



CAIM

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

Have courage and wait...

The themes of eager anticipation and waiting are constant companions for us during the Advent season, but this year they have a particular place in the life of our Community. It's early December, and had everything 'gone to plan', the new Mother House at Acton Home Farm would now be being prepared for its first guests. As it is, the building work there has been somewhat hindered by the weather, and instead of being at Acton I'm writing this from temporary accommodation near Hetton Hall looking out on a stunningly beautiful, but totally unyielding, snow-covered landscape.



The snow started to fall across Northumberland on the 24th November, and within a couple of days it had closed the roads around Hetton Hall to all but the hardiest of vehicles (needless

to say, none of them belong to the Community!) It had already been clear to us for about a week that it would be impossible to move into Acton Home Farm as previously planned, so we had taken the decision to put everything into storage and find alternative accommodation for the House Team when the lease expired on Hetton Hall on the 30th November. Fortunately, we had managed to get nearly everything out of Hetton Hall before the snow arrived and alternative accommodation was also found for everyone in time.

The hope was to start taking guests at Acton Home Farm from the 10th January, but as there doesn't appear to be any hope of a break in the weather anytime soon and the snow is continuing to hold up the building work, we have had to make the decision (albeit reluctantly) to cancel the retreats in January and aim for a start on the 31st January 2011; apologies to everyone who had booked on a retreat that has been cancelled.

And so we continue to wait, with eager anticipation; although the building work has slowed down, it is nearly finished. The wonderful place that God has provided for us is taking shape. The bookshelves are in place awaiting their literary load; the new beds are on order awaiting

their delivery for slumbering souls; the Everhot (AGA) is built and waiting to warm both kettle and guest; clearings in the wood have been made for Chapel and Poustinia. Nether Springs at Acton Home Farm is waiting to welcome Companions, Friends, and guests.

Reflecting on the journey to the new Nether Springs so far, and the waiting that it has entailed, I'm reminded of Ben, a Dutchman living part of the year in Felton, and part of the year in the Netherlands; a wanderer, and a man of prayer. Some time ago, around the time that the Community had been given notice to leave Hetton Hall, (unknown to Ben), he felt a strong calling to prayer-walk the area around Acton Home Farm. Ben had a deep sense that God was asking him to prepare the ground so something new could happen there. He was puzzled by this as he thought that God was going to ask him to move on to the property, and this didn't seem to fit with the things that God was doing in his life and ministry. But he followed God's call, and over a number of months, prayer-walked around Acton Home Farm. Later that year, about twelve months ago, he was praying round the property and met Alan Ferguson, the landowner. Alan asked him what he was doing and Ben explained; they chatted for a while and then Alan told him that our Community would be moving into Acton Home Farm. When I first met Ben a few months ago he said that as soon as Alan had told him about the Northumbria Community everything made sense, and that he then knew that God had asked him to pray over the land for us and not him.



As I was clearing out the Overseer's office at Hetton Hall I came across a picture bearing the words "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God". The story of our

Community over the years bears witness to the truth of this, and hearing Ben's story, and others like it, can (through our waiting for this next season of our Community's life to begin), give us confidence that the same God who has clearly led us to this point in time, is leading us into the future.

Pete Askew

Welcome to the Winter edition of Caim!

You may have seen Northumberland on the national news in recent weeks, as winter seemed to arrive first for us. Several weeks later, moving around is still very difficult. The leaving of Hetton was completed - but our arrival at Acton has been set back. Ingrid (Caim's co-editor) has moved house, but has no telephone or internet connection! The Community Office is in a bedroom somewhere in a snowfield... So we bring you a special shortened edition of Caim this time, aimed squarely at bringing us right up to date with the move of the Mother House. **Please see the website** for a list of important upcoming dates which Caim cannot feature, this time. We send you warm and kind wishes this Christmas season, and pray that you will know the nearness of the Christ who comes... Enjoy this edition of Caim. *Jeff & Ingrid*

A season for Giving

I am writing this on St. Nicholas' Day. Responding to Jesus' words 'sell what you own and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven', this 3rd Century Saint used all that he possessed to assist those in need, bringing healing and comfort to those who suffered. Dedicating his life to serving God, he became the Bishop of Myra on the Mediterranean coast, in an area which is now in Turkey. Nicholas was known for his generosity, his love and concern for others.

Throughout the centuries many stories and legends (including the origins of Santa Claus!) have been told to illustrate his extraordinary character. Celebrating St. Nicholas' day in Advent is a helpful reminder that Christmas is a feast of love, compassion, kindness and generosity.

Generosity - then, as now - always makes a difference, and I am writing to you as Companions and Friends of the Community to ask if you would seriously consider giving generously to the appeal that we launched this autumn for our Community's new Mother House; Nether Springs at Acton Home Farm.



As Pete has explained, we are currently temporarily 'homeless'; given the unexpected severe winter conditions, our hopes of relocating to Acton this month have disappeared. Building work has simply stopped, and some of our staff are stranded in

rented accommodation or 'halfway' houses.

The pressure on us financially will build, as we miss income otherwise generated from the Mother House - and this pressure comes on top of the fundraising effort to complete the first phase of our plans. Deeply thankful for all those who have given so far - which has raised £80,000 - we still need a further £120,000 to realise these plans.

We do appreciate the pressure that many people are under financially, and are of course mindful of the uncertainty of the present economic climate. However, it should not be beyond our means as a Community of Companions and Friends to raise a further £120,000 if everyone committed to some form of giving.

In the provision of our new Mother House, we have a remarkable opportunity - not only to continue what has been established over many years, but also to develop what

we can offer as a Community, and extend our hospitality to so many people whom we will welcome and serve in Christ's name.



Change began in my life whilst I was travelling in Belgium back in the 70's; someone opened their home and heart to offer me a warm and hospitable welcome.

Their kindness triggered a new beginning for me, and through their warmth and generosity I began to take tentative steps in a faith journey that was to lead me to follow Christ.

One of the privileges that I have in my travelling is to meet so many people who have encountered the Community, and whose lives have been touched for good by their contact with us. Many have made their way to Nether Springs, and such an experience has been transforming. People who have been searching and questioning; exploring; disillusioned; looking for authenticity, hope or healing; and yet others who've sought refuge and a safe space to be before God and others. They speak of "coming home", feeling safe, and having been given a 'language' to express their spiritual journey. For others, faith has been reborn, and they have found refreshment and nourishment from the well of spirituality that we draw from as a Community - and which finds a particular focus at the Community's Mother House.



This essential aspect of our life and work must continue - but it demands our response, in order to realise it and further its good and godly influence in the lives of all whom the Lord brings across our path.

Can I encourage you, during this season of Advent, to think about giving? As Christmas approaches we celebrate the coming of Christ, who is the greatest gift the world has ever received. God's giving transformed the world. In the light of his great gift, can I encourage you to make your gift, that will bring transformation to many at Nether Springs in the coming years?

By our giving we can make a difference. Please join us and give generously. A 'Giving Form' is included with Caim. Thank you in anticipation. *Roy Searle*

The leaving of Hetton Hall

My journey into the Northumbria Community began at Hetton Hall. Ingrid and I spent two weeks here early in 2001, and two years later it became our home. We have loved living and working here for the last eight years. During that time we have welcomed hundreds of guests, peeled thousands of onions and walked many miles to and fro between house and chapel to say the daily office through sun, rain, wind and snow.

Not surprisingly then, packing up and leaving this old house is a deeply emotional experience for us. There is a sense of loss and a disorientation to be worked through, even though we are greatly looking forward to the next chapter of the story shortly to be enacted at Acton Home Farm. The final few weeks at Hetton have inevitably been quite strange to live through. In some senses it has felt like we have been preparing to leave for ages and in other ways the end has come suddenly upon us.

Way back in the summer we had the first of our 'official' farewell to Hetton events – the garden party to which we invited neighbours and various people who have served us through the years – such as John Nixon, who has kept our long stream of old cars on the road and Peter (affectionately known as The Mouse Man), who has done battle with the rodents.

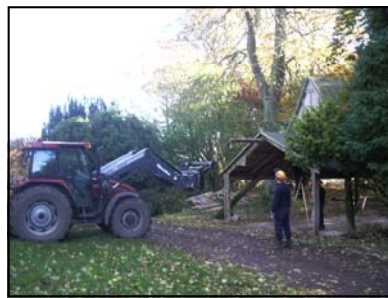
In Autumn the bonfires began. Ann, the Queen of Pyrotechnics, came into her own – “for such a time as this”. Room by room we took stock and the Great Judgement began, as items were marked for Acton, for passing on to another good home... or for destruction by the everlasting fires of the back field!

On Saturday 23rd October we said our final office in the Hetton Chapel. The following day it was to be taken down. Immediately after evening prayer, we remained in the chapel, and led by Catherine, we gave thanks, calling to mind many memories - from the bizarre to the inspirational – of this place where prayer has been faithfully offered, where hearts have been touched, hope rekindled, new resolve found; where tears have been poured out and where laughter has often rung out.

I thought of the time when I was about to lead office on one occasion and I left my seat and walked out to ring the five minute bell as usual. On returning, I found my seat had mysteriously disappeared and Rob Brown was smirking in the back row! Then there were those many Tuesday night complines that dissolved in uproar as the participants struggled with the infamous tongue-twister – I will not lie down tonight with shin, nor shall shin, nor shin's shadow lie down with me!

After giving thanks that evening, each of us left quietly, carrying out of the chapel with us a small symbolic object – a cross, a candle stick, the prayer basket, an icon...

The next day, demolition work began. Soon the Poustinia was no more and the Chapel of the Incarnation stood empty. The Chapel itself refused to surrender completely,



and the four supporting poles and the high roof have been left in place. It felt so strange and disorientating the following morning holding prayers in Columba. For me it was one of the biggest reality checks on the

journey that underlined the fact – we really are moving! It's not just an idea – it's actually happening.

On Thursday 28th October we said goodbye to our last group of guests. Then a sad silence settled upon the Hall. The Chapel Bell was no longer to be heard calling us to prayer. No guests were huddled around the Aga, drinking coffee and tea. The life of the house seemed to be ebbing away, as we began clearing the rooms, sorting and packing. Our spirits were lifted again by the Achsah Pilgrimage - a timely reminder that what we were about was not only an ending but also a beginning. We were able to continue our preparations for moving with lighter hearts once again.



Then we began to hear rumours of snow – heavy snow forecast to hit the North East in a few days time. There was nothing for it but to work like crazy to get as much moved into storage as quickly as possible. Van-load after van-load set out from Hetton while the roads were still passable. Then we woke to find a foot of snow putting an abrupt end to all our feverish activity, and leaving our move rather in limbo. And that's where this part of the story must end – waiting for the snow to melt so that we can return to finish the last load of removal work that still remains. *Norman Cumming*

Contacting the Community Office

Not only has the snow caused problems with the building work, but it has also caused us some challenges with communication.

Ellen is keeping the wheels of administration turning by working from home, until we are able to move into Acton Home Farm. Here's how you can keep in touch during December and January: **E-mail** is the best way to contact Ellen office@northumbriacommunity.org. Please continue to send any **post** to: Northumbria Community, Hetton Hall, Chatton, Northumberland, NE66 5SD, which will magically reach Ellen! As soon as we're settled at Acton we'll publish the new address. You can also use the existing **phone** number 01289 388235 as calls are being diverted. As soon as BT has managed to establish the lines into Acton we'll publish the new number.

Apologies for any inconvenience this causes in contacting the office - we're doing the best we can in difficult circumstances!

David Pott writes of **The Achsah Pilgrimage.**

Our "Ark of the Community" (a small black case) lay open on a table with our significant objects beside it, including a small container of water so that we might carry the Nether Springs with us. I put it in the ark and others quietly placed the other objects - which included the earliest handwritten book of sources and meditations from which CDP was prepared, a tulip bulb, the grace cube, a wooden cross from the chapel and a sprig of honesty.



From there we walked out to the 'chapel without walls' with the morning sun streaming through. As we started morning prayer, a skein of geese flew directly overhead heading southwards, beckoning us on. We could not have asked for a clearer sign that we were following the call of God's Spirit at the outset of our journey!

*Help us, Christ our brother
To softly fold inside
The grief and the sadness,
To pack away the pain
And to move on:
Taking each day in your company;
Travelling each step
In your love.*



So we set off for our morning walk to Old Bewick, taking a stop on the way to reflect and pray at the Purple Bridge.

Our lunchtime stop at Old Bewick was a major highlight where several others joined us in that special place so rich in memories for us.



In the afternoon we left the road to follow a delightful path along the River Till to Beanley. From there we walked steadily upwards in the beautifully sharp evening sunlight, up the steep slope to the Shepherd's Law Hermitage.

The Hermitage was absolutely the perfect place for us to stay. Brother Harold welcomed us so warmly and we were deeply refreshed by joining him for his evening office in the stunningly beautiful chapel. Brother Harold joined us in our meal afterwards, and we shared time where everything was just right – the food, the place, the company, the conversation. We went to bed with glad and thankful hearts.

*High King of land and sea
Wherever we have trod is yours
You led by fire and cloud
Lead us on through the days and nights.*

Once again the next morning dawned bright and sunny. We walked out beside the hermitage where we had an unhindered view back down the valley to the familiar hills which we have enjoyed from Hetton – this was for us "the place of no turning back". Brother Harold joined us as we shared our morning office, then we said our farewells and set off round Titlington Pike to the new views of Alnwick Moor which we would be crossing over later in the day.

*So we leave behind familiar paths
And take new steps into the Unknown.*

The next stretch was the most challenging of the whole journey. Firstly there was quite a steep ascent up and over Alnwick Moor and then there was a gradual descent over tussocky grass to Shiel Dykes Farm. The rain began to fall for the first time. Eventually we regained a road and walked up to Newton on the Moor where Ian & Joy were there to give us a last boost of chocolate!

We crossed over the A1 proper to go on a track to Acton Home Farm. The night was pulling in quickly as we arrived, so we planted the bulb and poured the Nether Springs water on the ground before saying our final prayers at the site where the chapel will be built.

*Thank-you God
For walking with us as we journeyed
From the familiar to the new
From Hetton Hall to Acton Home Farm
We put our trust in You.*

I am so grateful that the vision was fulfilled pretty much exactly as I conceived it a few months ago. Special



thanks to the other main walkers – Pete Askew, Terry Ansell, Gill Yellowlees and Sue Toms; to Catherine Askew for preparing the liturgy we used; and to Ian & Joy Corsie for the food and wonderful support throughout. I am also very grateful to all the others who joined us for stretches, prayed for us and sent encouraging emails and text messages.

*Thank-you God
For walking with us as we carried symbols of
The home of our community – Nether Springs.
Bless us as we resettle in the place of your choosing.
We put our trust in You.*

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