

Emmaus Gloucestershire



The newsletter of Emmaus Gloucestershire – Winter 2009/10

Jason's Story

How I came to Emmaus, by Jason

In 2007 I had a great job and a lovely house. Unfortunately I lost my job and my house and became homeless. I was able to stay with my family and my friends but I had too much pride and decided to get a place to live and sort myself out. I was staying at a night shelter in Cambridge when an exceptionally nice young lady told me about Emmaus. I was intrigued. I asked her if she would be willing to help me and she contacted the Gloucestershire Community. Within two weeks I was on the train and wondering what the future had in store for me.

I was unprepared for the welcome which I received. All the staff and Companions went out of their way to make sure I was settling in and had everything that I needed. Unfortunately, because I had broken the law, after six months of being in Emmaus I was sent to jail.

During my six months at Emmaus I made many friends, both Companions and staff. Whilst I was in custody the support of my new-found friends was invaluable and helped me through the most difficult time of my life. I rejoined the Community on the day of my release.

I have now been back for 3 months and my life is getting back on track. There are a lot of new Companions here as well as a few of the old faces from be-



Above: Jason

fore. All of them have welcomed me back and it's now as if I never left.

Emmaus Gloucestershire helped me through the toughest period of my life so far and I will always be grateful. I want to say a special thank you to my friend, John Noble, chairman of the Board of Trustees. He took the time out of his busy life to come and visit me in prison. He will be sorely missed when he stops being Chairman in the New Year.

Christmas spirit



Above: Gary dressed the part

We know Christmas has come and gone, but we wanted everyone to know that Gary dressed up as Santa and went to the children's ward of the general hospital in Gloucester to distribute Christmas presents for the kiddies unfortunate enough to have to stay in hospital.

Gary managed to get donations of selection boxes and other goodies. The shops that helped out were Sainsbury's, Staples, and Bookers cash and carry. Many thanks to them and to Gary for his solidarity work. Mention must also be made of Santa's little helper, a role played with talent and skill by Neil who, despite much encouragement, refused to wear green tights and a pointy hat.

Poem, by Blue

When I first fell out of the melting pot
You could see me for miles
I was glowing so hot
So they left me out to cool
Still glowing golden like a jewel
T'was then the bird of pointed beak
Flew me up to its snowy peaks
But being so hot I caused a thaw
Which dampened my flame
But never to my core
As the years pass by I've cooled a bit
My dreams of home, my thoughts of it
Yet the ghosts inside still hold me to blame
For the errors of my infant flame
So it's back to the wilderness
I seem destined to roam
To search without charity
A place to call home



Above: Abbé Pierre poster at the Paris Salon celebrating 60 years of Emmaus – WE CONTINUE!

What is Emmaus & Who are Companions?

People become homeless for many different reasons. Emmaus Communities enable people to move on from homelessness, providing work and a home in a supportive, family environment. Companions, as residents are known, come from many different backgrounds but share a commitment to participating in the life, work, and solidarity activities of Communities. Companions sign-off benefits and work full time in our reuse social enterprises. This work supports the Community financially and enables us to assist others in need. Through this, Companions develop skills and rebuild their self-respect.

Being a Companion

(Episode One: First Contact)

Anonymous

I suppose that most people come to Emmaus for the first time because it sounds better than sitting in a hostel waiting for a Giro to arrive or living on the streets. The vast majority of people who come to Emmaus want to be active and want to do something constructive. Basically they want their pride back.

I first heard of Emmaus about 8 years ago when I was in a Salvation Army hostel. Some of the residents of the hostel were drug addicts and they would break into other people's rooms looking for anything of value so that they could buy drugs. Some of them would leave their used syringes in the foam of the armchairs so that people would sit on the needle. As soon as I heard about Emmaus I got in touch with my closest Emmaus and moved in within 48 hours.

As a new Companion as soon as you step through the door your whole world is suddenly changed. It is completely different from being in a hostel. All of a sudden somebody cares, everyone wants to know you, and you lose count of how many times you shake hands.

On the first day you are in a kind of mental overload, you are shown your room, the laundry, the kitchen, the dining area, the TV lounge, the smoking area, the linen room, the gym/pool room, the computer room and all sorts of other facilities. You are also told the times for starting work the times for finishing work, the times for meals, the times you can use the laundry and the times you can use the kitchen. In the end you just decide to do what everyone else does until you get used to it.

When you have put all your belongings away in your room it is time for your first big test – the first visit to the residents' lounge. In my first Emmaus there were 25 other Companions which made my first visit to the lounge all the more daunting, especially because I normally keep myself to myself. The

first time I entered the lounge there were people playing pool, playing cards, watching TV or just chatting and everything was fine. Within a short time I was chatting and playing pool with the other Companions. The first two weeks in your first Emmaus is a time of nervousness and uncertainty and then something just clicks and you know you have made the right decision.

Over the past 8 years I have spent a total of about 2 ½ years as a Companion and I have learned that Companions have more needs and problems than the average person (me included). All Companions go through bad times and it is a tribute to them and the staff who help them that they get through the bad times and don't give up.

Being a Companion isn't always plain sailing. Some days you can be having a bad day or the person you are working with can be having a bad day and it can have an adverse effect on everyone. But once you have been in the Community for a while people recognise when you might want a chat or when you want to be left alone to get over what's bothering you.

Finally I would like to say that I have been a Companion in 4 Emmaus Communities over the years. One was dreadful, two were good, and one was excellent. Fortunately for me the Emmaus I am in now is the excellent one. I believe this is because the staff are very good at their jobs and they know that although the business is very important, it can never be more important than the Community.

The Trustees have every reason to be proud of the staff at Emmaus Gloucestershire for all the hard work and long hours they put in. I believe the Companions are also proud of the staff members; it's just sometimes we don't show it, maybe we just take it for granted that they are always there to help.

Yours sincerely.....

Before



Above: Chequers Road before its transformation

Superstore Remodel

During early 2009, we undertook a major remodelling of the Chequers Road, Gloucester building, transforming it into a **Secondhand Superstore**.

Many of the projects were planned to be contracted, but Companions and staff decided to undertake much of the work themselves. We had a budget of £64,000 to accomplish the project, but spent only £49,000, saving approximately £15,000 by the Community 'pitching in' and discounts offered to us by our contractors. In addition, many Companions learned new skills and we have lasting memories of a great team effort.

After



Above: The remodelled Secondhand Superstore



Above: Norman and Jason hard at work

John's thoughts on stepping down as Trustee and chair

We said goodbye to John Noble as Chair & welcomed Michael Heap as our new Trustee & Chair.

My work in Latvia: restructuring the food industry; privatising state enterprises; creating the public utilities regulator & defending the Government successfully in a \$368 million arbitration claim were highly rewarding. But equally important were helping poor people & a Pakistani family to gain asylum, getting one out of prison and saving one, falsely accused, from deportation. I was told: "John, be careful who you help!" but "for me, this was what it's all about". So, becoming a trustee & reopening the Gloucester Community was the logical next job for me.

Chair of the Gloucester Community has been my major work over the past seven years. The road has been rocky but rewarding, making many friends. For a Companion to say: "He's for real, man" was a real compliment. I feel at home in Emmaus. Reports from Communities and Groups at the Annual Assembly are a real inspiration.

But now there are new things to do. I go when I can and not when I must. The Community is in good order with a cohesive staff team achieving its objectives. Not that anything is for ever and no doubt the organisation will continue to evolve as it sets new goals. Perhaps the most important development is the pastoral and support services we are increasingly giving to our Companions to choose and take new opportunities.

As a businessman I'm delighted that trading in our shops continues to grow in a recession. In the past seven years, a self-supporting Emmaus Community in Gloucester has invested surpluses of £400,000 in an enlarged and modernised community, with accommodation for six extra companions, bought a Nailsworth shop, & upgraded Chequers Road. In 2008/9 we reduced our loan by £52,000 & made solidarity donations of £41,536 of which £25,000 went to Emmaus Hastings with Companions donating



Above: Erwann Briand, Neully Plaisance Community Leader welcomes John to the first Emmaus Community

their £500 prize. I know how much our support to Hastings meant to Charlie Jordan, its Chair; a friend I miss greatly.

It was a year of greater involvement with the wider Emmaus movement. We helped and mentored Emmaus Rugby, Emmaus South Lambeth & Emmaus Bridgend. In October I became Chair of Emmaus Preston, a Community we hope will "rise from the ashes" as has Emmaus Gloucestershire.

Seven years as Chair gives me the opportunity to use that experience in development work as Vice Chair of Emmaus UK and in support of other Groups and Communities.

I am delighted Michael Heap has taken over as Chair. I thank my fellow Trustees, staff and Companions for the good work in Emmaus together over these years. The best lies ahead.

What could you donate?

Have you ever wondered what sort of things get donated to Emmaus Gloucestershire? If you've been to one of our shops then you will have seen all of the usual suspects, such as wardrobes and tables, chairs and sideboards, mugs and plates. However if you are eagle-eyed you may well have spotted some more unusual objects.

One kind person recently donated a trumpet, in perfect working order, which was sold for an incredible £80; a marvellous donation. A fine example of a porcelain bed pan was spotted recently in our Cheltenham shop.

The most bizarre donation we have received, however, is a coffin. Fortunately it had never been used for its' original purpose, but had taken part, so to speak, in a demonstration in

London! The donor wanted it to go to a good home and felt that if it went to landfill, empty, it would not be a fitting tribute to the coffin makers art. Frankly we were not sure what to do with it, until one of our volunteers suggested contacting the local paper. Sure enough the coffin was pictured in the press and we were contacted by a lady who wanted to buy it. She is suffering from a terminal illness and wanted to save her family some of the expense of a funeral. We offered it to her for free, but she insisted on making a donation of twenty pounds. It just shows that **some people think of others even when they themselves have so very little.**

Right: The coffin that was donated to Emmaus Gloucestershire

• Big Issue sales

Every Big Issue sold through the Cheltenham shop earns Emmaus Gloucestershire a small commission. The Community has decided the money earned from this will go towards funding the Night Shelter cooking that takes place on Friday nights, and to a soup kitchen in Cheltenham.

• We Are Available to Speak to Your Group!

A very successful talk about Emmaus was given to the congregation of St Lukes Church in Cheltenham by Pete, Jason, Dave, and Neil.



Fun Activities Over the Past Year



Left and Below: Companions and Staff enjoyed a fab day at Alton Towers.



Above: Making a new friend at Longleat



Above: We have the staff just where we want them



We've Been Out and About



Above: John Noble takes his bowling very seriously



Above and Right: Pictures from the Emmaus Salon Sale in Paris





Above: Karen Brown Visits the first Emmaus Created by Abbé Pierre



Above and Below: Pictures from the first ever Emmaus Work Camp held in the UK at Emmaus Village Carlton.



Royal visit

Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Cornwall, patron of Emmaus, paid a visit to Emmaus Gloucestershire's Nailsworth shop at the end of December 2008.

After being greeted by Emmaus President Terry Waite, she chatted with staff, volunteers and Companions at Emmaus Gloucestershire's shop in Nailsworth. The Duchess then browsed in the shop and chose a wooden toy truck for £3 for her grand daughters. 'Everyone loves a bargain,' she told volunteers in the shop.

The Duchess was keen to hear from the Companions about how the experience of living in the Community at Gloucester had changed life for them.



Above: HRH meets one of the longest serving volunteers and speaks with Michael



Above: HRH meets Norman and chats with Shop Manager, Paula McLean



Above: Outside the shop and presenting the Community with a Christmas cake



What do we mean by solidarity?

The dictionary defines Solidarity as, amongst other things, a fellowship arising from common responsibilities and interests, as between members of a group or between classes, peoples.

At Emmaus we try to put this into practice in several ways. First of all by practical help offered freely by companions and staff, such as working at the night shelter or the day centre in Gloucester for homeless people, by doing gardening work for an older persons residential home, and by garden clearance for the James Hopkins Trust. Secondly there are fundraising activities, such as car boot sales or sponsored walks, and finally as an organisation donations are made

from the surplus money made from our business activities to help projects abroad and at home, nationally and locally. There are many other ways, both small and large, in which we try to help others. It is this that gives purpose to what we do, and transforms a simple charity to help formerly homeless people into a fabulous social enterprise where they are directly helping others who are less fortunate than themselves. It is this that makes Emmaus special.

Companions raise money for the Pied Piper Appeal



Above: The lads arrive at their destination...!

In November, five Companions from Emmaus Gloucestershire completed a sponsored walk from Cheltenham Town Centre to Cleeve Hill. Gary, Paul, David, Henry and Jav accompanied by Support Worker Kevin walked from the Emmaus Charity shop in Henrietta Street to the Cheltenham landmark, Cleeve Hill. The walk took approximately three and a half hours and the first half was very wet indeed! The 12 mile walk was to raise money for The Pied Piper Appeal, which is a local

Charity that helps sick children and their families. The money is going towards the cost of buying toys at Cheltenham General Hospital to occupy the children whilst they are waiting for treatment. The lads made approximately £200 from their walk, and most of this money was given very generously by our customers at all three of our retail outlets. Many thanks are extended to all of those people who gave what they could towards this wonderful cause.



Above: There's nowt funny about this food, mate!

Cooking at the night shelter

Every Friday night and most Thursdays, we cook at the night shelter in Gloucester. For just £1 per head, a decent meal with pudding is prepared and served for the people who are staying the night. We usually serve 20 meals by 9pm and it's really good to be able to directly help others who are experiencing hard times. Most of the money to pay for the food comes from private donations, including from those who cook. It doesn't take up too much time; maybe three hours at the most, and we have a rota system that ensures that we don't let the night shelter down. Apart from the cooking it's a great point of contact which helps us to support the shelter in other ways, by donating bedding or mugs, for instance, and for all of us it's a useful reminder of the misery of life at rock bottom.



Above: Pizzas a go-go

Preloved

www.preloved.co.uk is one of the UK's leading second hand websites, with a community of more than 2 million people. During January, the site partnered with Emmaus, to launch a 'Second Hand – Second Chance' campaign. Preloved donated £1 to Emmaus for every new listing posted on the site. Currently over a quarter of a million items are listed on the site, including cars, wedding dresses – even 13 stuffed and mounted animals!

Trip to France

By Neil Booker

I spent a long weekend visiting friends in Paris in December and so I took the opportunity of popping into Emmaus Neuilly Plaisance to see how things are done over there. It was a fascinating trip and the scope of what they do was absolutely incredible. Firstly they have several shops on site, including an enormous high quality bric-a-brac shop full of fantastic stuff. Then there's the production of wooden chalets, made almost entirely from recycled pallets, which are sold to local



Above: Bric-a-brac at Emmaus Neuilly Plaisance

councils and the like to provide a quick solution to housing problems. To prove that they are OK a couple of companions live in one on site and it is indeed, a very impressive place to live. On top of all of this they've just bought, in partnership with another nearby Emmaus, an enormous depot which they use for recycling, storage, and repairs, as well as providing ten bedrooms for companions over the top of the unit.

There are forty or so companions at Neuilly Plaisance and they are a fine bunch of people. I was made very welcome and apart from endless cups of coffee, was treated to lunch in the canteen. This was the very first Emmaus founded by Abbe Pierre, and quite rightly the companions are proud of their home and workplace. The opening hours seemed strange to me, being limited to afternoons, but the



Above: Chalet house made from pallets

same buzz of excitement was around the place and there was real pride in what they do.

We discussed the idea of exchanges and both staff and companions are keen to get this going. We all felt that this would be a good thing to do, helping us to develop a bit of entente cordiale as the French say, or chumminess as posh brits say.

Paris Exchange

An exchange between Emmaus Neuilly Plaisance in Paris and Emmaus Gloucestershire will take place in March. Two Companions will go to France and two French Companions will come here to work and learn about the UK.

Donate it. Don't dump it!

Emmaus Gloucestershire asks you to think – and donate all re-usable items to your nearest Emmaus shop.



Any items that are not in re-usable condition can be taken to your nearest household recycling centre for recycling.



Emmaus believes that everything that is re-useable should be re-used.



Be sure to tell all your family and friends, that Emmaus offers high quality re-used furniture and household goods for sale to the whole community. Find something unique, and take home a bargain!



We are open to all.

Call to arrange a free collection for furniture donations 01452 413095

Secondhand Superstore

Chequers Road
Gloucester GL4 6PN
Tel 01452 413095

Cheltenham Charity Shop

18/19 Henrietta Street
Cheltenham GL50 4AA
Tel 01242 269734

Nailsworth Charity Shop

The Old Co-Op, Market Street
Nailsworth GL6 0BX
Tel 01453 835036

Help Us Help Homeless People in Wales

Emmaus Gloucestershire is sponsoring and mentoring a Emmaus Bridgend to open the first Emmaus Community in Wales. In December 2008, Emmaus Bridgend joined the Emmaus UK Federation.

John Noble, former Chair of Emmaus Gloucestershire, has joined the Bridgend steering group bringing his many years of personal experience. Emmaus Gloucestershire Community members are eager to help Emmaus Bridgend by giving time, expertise, and hopefully, MONEY to open a new Community!

Emmaus Bridgend is in the process of looking for a suitable site for a Community – three sites visited

already met some but not all the criteria they are looking for. They also need a warehouse to be used as a 'Secondhand Superstore'. The search goes on!

All money donated to Emmaus Gloucestershire using the donation slip below will go into a fund for Emmaus Bridgend to support the opening of the first Emmaus Community in Wales!

Please donate generously.

If you would like to contribute more in support of Emmaus Bridgend, or know someone who could help in this effort, please contact Maureen Margrie, General Manager, 01452 413095, Maureen@emmausglos.org.uk.

Saving the Tax Payer money!

Cambridge University Professor, Christine Whitehead, has provided Emmaus the means to calculate how much we save the taxpayer.

Almost unbelievably, Emmaus Gloucestershire gives **savings of £670,000 per year** to the UK taxpayer in benefits, health care, legal and prison costs.

Most of us understand that offering people dignity, home, work, friendship, and an opportunity to help others less fortunate provides personal opportunity. But Professor Whitehead's research shows that Emmaus Communities save taxpayers money!

Support Emmaus Gloucestershire

Please pass on to a friend who might like to support our work



I would like to receive information:

- By post to my address below
 By email to _____
 Please also send me information about Emmaus Bridgend



I would like to make a one-off donation

I enclose a cheque/voucher for £ _____
 (Please make cheque/voucher payable to Emmaus Gloucestershire)



I would like to make a gift by standing order

To the manager _____
 Branch address _____
 _____ Postcode _____
 Account no. _____ Sort code _____
 Please pay Emmaus Gloucestershire £ _____ (figures)
 _____ (amount in words)

At CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ (Sort code 40-52-40; Account no. 00016747)

Starting on _____ and thereafter payable
 Monthly Quarterly Half Yearly Annually
 Signature _____ Date _____



I have filled in my contact details below

Name _____
 Address _____

 _____ Postcode _____



Gift Aid Declaration

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Please complete if you are a Tax Payer (excluding CAF donations)
 I want the charity to treat this donation and all future donations until further notice as Gift Aid donations.

Title _____ First Name(s) _____

Surname _____

Home Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Notes:

1. You must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the tax year.
2. You can cancel this declaration at any time by notifying us.
3. If in future your circumstances change and you no longer pay tax on your income or capital gains equal to the tax that the charity reclaims, you can cancel your declaration.
4. If you pay tax at the higher rate you can claim further tax relief in your Self-Assessment tax return.
5. If you are unsure whether your donations qualify for Gift Aid tax relief please contact us or ask your local tax office for leaflet IR113 Gift Aid. Please notify us if you change your name or address.

Please return this form to:

Emmaus Gloucestershire at the address below