

A Pilgrim's Tale

This was no walk in the park but a 28-mile trek over two days across Dorset and Wiltshire to our mother church in Salisbury. Stunning scenery, good company and frequent worship marked our pilgrimage,

But we experienced a modicum of hardship, too. By lunchtime on the first day we were drenched and we came in for our fair share of blisters, sore feet and painful limbs.

People reflected afterwards that the cross we carried in turn had been hard to bear. Yet it was a flimsy structure which would never have borne the weight of a man. And, of course, we knew we weren't going to be nailed to it when we reached our goal.

Turning your back on the everyday to walk quiet lanes and drovers' paths brings Creation into focus with intense birdsong and heart-stopping vistas. And the rhythm of just keeping going seems to speak of how our lives are playing out.

Not many of us enjoyed the vistas much the first morning, however – it was more a case of watching where you put your feet and hunching up against the driving rain.

The fact that we are a community quickly became manifest, however. We were 15 walkers and a small boy in a cart but others gave up two days of their lives to support us with refreshments and music whilst nettles and brambles had been cleared beforehand to ease our passage.

People from Colehill and parishioners from the three villages were waiting in the churches to share worship with us whilst others dropped in for meals, baked us cakes, walked with us for half a day and/or greeted us at the cathedral.

Friends at Gussage all Saints threw their house open for hot drinks on Day 1 – never mind soggy bottoms on dining chairs – and a stranger opened hers for civilised loo stops at Stratford Tony the second day whilst we picnicked in the sun, villagers supplementing our feast with wine and bakewell tart,

The overnight accommodation in Pentridge village hall was not up to the standards of the Chaucer's Tabard Inn – I would have settled for some fresh straw and a nice warm donkey to snuggle up to. (In fact this particular pilgrim defected for the night and climbed into a hot bath with a G&T.)

But the welcome and the barbecue were amazing – in fact the whole catering operation was organised like a NATO exercise and the food so good I gained three pounds.

Evensong at the Cathedral was the culmination (after yet another feast, this time from Salisbury hosts). We were touched at the welcome and elated to have made it. Our bodies ached while our hearts soared to the sublime music from a visiting choir.

For me the whole experience was summed up in a prayer we had used along the way:

I sought my God

My God I could not see

I sought my soul

My soul eluded me

I sought my brother

And I found all three

Sharen Green

We have raised nearly £2000 for charity as a result of the Pilgrimage and hoping to increase the total further.