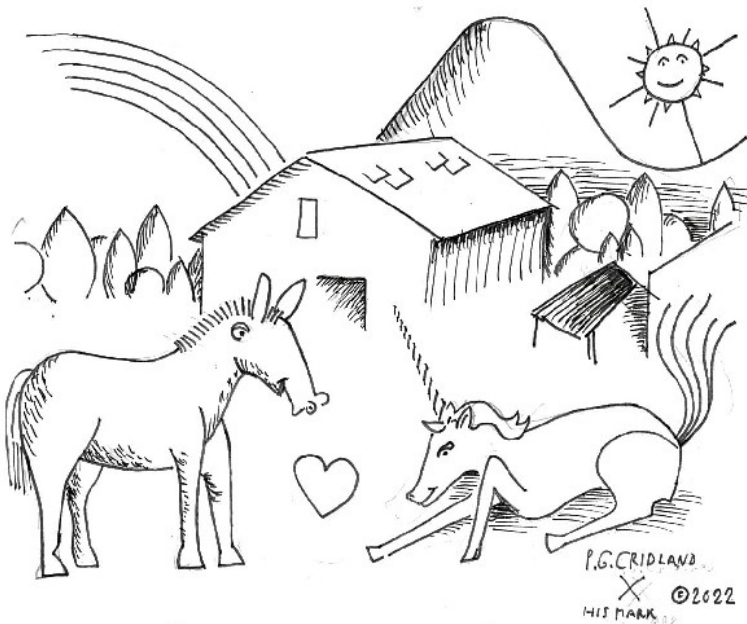
Prayer is not confined to linear time, but Kairos, .. God's time affects past present and future and surely our children's, children's, children are reaching back to us in prayer asking us to make the earth a good place for them to be born into.

My love and blessing to you all. Sue





WORM CHARMING AT PILSDON



PAUL THE DONKEY MEETS PEARL THE UNICORN



I HAVE MANY
 BUTTONS. SOME
 SHOULD NOT BE
 PRESSED.

Struggling

I am struggling. Admitting this in my head has brought healing tears.

I regularly struggle, **I want my life back!** The road to that is going to be a struggle.

Pilsdon is a lot of things, to a lot of people, at different points in time. It's also a place where people struggle, a conscious choice to come somewhere to struggle through; real, raw beauty lies in it. Pilsdon is a good place to go through that struggle.

From an experience I had at the Othona Community, on a prayer retreat, I learnt that I didn't always want people to always ask me if I was ok, give me a hug, tell me to cheer up and say good morning. It leaves me uncomfortable and I start thinking about the other person, social obligations, and stifling tears. I ask that those who come across me in a struggle, forgive me if I am not sociable, making conversation, please do not take anything from it.. Worrying if I am offending people only adds to the weight of the struggle.

People ask me what I like most at Pilsdon; what I cherish most are in the moments of struggle the true, rich conversations and connection to another human being that comes from sharing authentically.

Easter holds one of my favorite memories, spent with someone I love deeply. It's always been a bit hard since then. The thing we are celebrating is also not an easy one. For me it has a lot to do with struggle.

I've always respected Judas. Not because of what he did but because he struggled with a terrible mistake.

At times I am Judas struggling with mistakes I've made, at times my struggle is like Christ's, carrying the cross of other people's mistakes and at times Simon of Cyrene, giving what is actually needed to someone in a struggle, as opposed to "cheer up Jesus!"

Finally at Easter there is the message of hope, the promise of resurrection.

I look forward to mine.

It is in the quiet crucible of your own personal suffering that your noblest dreams are born and Gods greatest gifts are given, in compensation for what you have been through. It is well.

Wintley Phipps

I will pray for all those reading this who are struggling and I ask you to keep me in your prayers..

Peace and Love

Patrick



Mission Pig Relocation

One of the items on our long list of ideas was to get our pigs to do some of the hard graft for us in the garden. The first opportunity came when needing to find some emergency accommodation for some dislocated fruit bushes – brought on by access needs for our new building site. Bill's cottage seemed the ideal space and with the pigs lending us a hand (or a snout) we were able to get on with alternative jobs whilst the pigs did what they do best, transforming an unusable area of thick bramble into a useable space for planting our fruit bushes, and at the same time conveniently leaving us some great manure as a bonus. Admittedly there were a few challenges, and a healthy bit of chaos with several escape attempts, but we were delighted with the progress and keen to use them again on another plot.



We found some new enthusiastic gardeners

Our second opportunity came as their time was running out, with the date set for their “departure” getting ever closer. We needed to walk the pigs from their home at the south edge of the farm to the pig pens on the north side of the yard. No mean feat with pigs who had done very little ‘controlled’ walking. The thought of trying to move all six across the garden, with multiple distractions and escape routes, brought both a sense of anxiety and excitement. We decided to lean on one of Pilsdon's greatest assets: people power and invited as many guests as we could to help with the mission. We plotted our best route and constructed a holding pen about half way along, in the centre of the garden, using hurdles and an assortment of foraged items tied together with baler twine (...ever our faithful friend). With a largely unfenced route we relied on the belief that if pigs can't see through something then they won't charge at it; and we tested the theory by getting several people to hold up a large piece of weed suppressant membrane, like supporters at a fun run with a banner, in the hope that it would channel the pigs in the right direction. With everything in place, and people poised for action, we cut the power to the electric fence, opened the gate to the pig pen and then..... nothing. Despite a history of multiple escapes and endless digging for freedom, when the gate was actually opened the pigs were reluctant to leave their familiar surroundings. Undeterred we persisted for what seemed like ages until one pig was separated from the rest. With an alluring trail of food pellets we got to find out whether our flimsy cross country trail was sufficient enough to coax the pig all the way to the holding pen.

It wasn't exactly smooth, but it was cause for huge celebration when we actually secured the first pig in the garden. A sigh of relief passed over us, but then...the realisation hit that we would have to repeat the process a further 5 times, with night drawing in. We eventually managed to move 3 more pigs to the holding pen, leaving 2 behind for the next day. Exhausted, but pleased with our progress we were also delighted to see that in penning up the pigs in the garden overnight they would helpfully dig over the plot that we'd been hoping for them to have a go at for some time.



Tim and Adam, really working those pig boards

The second part of the mission up to the pig pen was carried out the following afternoon and surprisingly created very little drama. Despite all the effort needed the previous day to relocate the pigs, the use of a couple of hurriedly made pig boards did wonders in enabling us to calmly walk them all the way round to the pig pen with minimal hassle. We were in shock and what a contrast to before! It was as if the pigs were quite happy to go for a stroll around the farm and were willing to go wherever we wanted to take them.

Was it worth it? Depends on who you ask! Mission Pig Relocation complete, there are now several of us wondering if we can take our pig handling skills to the next level. Watch this space. **James**



Margaret's Pilsdon notebook

Cooking at Pilsdon is counter cultural. In our consumer led society, we think about what we would like to eat for our lunch or dinner and shop accordingly. At Pilsdon, we plan our meals according to what we have in the garden whether that's cauliflowers or leeks or in the freezer where we have lots of apple and broad beans. Ditto meat. Rather than going to the butcher or supermarket to buy a joint for a Sunday roast we eat our community produced meat, the quality of which is second to none. I have enjoyed preparing meals based on Pilsdon produce. A firm favourite has become a fritatta made with Pilsdon eggs, leeks and cream supplemented with some cheddar cheese.



Bramble bashing on our friend Betsy's land

Signs of Spring are in abundance at Pilsdon. There are carpets of daffodils and primroses, the purple of aubretia draping the garden wall. The wisteria which climbs the front of the house is starting to flower, seeds are germinating in the greenhouse and there are swathes of wild garlic. February saw the birth of 4 gorgeous lambs names, Coaly, Dexter, Bruce and Vivienne and they are currently being used as mini lawn mowers on the front lawn. They are going to be joined by some new arrivals any moment now as Daisy gives birth to her first lambs.



Daisy and little Ambu

Having spent 3 decades earning my keep at the chalk face, I have enjoyed developing new skills at Pilsdon. I have learnt how to cater for large numbers extending my recipe repertoire. In the garden, I have learnt how to harvest willow and then cut 30 cm lengths to plant new willow patches (the lengths of willow are already sprouting new leaves.) Now, I know how to prune gooseberry and blackcurrant bushes and how to suppress weeds using compostable corrugated card and tarpaulins or woodchip. I am already planning how to use the latter in my garden, at home. Next on my to do list - learn how to make James' legendary sourdough bread.

Pevsner, the renowned German architectural historian mentions Pilsdon in his survey of Dorset. Pevsner remarks that 'Pilsdon manor house has an unusually fine facade of the mid seventeenth century.' He also mentions the Iron age fort found at Pilsdon Pen where apparently the enclosed area covers just over 7 acres. I recently enjoyed a trip to the Pen and marvelled at the work which must have been involved in digging the defensive ditches and flat enclosed area. I have yet to view the sea from the top of the Pen but hope that I will be able to do this in the summer.

Other news... Much progress is being made with the building project to construct new accommodation for members. All of the groundwork has been done and the foundations built, the brick layers begin work in a couple of days. We took the opportunity with the clearing of an access track for the builders to widen the path in the back field and improve the fencing. We will now have better access around the back of the North Barn for visitors and farm vehicles. We are so grateful to all of you who have so generously contributed to the building fund for this most needed new accommodation...we haven't quite reached our target yet!



We hear that our new book 'Living life in Common' is being enjoyed by many of you. One of the authors Mary Davies, a member here, who organised the 60th anniversary oral history project has been interviewed about Pilsdon and the book. You can listen to it here: www.marshwoodvale.com/audio-video/2022/03/dr-mary-davies-talks-to-seth-dellow/

The Trustees and whole community are tremendously grateful to our good friends Marian Barnes and David Prior for the time, care and generosity they have shown in making sure this book was written and published.

Please do go to our YouTube channel to see the book launch and watch the video Tim made about Pilsdon which was shown at the High Sheriff of Dorset conference where Sue was invited to speak about the life and work of the community.



Henry and Tim milking Meadow (left) and Daffodil (right). Meadow is doing very well adjusting to her new life as a milking cow since giving birth in April

A young Ukrainian man called Bohdan will hopefully be joining the community soon. We are waiting for his visa application to be approved—so do please pray for his safe and swift passage to be with us here.

The garden continues to provide us with so much nourishment both in the food we produce and the work with do together as we nurture new life on our land. We are happily engaging with no-dig methods which is generally keeping the weeds down, except the dreaded bindweed which seems to be everywhere...any organic bindweed reduction strategies? Answers on a postcard please.



Simon covering our no-dig first early potatoes