



Emmaus Oxford

The newsletter of Emmaus Oxford

Spring/Summer 2007

Is this a digger that I see...?



Well, yes, and no! Not the one we're all waiting for, but a step in the right direction. A condition of our planning permission was an archaeological dig prior to commencing building. We're in Temple Cowley, whose name recalls the medieval Order of the Knights Templar, believed to have had a large headquarters in the area. So, at the end of April, Oxford Archaeology arrived to look for it. At the last moment a small section of wall was unearthed, but, while details of its provenance are awaited, we are reassured that it will not prevent us continuing with our long-awaited Emmaus Community.

What Emmaus is and does

For those of you not so familiar with our plans, here's a summary of what we're about.

Emmaus Oxford owns the plot of land at 171 Oxford Road and the adjacent house. On the land we will build a Community for 24 'Companions' – the formerly homeless people who will live together there and work in the social enterprise to be run by Emmaus Oxford.

That's the unique aspect to Emmaus' provision for the homeless: not just somewhere to live, but a meaningful job, with the restoration of self-respect that this brings. Two recent local reports, one from the

Elmore Team and one on behalf of Oxford City Council, have confirmed that finding employment is identified by Oxford homeless people themselves as a key issue. Our business will collect, refurbish and sell donated furniture and household goods: the importance these days of a job in re-use and re-cycle is clear.

We're part of the Emmaus UK Federation, itself linked into the worldwide Emmaus movement, so we're following a tried and tested model. There are already 13 established Communities in the UK. In this city we tend to gloss over the fact that the first was established 15 years ago on the edge of a town called, er, Cambridge. We can't let the lead get any longer: we have to build ours!

Moving ahead...

The exciting news is that we're in hot pursuit of some possibilities that, we confidently hope, could bring us sufficient major funding to call in the real diggers before very long. Watch our website for news and pictures of that hope becoming reality. Stay with us, for we'll continue to need your support for our emergent Community some while after the diggers have gone. And, along with our hard-working Companions, to help ensure there'll still be a planet for archaeologists of future centuries to explore.



Giving people a bed... and a reason to get out of it



New faces at Emmaus Oxford

Late 2006 saw some major personnel changes within Emmaus Oxford. Wyon Stansfeld was appointed Development Manager, tasked with fundraising for the Community and getting the project up and running. Margaret Brown came on board as Administrator, responsible for the day to day running of the charity. And the Board added to their own number, welcoming Joanne Bowlt as a Trustee, with portfolio covering Marketing, PR and Events.



Margaret

I have worked principally in the charity and voluntary sector, from being a Traidcraft rep in its early days, to developing and managing a church bookshop and porters lodge, via running the finances of a Development Education Centre and fairtrade shop in Reading. I'd barely left that job when I found myself part of a group setting up Oxford's thriving fairtrade shop.

I was glad of the opportunity to extend my experience into the area of homelessness, a major issue in Oxford, and particularly to be taking the Emmaus route. Its ethos of helping people to regain self-esteem and a sense of purpose through work attracts me. Indeed the idea of allowing them to develop their own potential rather than just giving a handout has parallels with the concept of fairtrade, which may be in large part why I so immediately felt at home with Emmaus.

I look forward to welcoming our first Companions and seeing the Community grow and develop.

Wyon

For seven years I directed Communicare Counselling Service in Uxbridge. I have also been Service Manager for Oxfordshire Family Mediation and a Project Manager within Refugee Resource in Oxford. And from previous employment as both psychotherapist and social worker I



have extensive experience of working with the more disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society.

I applied for this post because the project is uniquely wonderful! Rather than focusing on peoples' difficulties, as if they have no resources of their own, it turns that all around and says: 'you have something to offer, please join with us to work for others less advantaged than yourselves'. I think that it is this paradigm shift that gives us all the possibility of transcending our difficulties. For some of the homeless people who come to Emmaus it can mean succeeding for the first time. Emmaus needs to happen in Oxford for the benefit not only of homeless people but for the community at large.

Why support Emmaus?

Why do people support Emmaus? Here is one testimony, from Scandinavia.

I first heard of Emmaus in the 60s. They dared be different. They took on problems directly. Respecting everyone. Seeing the resources in everyone. Clearly stating that everyone had something to give. Add to that, making use of local resources, local needs, local ideas – and you have sustainability and recycling long before these words became fashionable!

Joanne

After graduating from The Queen's College, Oxford in 1991, I served as a Logistics officer in the regular Army and still serve as a media officer in the Territorial Army.



I'm now a self-employed PR consultant and Director (Regions) of 'Women2Win', the campaign to get more Conservative women elected to Parliament.

An active supporter of the Women's Environmental Network and the Climate Outreach Information Network, I was particularly motivated to join Emmaus Oxford by the environmental work ethos and the significant number of homeless who are young and ex-Army. I am delighted to have joined at such an exciting time!



Farewell Abbé Pierre

On 22nd January Abbé Pierre, the 94 year old and seemingly indefatigable founder of the international Emmaus movement, died. Born Henri Grouès on 5th August 1912, he was to become a Catholic priest, wartime Resistance hero, member of the post-war French parliament, human rights activist and tireless and effective campaigner against poverty and homelessness, a 'flea in the ear of the great'. More than 400 Emmaus Communities – 13 in the UK – in some 40 countries worldwide form his greatest legacy.

A national hero in his native

Don't forget *the others*

The ideology of Emmaus is rooted in the 1949 encounter of Abbé Pierre and Georges, a former convict who had lost all self-esteem and hope in life. The Abbé told Georges he had nothing to give him, but suggested that, as he clearly valued his life at nothing, he might as well give it away in helping him to build shelters for the starving and freezing homeless of Paris. Georges found hope in giving hope to others worse off than himself. Emmaus was born. Later, Abbé Pierre always wrote under his autograph, 'Don't forget those worse off than yourself'.

Selwyn Image, founder of Emmaus in the UK, shared some personal reflections and remembrances at the Memorial Service

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France, his funeral was held in Notre Dame, Paris, but we had the opportunity to celebrate his life and work in March, at a Service of Thanksgiving in St Martin-in-the-Fields, London. This church's work with homeless people, through its drop-in centre, and its tradition of hosting memorial services to mark a life well lived, made it the ideal venue. The service began with Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders joining a representative from each of the 13 UK Emmaus Communities in lighting candles to remember the Abbé, and the spark he ignited nearly 60 years ago.



in London. His first encounter with Abbé Pierre was as a student doing long vacation work in the founding Emmaus Community in Paris, but they became better acquainted some 30 years later. Selwyn recalls a sprightly 77-year-old Abbé sitting on a straw bale in a disused cowshed where now stands the Cambridge Community. After an hour's grilling and a load of advice, Selwyn subsequently received a cheque for £30,000 - to be passed on to a second Community once the first had made sufficient. It was, of course, passed on.



The Emmaus hope

Terry Waite, President of Emmaus UK, spoke of the hope he had received, during his time of incarceration, from a single postcard telling him that he was remembered. Hope is what Emmaus brings. No one is beyond hope, every person is uniquely valuable.

And it is to restore value to some broken lives - or rather, to allow those lives to find their own value, through working to help others - that we are striving to set up the first Oxford Emmaus Community.

As we entered St Martin-in-the-Fields to celebrate the Abbé's life, each was handed a red gerbera, to place in one of several vases in front of his picture. Then as we left we took one away, to do with it something meaningful to remember him. The remaining Oxford petals are waiting, to be sealed symbolically in the foundations of the Emmaus Oxford Community. Farewell Abbé Pierre, but - as you were so fond of saying - 'Let's continue!'



Welcome...

to this edition of the Emmaus Oxford newsletter. You have received it for one or more of a number of reasons, such as:

- You have kindly supported us in the past, through donations, attendance at our events or other means – thank you
- You have previously expressed interest in our work
- A friend or associate has suggested that you might be interested in what Emmaus Oxford wants to do
- You have contacted us about donating or buying furniture

We'd love to continue sending you updates on our progress and information about our fundraising events.

However, if you would prefer not to receive our mailings now or in the future, or if your envelope was incorrectly addressed, then do please contact us using the contact details at the bottom of this page.

Of course, you can still follow our news and progress by visiting our website: www.emmausoxford.org We belong to the Emmaus UK Federation – for general Emmaus news visit: www.emmaus.org.uk

Below: Artist's impression of Emmaus Oxford



Furniture

The furniture reuse aspect of Emmaus is clearly well-known, as we receive countless offers of, and many requests for, domestic goods of all kinds.

Unfortunately we're not ourselves yet able to respond to these, but we are working very closely with another local charity, OCVA, who are.

Please phone them on 01865 763698 (answer machine outside opening hours, Mon-Fri 9.30-12.30) or e-mail furniture@ocva.org.uk to enquire whether they can help.

I would like to contribute to the work of Emmaus Oxford

I would like to make a donation:

By cheque/CAF

I enclose a cheque/voucher for £ _____
(please make cheque/voucher payable to Emmaus Oxford)

By standing order

To the manager _____
Branch address _____
_____ Postcode _____
Account no. _____ Sort code _____

Please pay Emmaus Oxford the sum of _____ (figures)
_____ (amount in words)

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