

# THE CLARION

The Magazine of The Parish of St Mary The Boltons

JULY 2004

## Russian Pilgrimage

After months in the planning 28 intrepid travelers set off to Moscow on Ascension Day, 20 May. Arriving late in the day we joined our ship, The Tikhy Don, which was to be our floating hotel for the next eleven days. Our first full day was spent on a whistle stop tour of Moscow – the Kremlin and the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour being special highlights. The weather, unfortunately, was unusually cold and wet but our spirits were not dampened.

On the Saturday the ship set off along the Moscow Canal built by Stalin to give the capital city access to the Volga and make it less dependent on land and air transport. Many thousands of lives were lost in its construction which includes 18 locks. The following day we worshipped with a party of Lutherans from California onboard and then stopped at Uglich, a town famous for its associations with Boris Godunov.

On Monday we visited Kostroma and Yaroslavl which both have fascinating churches and monasteries. The next day we arrived in Goritsy and spent the afternoon looking around the Kirillov-Belozersky Monastery on the shore of Lake Siverskoye. This enormous complex of buildings was at one time the largest monastery in Russia. It was founded in 1397 and within 400 years had become very wealthy. Early in 16C Tsar Vasily III came here to pray for his childless wife, Elena. The year later she gave birth to a son, the future Ivan the Terrible. Intercessory prayer needs to be treated with care!

Much of Wednesday 26 May was spent on the river. The Volga that we saw has none of the drama of the Rhine or the Danube. Forests stretch as far as the eye can see with few settlements on the banks and it was too early in the spring for there to be much birdlife. The character of the river changes considerably from narrow, winding stretches to lakes where the shore almost disappears.

That evening we arrived at one of the highlights of the trip, the small island of Kizhi with its magnificent wooden churches. The smallest and earliest was built in 14C century. The largest with its 22 domes, the Church of the Transfiguration, was built in 18C entirely without nails. Because of the extremes of temperature many settlements have both a summer and a winter church, the latter being smaller so as to conserve the heat. We arrived at 8.30pm and stayed until around 11.00pm but it was still light albeit eerily so. For those of us who have been to Iona there was a similar atmosphere of a remote holy place where the efforts of those who created the churches and shrines provide energy and inspiration.

On Thursday we stopped at a village called Mandroghi, a tourist trap designed to empty western pockets in return for craft items of all descriptions. It was wet and we had lunch under canvas. As a cub scout who only

survived one mucky summer camp, it brought back all sorts of memories.

Civilization returned in the shape of St Petersburg where we arrived on Friday. Over the weekend we visited some of the palaces for which the city is famous including the Hermitage and the Tsar's Village (now called Pushkin). Here Peter the Great's wife, Catherine I, built a palace that was substantially altered by their daughter, the Empress Elizabeth, who wanted something along the lines of Versailles. The palace includes the famous Amber Room, now recreated to replace the one that was lost during World War 2.

On Saturday there were outdoor celebrations making the 301<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the city by Peter the Great. Some of us ended up in a somewhat complicated crocodile threading our way through crowds concealing would-be pickpockets. Making our way back to the ship via metro and bus was quite an experience.

It is extraordinary how quickly the trip went and how much we packed in. Each member of the group has returned with an adventure to tell and a highlight to talk about. I especially enjoyed some time alone with the pictures by Rembrandt in the Hermitage. His painting of the Return of the Prodigal Son is something I have long wanted to see and I was not disappointed.

This large unfinished canvass from the end of his life is a work of genius – the depth of feeling the father has for his son, the abject misery of the prodigal and the ambiguity of the four other characters in the painting provided me with food for thought for one of the most intense hours of my life. I could have stayed there a great deal longer but when the time came to move I was content to leave knowing that I am secure in one of Christ's great teachings.

I do, however, have a sense of unease about being a tourist. Travel is wonderful. The world is a vast place and the variety of its peoples and landscapes is mesmerizing. But there is something wrong with turning profound and historic cultures into visitor attractions. I thought this especially in Uglich where we were whisked round the icon museum and listened to a short piece of church music sung by a choir ('please buy the CD on the way out').

Across the world many poor people would be even worse off financially if it were not for the tourist dollars and euros. But is there not another sort of poverty that is created by wealth? During the trip I read *Natasha's Dance*, a wonderful book about Russian cultural history by Orlando Figes (Penguin 2002). He explores the notion of the 'Russian Soul' that figures so largely in 19C literature. It remains a talking point still – Does it exist? What is it?

We all have a soul. It is that spiritual dimension that comes from faith, hope and love and gives birth to our aspirations and values. We see it in people's eyes and their animation. It's there in the wonder and inquisitiveness of children as well as the wisdom and laughter of older people. The soul is a gift; it cannot be bought or manufactured. If there is to be more soul in our world it will occur when more people and communities move away from money-making for its own sake and see it as a tool of limited use. A full heart is of more value than a full wallet.

On behalf of the group I would like to thank Leo Fraser-Mackenzie and Bill Gallagher for putting so much into making the trip happen and for their Russian language classes in May. In the Spring of 2006 Anne Swift is thinking of making up a party to go to Germany to follow in the steps of Martin Luther. Please talk to Anne if you are interested (020 7370 6589 [annephil@msn.com](mailto:annephil@msn.com)).

Gerald Beauchamp

### White Night

– A Poem Written on 25 May, 11.30pm

It is not getting dark,  
miraculously it is still light.  
Birds are singing.  
I marvel at the pale grey sky  
and the midnight sun  
forming a pink band along the tree line.  
I am in awe of God's creation.  
Is the forest on fire?  
No! It is the midnight sun.

Anne Swift

*'The Clarion' would welcome more contributions and reflections from members of the group. Please send them to the Parish Office. Do look at the display of photographs from the trip on display at the west end of the church.*

### PCC Report

The new PCC met for the first time since the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on Tuesday 8 June. Meetings have been moved from Wednesdays because of the problems caused for those who travel any distance if Chelsea is playing at home.

The PCC members this year are Charles Booth-Clibborn, Sara Bossom, Richard Brudenell (deputy chairperson), Margaret de Maré, Michael Farr, Linda Fleming, Bill Gallagher (Asst Treasurer), Brian Hallock, Martin Murphy, Mark Nicholls, Heather Richards, Anthea Smith (Deanery Synod Rep), Maureen Stainton (Secretary and Electoral Roll Officer), Carolyn Stubbs (Treasurer), Arthur Tait (Deanery Synod Rep) and the clergy.

Gerald began the meeting by looking back over his time at St. Mary's contrasting the situation that he came to in 1996 and the one he is leaving. St. Mary's is a more confident and lively church now but needs to face significant challenges in the context of a fast-changing Church of England and a local population who have little contact with the church.

St. Mary's, however, has much going for it – a caring congregation offering a lot of support, a great Sunday School, a high reputation for preaching, liturgy and

music, interesting events, a building that is often open and where a variety of groups meet and a beautiful church and garden.

Going forward, with the arrival of The Revd Ginny Thomas and Graham Caldbeck as Director of Music in September, there will be an injection of new ideas. As Ginny will be 'part-time' we do need to find some volunteers to take on particular pieces of work including producing *The Clarion* and organizing the summer fayre. At a deeper level, however, there is the challenge of developing the ministry and gifts within the congregation (there are definitely some potential preachers out there!) and putting St. Mary's on a firm financial footing.

Less than half of the £120,000 currently needed to run the church comes from committed giving from the congregation, let alone make provision for the future. Because the hall rents prop up the PCC finances the potential for developing the life of the church within the community is inhibited. Despite the Friends Campaigns in recent years the message has not got through that the church not only needs financial support but that giving money is one of the joyful fruits of a lively faith. Putting it very crudely, in a competitive religious market if people want the sort of church like St. Mary's to thrive then people are going to have to put their money where their mouths are.

There was some discussion concerning changes in this part of the **Chelsea Deanery**. Last year The Revd Lawrence Smith began working on a report for the Kensington Area Council on the situation in the parishes of St. Cuthbert's, Philbeach Gardens, St. Jude's, Courtfield Gardens, St. Mary The Boltons and St. Luke's, Redcliffe Gardens. Lawrence's report is still to be brought into the public arena but in the meantime the Bishop of Kensington has decided to make St. Jude's an extra-parochial place (i.e. it will cease to have Sunday services) and The Revd Tom Gillum has been appointed to run a project based on a model in Rome (the San Engiddio Community).

There were **congratulations** all round to those who had organized recent exciting events including the **Teen Event** on 8 May in which 19 young people spent a 'cool' Saturday night doing their thing in church and the **trip to Russia**.

Some time was spent on talking about the building. The good news is that the architect's latest **Quinquennial Report** (the five yearly survey of the building required by the diocese) shows the need for only minor repairs and the consulting engineers who have been monitoring cracks in the tower for at least the last three years have now concluded that there is no significant movement and that further action or monitoring is not required.

Recently, there have been requests for permanent **memorials** in church to commemorate people who have died. This is a difficult issue balancing the pastoral needs of people on the one hand and the rules governing parish churches which currently discourage memorials on the walls etc because the permanence of church buildings cannot be guaranteed. As can be seen by the Treasury in the south transept St. Mary's has more than enough plate and the garden is also well stocked with plants and garden furniture. Although the PCC was reluctant to have a formal policy refusing all future requests for any sort of memorials it would like the

message to go out that 'more is less' in the hope that people will support the church as a whole by donations and bequests without tying this to particular objects.

Lastly, Arthur Tait has put in an amazing amount of work on a **brochure** about the history of the church and parish. Photographs were taken during some of the events at the end of last year and it is hoped that the book will be available in time for Christmas.

### **Richard Dowbiggin RIP**

*An address given by The Revd Charles Marnham at the funeral on Wednesday 2 June at Mortlake Crematorium*

First of all, we give Anita, Martin, Mandy and Katherine, together with Richard's sisters Joan and June our fond love and deepest sympathy as we remember Richard.

Richard had so many virtues – it is always interesting to discover others' views of someone you have known well and to share impressions.

Letters Anita has received mention Richard's charm, courtesy and wit; and his great interest in what others were up to including Anita's children and grandchildren. He was an attentive host and great fun to be with.

He loved to tell stories which made you laugh. He made you feel better for having spent time with him. And there was always a twinkle in his eye.

I had lunch with Richard at my Club a little time ago and all those fine and exceptional qualities were displayed. Although we were from very different generations, it was a most memorable and happy occasion.

My family had known Richard for many years. I have known him all my life. My father was his Best man.

You will know more about some of his personal history than I do – his time in the Indian Army, Hong Kong and business in London.

I knew him in particular because he spent every Christmas Day with us for many, many years. He was part of my childhood and brought all those special qualities mentioned earlier, to us as a family. We always enjoyed his visits.

He was loved by three women – which is a testimony in itself to Richard – my Godmother, then Janet my adopted Godmother, and finally Anita, who has cared for him so devotedly together with her family.

When I visited Richard in hospital he was stoical about his illness. Above all he thought of his visitors. We were not to stay too long – he clearly did not want to be a nuisance to us. He did not want a fuss. So like him!

I am about to read a Joyce Grenfell poem specially chosen by Richard. It expresses so clearly that there is the pain of parting and weeping. But we began this service with passages from the Bible to remind us that for the one who believes in Jesus "Yet shall he live and shall never die". That certain hope is a great comfort as we remember Richard with much thanksgiving.

If I should go before the rest of you,  
Break not a flower or inscribe a stone.  
Nor when I am gone speak in a Sunday voice,

But be the usual selves that I have known.

Weep if you must

Parting is hell

But life goes on

So sing as well.

### **St Paul's Cathedral**

St. Mary's is being remembered in prayers at the cathedral church on Saturday 17 July at all the services (8.00am, 12.30pm & 5.00pm). Gerald is going to the 12.30pm Eucharist. If you would like to go we will meet in the cathedral.