

## Diary dates for January and February 2011

18 <sup>th</sup> January	20.30 Service for Christian Unity at the Catholic Church La Richardais
19 <sup>th</sup> January	11.00 Julian Meeting – George Dobinson
21 <sup>st</sup> January	20.30 Service for Christian Unity at Eglise Reformée, St Servan
27 <sup>th</sup> January	10.30 Council Meeting
16 <sup>th</sup> February	11.00 Julian Meeting – George Dobinson



### Prayer of the month

Father Almighty,  
you gave a great light to the people who lay in darkness; grant that we  
may always seek the Lord Jesus and know him more intimately every  
day, growing in the faith of our baptism.  
Through him who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Prayer translated from the Ambrosian rite for Epiphany  
Courtesy of Bishop David Hamid's Blog - Epiphany 2010



### Prayer focus

To reflect how our sense of faith and morality can be clearly  
communicated to others in an ever changing world.



### Advent Appeal

Our 2010 Appeal in aid of the British Diabetic Association raised 262€.  
Thanks to everyone who made a contribution.

## The Newsletter St Bartholomew's, Dinard



January, 2011

### Services

**Sunday 11.00** Holy Communion (with hymns)

**Thursday 10.00** Holy Communion (said)

A warm welcome to all who worship with us.  
After the service coffee is served.

**Priest-in-charge: The Revd Gareth Randall**

For further information concerning baptisms,  
marriages or funerals:

☎ 02 99 46 77 00

e-mail : [gareth.randall@nordnet.fr](mailto:gareth.randall@nordnet.fr)

Website : [www.stbarts-dinard.org.uk](http://www.stbarts-dinard.org.uk)



January, 2011

Dear Friends

### *A New Beginning ?*

When does the New Year begin for you? Of course, your answer will be determined by the particular New Year you are talking about. There is no doubt that January 1st is the beginning of the year for most people in Western Europe and living here in France, New Year's Day is preceded by La Nuit de St Silvestre!

But in terms of our Christian Liturgy, the New Year began on 28th November with Advent Sunday, the lighting of the first candle in our Advent wreath, once again a beautifully bespoke creation by Diana Wilson, a sermon by The Revd Dr John Marvell and the introduction of the long-awaited new service of Holy Communion.

All that was a month ago and I have deliberately waited until now to write about it, having given you the chance to get accustomed to the slight changes. But change there is with 'You' being substituted for 'Thee' and 'Thou'. There was something 'sweet' about the use of the 'Tu' form in English, to 'tutoyer' God as the French might say, to address him in a way that is both intimate and delightfully old-fashioned. But our God is real and up-to-date, a player in the contemporary world, not an anachronism confined to a Shakespearean play or to the King James Bible which coincidentally celebrates its Quatercentenary this year!

If God is to be real in the age in which we live, we should talk to him and of him as we would to anyone else who is vital and important in our lives.

Father Gareth



### Notices

- **The Standing Committee** would like to thank everyone whose contributions this year in a whole variety of ways have helped to make our church a vital and viable community.
- **A piece of cake?** Doreen Collier's e mail address to which to send your cake recipes is [doreen.collier@wanadoo.fr](mailto:doreen.collier@wanadoo.fr)
- **The coffee morning** in December at Diana's raised 226€ shared between the church and the SPA.
- **Tournebride Monthly Lunch 8<sup>th</sup> January** at the Relais de Tournebride - a good opportunity for British and French folk to meet. 14€ includes an aperitif, a four course meal, wine and coffee. **Mike Baber** 02 99 73 56 06/[annebaber5050@aol.com](mailto:annebaber5050@aol.com)
- **For Sale – Dolo Jugon Les Lacs**  
Breton house and manoir with land and outbuildings. A rare opportunity to buy a whole hamlet.  
Two properties 140,000€  
Further house and land 80,000€  
Contact Elaine Dunstan [elainedunstan@yahoo.fr](mailto:elainedunstan@yahoo.fr)  
02 96 83 39 35 or 06 83 51 98 57
- **House for Sale or Rent**  
Large lounge; dining room; bathroom with toilet; large kitchen; conservatory; cellar and wine cellar.  
Upstairs: 3 bedrooms; dressing room; bathroom with toilet.  
Outside: garage; summer house; car port; ample parking.  
1,400m<sup>2</sup> of terrain situated close to the Port in La Vicomté sur Rance; 10 minutes from Dinan. 185,000€ or 650€ per month.  
Contact Bill Hughes 02 96 83 30 19 or 06 61 66 14 84  
or Chris Hughes 06 67 67 02 28
- **Deadline** for submission of material for the February Newsletter is **midday on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January**
- **Church Finances for November**  
Income: 1,951€ Expenditure: 5,122€

**January 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Jeremiah 31 v7 – 14  
Ephesians 1 v3 – 14

**January 9<sup>th</sup>**

Isaiah 42 v1 – 9  
Acts 10 v34 – 43

**January 16<sup>th</sup>**

Isaiah 49 v 1 – 7  
1 Corinthians 1 v 1 – 9

**January 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Isaiah 49 v 1 – 7  
1 Corinthians 1 v10 - 18

**January 30<sup>th</sup>**

Malachi 3 v 1 -5  
Hebrews 2 v 14 – end

**Readings in church**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Christmas**

Psalm 147 v12 – 20  
John 1 v10 – 18

**Baptism of Christ**

Psalm 29  
Matthew 3 v13 - end

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany**

Psalm 40 v1 – 12  
John 1 v29 – 42

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany**

Psalm 27 v 1 – 10  
Matthew 4 v12 - 23

**Candlemas**

Psalm 24  
Luke 2 v22 – 40



**Personal Column**

Congratulations to:

- Elaine and John Dunstan whose granddaughter Victoria Maud Aliénor Carswell was baptised in St Barts on Boxing Day.
- Louis-Emmanuel de la Foye ordained deacon in Notre dame Dinard by the auxiliary Bishop of Rennes, Nicholas Souchu.
- The Revd Brian Davies whose last service at All Saints La Vendée was 12<sup>th</sup> December. We wish him and his wife Pam every blessing when they move to the Aquitaine Chaplaincy in January.

Sympathy to

- Mary Pierpont who in the cold weather on 2<sup>nd</sup> December fell and broke the femur on her right leg. She was immediately taken to the local hospital for an operation to set the bone and then transferred to a Rehab Centre where she is recovering.

**Notes from your Council  
25th November, 2010**

The Meeting of the Council opened and closed in prayer following on from our regular Thursday morning service of Holy Communion which most members present attended.

We are still engaged in the long-drawn-out process of trying to secure the Moynihan legacy. It is now possible to leave money in a will made in France to the church since we are an Association Cultuel.

Money raising continues in a variety of ways with new church postcards commissioned by David Morgan and a coffee morning planned for a Saturday in December at the home of Diana Wilson.

The status of the British portion of the Dinard cemetery is being reviewed by the Mairie but on enquiry, the possibility of establishing a columbarium in that section was not possible but it is possible to have ashes scattered or interred within the main cemetery itself.

Ecumenical relations continue to thrive with services for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2011 being planned at St Enogat and in the newly opened Eglise Reformée in St Servan.

With regards to music in church, we have secured the services of an organist, a teacher from the Dinard School of Music; there are plans to launch an appeal fund to purchase a back-up electronic organ and a concert by a choir from Imperial College London has been booked for 28th May.

Sadly, Sybil's present state of health means that she is not in a position to assist at our services. It was proposed and accepted that she should be accorded the title of Reader Emeritus.

*Father Gareth*



## Thoughts from a Visiting Chaplain.

*In an occasional series of articles former locum chaplains write of their experience with us*

In October 1999, we received a letter from Julian Thompson inviting us to come to Dinard and serve as chaplain at St. Bartholomew's for the month of February 2000. We were delighted to say "yes" and thus began the first of five visits. We were impressed with the beauty of the town and the surrounding countryside and were warmly greeted by the members of the congregation.

On our first visit, we were welcomed by Elizabeth Hannay and invited to her home for tea. She told us a great deal about the history of the church. I presented her with one of my business cards which gave not only my name but my title of "visitor on behalf of the Bishop." The title puzzled Elizabeth and for five years she repeatedly asked me, "Which Bishop are you spying for?" We finally convinced her it had to do with my visits to the retired and ill for the Diocese of Olympia in the State of Washington. Elizabeth and Lafayette faithfully attended Evening Prayer every week.

Our second visit was in September 2001 which to us will always be remembered by the tragic events of 9/11 when New York City was devastated by the destruction of the Twin Towers resulting the deaths of more than 2000 Americans. France declared a time for silence throughout the nation to remember the victims. We held a special service in St. Bartholomew's to honour the dead and a grieving nation. As Americans, we felt an outpouring of support from the congregation that was touching and meaningful to us.

As time went on, we became more familiar with the good people of St. Bartholomew's who made us feel so welcome. On several occasions,

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10.30 Council Meeting

9<sup>th</sup> March 10.00 Ash Wednesday

24<sup>th</sup> March 11.00 Start of Lent Bible Study

2<sup>nd</sup> April 10.30 Council Meeting

17<sup>th</sup> April 12.00 AGM

21<sup>st</sup> April 10.30 Maundy Thursday

22<sup>nd</sup> April 11.00 Good Friday

24<sup>th</sup> April 11.00 Easter Day

12<sup>th</sup> May 10.30 Council Meeting

2<sup>nd</sup> June 10.00 Ascension Day

12<sup>th</sup> June 11.00 Pentecost

26<sup>th</sup> June 11.00 Peterstide & the celebration of the  
ordination to the priesthood of The Revd  
Canon Roger Gilbert 40 years ago

8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> July Flower festival

14<sup>th</sup> July 10.30 Council Meeting

17<sup>th</sup> July 12.00 Friends AGM

6<sup>th</sup> August 14.00 Garden Party

28<sup>th</sup> August 11.00 Patronal Festival

1<sup>st</sup> September 10.30 Council Meeting

25<sup>th</sup> September 11.00 Harvest Festival & the celebration of the  
ordination to the priesthood of The Revd Dr  
John Marvell 30 years ago

10.30 Council Meeting

24<sup>th</sup> November 17.00 Carol Service

17<sup>th</sup> December 17.00 Crib Service

24<sup>th</sup> December 11.00 Christmas Day

25<sup>th</sup> December

**Recipe of the month**  
**Nettle Soup (serves 4)**  
**NB Use gloves to pick the nettles!**

Another Jersey recipe as know on the island as 'Ortchies' Nettle soup was a staple made in Jersey during the occupation

- ✓ 3 oz nettle leaves
- ✓ 1 onion
- ✓ 1 carrot, 1 clove of garlic
- ✓ 1 medium potato
- ✓ 1.5 pints of stock (vegetable)
- ✓ 2 tbsp double cream
- ✓ 1 oz butter
- ✓ Salt & Pepper



- Chop the onions, carrot, potato and garlic.
- Fry in the butter for 5 minutes.
- Add the stock, nettles and seasoning.
- Simmer for twenty minutes.
- Strain the soup.
- Whizz the nettles and vegetables in a food processor, adding a ladle of stock to get it going.
- Rinse the pan
- Add the puréed vegetables and stock,
- Just before serving, gently heat to boiling point.
- Remove from heat, add the cream.
- Serve with a bowl of garlicked croutons.

*Victor Pumfrett*

we were invited to their homes and became good friends. I had also been asked to perform two weddings – one in St. Lo and the other in a small town not too far from Dinard. One couple came from England the other from the Channel Islands. Both weddings were delightful and we still hear from one couple who now have two children.

Shortly after being asked to return to Dinard, we had to cancel our plans as I had been diagnosed with prostate cancer and had to endure several months of treatment which ended with surgery. During that time, we received many cards and notes from parishioners. Once again we felt the outpouring of support that was such an encouragement during a difficult time.

We were very lucky to have been asked to serve a chaplaincy in December. It was an exciting month. During the latter part St. Bartholomew's hosted the Lessons and Carols Service with its mince pies, wine and all. There was a big crowd, close to 200. Lorrie and I washed 184 wine glasses with the help of the chaplain's flat dishwasher. On Christmas Day, there was a good crowd present for the Eucharist. This was followed by a wonderful lunch at a local hotel – it lasted more than three hours! We did miss our families and friends, but Christmas in Dinard left wonderful lasting memories!

Our last year in Dinard was again in September. We had learned that a permanent priest had been appointed - the flat was remodelled by members of the congregation in preparation for Fr Gareth's arrival. Parishioners bid us farewell with many thanks and good wishes. We think of you often and wonder what's happening in your world. Lorrie and I will never forget St. Bartholomew's, Dinard and the wonderful people who became a special part of our lives.

Fr. John (John Schaeffer)

## Heaven – I'm in heaven'

*As Christians, we often hear about heaven, the joyful promise of eternal life in the world to come. No one knows the nature of such eternal bliss but occasionally we can glimpse something of the delight of heaven. In a series of three articles for our Newsletter, Claude François shares with us three moments in his life when he had surprising insights into the nature of heaven.*

The first time I went to heaven I was in the French air force.

I had just received my commission as a Second Lieutenant but I didn't know anything about the army or aircraft so there was a great temptation on the part of non-commissioned officers to have a good laugh at my expense. This I knew but still I didn't mind!

Then one day, a sergeant major obsequiously asks me, 'Lieutenant, have you ever flown in a jet fighter?' I could honestly reply no. Quick as a flash, he then asks, 'Well, would you like to?' and of course I say, 'Yes, please!'

So off we went to the airfield where I put on the oxygen mask, buckled up, and then we took off, ever so gently. Then he asked, 'Lieutenant is your seat belt well fastened?' and I said 'Yes.' So without warning, he flips the plane upside down and there I am, hanging on the safety belt. And I say, 'No, no!' And he flips the plane back and I tighten the belt so tightly it hurts.

Then he says, 'Hey, I can see my mate over there. Lieutenant, do you want to simulate a dogfight? Yes, why not while we're at it? Let's enjoy ourselves!'

So he pulls on the handle and my head sinks into my shoulders. I feel squished just as if an elephant or a giant octopus is sitting on top of me and for the next ten minutes, I feel the G force in all directions. Now I've always hated roller coasters but this is so much more violent with

## Organ Appeal

We are fortunate here at St Bartholomew's to possess a beautiful organ which from time to time needs repair and maintenance. When such occasions arise, it would be useful to have a stand-by instrument. A suitable keyboard would be ideal.

At present, we do not have a permanent organist. There are, however, pianists who can play a keyboard but not an organ. The keyboard as a back-up instrument would give us greater scope in providing the music in church especially for our Sunday morning service.

I have, therefore, spoken to Father Gareth and have given a donation to St Barts to launch an 'Organ Fund' to purchase such an instrument. The money given is in memory of my wife, Joyce, who loved music and who played an electronic organ at home. Perhaps you would care to join me in making a donation in memory of a loved one(s).

So many people over time have given generously to enable us to purchase items for our church that a book recording such gifts will be established listing the item donor and in whose memory the gift was given.

If you share my belief that music is an important and vital part of our church and a keyboard would be a valuable addition, then please think about contributing to the Organ Fund. Any such donation can be given directly to our treasurer, David Morgan.

Thank you.

*Bill Hughes*  
*Church Warden*



## Desert Island Books

If you were allowed one book on a desert island, what would it be? Think of 'Desert Island Discs' and you have the idea. You are to be allowed one book, not including the Bible or Shakespeare. The prohibition of the Bible I can understand, but Shakespeare? It would not figure very highly on my list of favourite books: it stands in my order of merit at about 374! One other preliminary thought: no cheating or stretching of the rules: the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica' for example, cannot be counted as one book. And one last thing. You have 5 'goes' Book No1 is to be taken as your final word until you nominate a further contender, which shall then be placed in its stead as the revised No1 so that there will be a hierarchy, a 'Champion of Champions' if you will.

So here is my No1: 'Robinson Crusoe'. Not for its possible relevance to being a castaway on a desert island, but for its merits as a book in its own right. Written in 1719, it reads like a true, autobiographical account, with that same sense of compelling immediacy found in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's writings (notably Sherlock Holmes). Practically no other writer in English has given his characters such reality and solidity. I refer, of course, to the authentic text of 'Robinson Crusoe', not to the universally-known children's version, which is not so very much different, but which lacks the subtlety and deep religious speculation which characterise the original. On several levels the book scores: first, for its profound level of psychological insight; it is a jumping-off place for wide speculation and meditation. Secondly, the mental processes of Crusoe himself provide endless fields for study. Then, the story of the historical figure of Alexander Selkirk, the original castaway (whom Defoe met and came to know) is a fascinating mine of treasures. And finally, the story (apart, curiously, from its final thirty pages or so) is a rattling good tale.

my eyes threatening to pop out of their sockets and me feeling sick and ready to throw up till this thought crosses my mind: 'What would be the consequences of me vomiting into my mask - cutting off my oxygen supply? One way of suffocating!'

Then a terrible roar: nil visibility. Our plane is climbing like a rocket through a cloud. And I'm thinking this pilot is crazy. We're going to die and he doesn't care! Everyone knows being a jet fighter pilot is dangerous; life must not be very important for him. Then for the first time, I realise how vulnerable life is and I know how precious life is to me.

Then out of the blue, I'm dazzled by a flash of bright sunshine from above. No sound. A beautiful, pale-blue sky. I can't feel a thing. I realise I've been holding my breath for some time. So I take a deep breath of oxygen which fills my lungs and gives me an instant high.

The plane is now on a weightless trajectory and I cannot feel my body. I feel fantastic. No sense of space. No sense of orientation: of up or down; of right or left. No sense of time. I just don't know anymore. But I'm so happy to be alive. It feels I'm dreaming, simply enjoying myself - the best time ever! Surely this must be heaven?

But no, eventually we have to land.

*Claude François*



### Quotation of the Month

If I rest, I rust.  
Plácido Domingo



**Film Review of the month**  
***'The Island on Bird Street' – Soren Kragh-Jacobsen 1996***

In 2001, Holocaust Remembrance Day was first celebrated in the United Kingdom after an international conference the previous year so designated 27<sup>th</sup> January, since it was the day in 1945 when the Russian Army liberated Auschwitz.

I'm not good at remembering the horrors of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis – the whole period of history is too uncomfortable, too raw and unpleasant for me willingly to want to dwell on it. But sometimes you have to confront the demons that haunt you which is a principle my father taught me.

For this reason, let me recommend a film you may not have come across, 'The Island on Bird Street' directed by Soren Kragh-Jacobsen. Based on a 'true' story written by Uri Orlev who survived the Warsaw Ghetto, it is an account of Alex (Jordan Kiziuik) a young Jewish boy who tries to survive in a fictionalised Polish Ghetto after all the Jews, including his father (Patrick Bergin), are rounded up to be packed off to the extermination camps. Inspired by a translation of Defoe's novel, 'Robinson Crusoe', and accompanied by his pet white mouse, 'Snow', Alex lives a precarious, hand-to-mouth life on the margins of the ghetto with the window of his den overlooking the 'normality' of the Polish neighbourhood to which he has access through a concealed cellar door. Inevitably in the film, the actual hatred and violence, the real fear and the pain, are softened for it is difficult to bear too much reality. But in this story of a little boy lost, we see a glimmer of hope through some of his encounters and in his simple trust in his father's promise to return for him.

We should remember so as not to make the same mistakes again. We should remember, as God's Children, we share a common humanity.

*Gareth Randall*

And every now and then I drop something – obviously not deliberately, of course ! The latest thing was a mug, which broke - or nearly did. (*Message? What's one mug in these troubled times ?*)

Looking to the future : I am intending to put a piece of ribbon along the wall in case of Christmas cards. (*Hint ! Hint !*) I am also contemplating buying a plant. (*Any ideas? Only clean ones, please !*)

David Norris



**Kids see things differently**

*This series of jokes over the next seven months was kindly sent to me by former my vicar, Father Peter Bevan*

**Nudity** - Driving along with my young children one warm summer's evening, we were overtaken by an open top sports car in which the woman driving appeared to be completely naked! I was shocked and so was my young son who exclaimed indignantly: "That lady isn't wearing a seat belt!"



**Church Bulletins**

*The 1st of a 12 part series from Pam and Chris Rowland*

- The Fasting and Prayer conference includes meals
- The sermon this morning is 'Jesus walks on water'.  
The sermon tonight, 'Searching of Jesus'



On a book mark found in a novel lent to the Vidal Halls:

***A good pun is its own reward***

losing. So I stopped until I eventually won something, and then I stopped once and for all, as you should at that point, if not before. Believe me, I know what I'm talking about.

In the evenings I occasionally have a can of lager – or a couple of Paracetamol, and watch a smattering of television – which might still be on anyway from the night before. (*They do say it's cheaper to leave it on.*) Sometimes though, for a change, I turn the TV off and look for a book. But if I can't find it, I just sit and do nothing at all. (*Nice, occasionally, isn't it ?*) Or I just read until I'm tired or bored, and then I go to bed and listen to music – from the restaurant underneath.

Every day is different : On Mondays I always try to locate where my car's parked, which can take most of the day. But it's time well spent because it's a great help on the Monday after, especially if I haven't moved it in the meanwhile - though it takes me just as long! (*What am I like !*) On Tuesday evening I put the rubbish downstairs so it's there when it's collected on Monday morning. On Wednesdays I either have a lie-in or an early start – whichever. On Thursday morning I buy my milk, always semi-skimmed. (*I'm totally green now!*) On Friday afternoons my cleaner comes so I go and sit in the bus shelter. I could get on a bus if I wanted to, they seem to stop just where I sit. But I haven't so far. (*Something for 2011 ?*) On Saturday nights I often plan to go out. On Sundays there's church, of course – following which I throw everything into the washing machine and just sit down and watch it till the cycle's over. (*On the 7<sup>th</sup> Day I resteth !!!*)

Life's little surprises : Some weeks I receive a letter and some weeks I don't... In March the electricity went off - for an hour almost. Then it came back on again almost an hour later. (*Spooky or not ?*) And one Thursday I forgot to go for my milk. But *luckily* I'd kept some by in case that very thing happened - which it duly did... (*So how weird is that!*)

## Remembrance Sunday

*The following sermon was preached by my friend, Father Richard Tillbrook, Chaplain of 7ParaRHA and parish priest of St Barnabas Old Heath*

***Greater love has no man than this,  
that he lay down his life for his friends.***

Remembrance Sunday is one of those days in the life of our church and nation when we are not too sure how we should feel. On the one hand we think is it time to forget, to move on. On the other hand we thin, to forget history, to forget the foundations of our very existence, is a bad and dangerous thing. For me it the most important of days not just because members of my own family have lost their lives serving King, Queen and Country but because I believe it is vital to stop and say thank you for the supreme sacrifice they have made and to pray that we may learn the lessons and hope for peace one day.

I had written my sermon for today when, out of the blue, I received this very moving email which I have decided to read to you as a reminder of how much our soldiers have to face and how we still need to be grateful.

On the eve of Remembrance Day I sit behind the ubiquitous Hesco bastion walls and write. These colourless, stone-filled, wire and cloth baskets enclose almost every British base in this blighted country; they have become synonymous with this prolonged conflict.

Three of the five companies of soldiers I command are fighting at this very second. The clear autumn sun of is still hot, and my sweaty, dust-encrusted combat uniform bears the white, tidal salt stains of a day's perspiration. A day in the Green Zone of the River Helmand's fertile flood plain. The sweat-tide clearly traces the outline of the heavy,

cumbersome body armour that I've just discarded. In the distance the deep staccato beat of an Apache helicopter firing its 30mm shells mixes with the occasional crump of a Rocket Propelled Grenade. At over a kilometre away, the higher frequency fire from my soldiers' rifles cannot be heard. But each of them are fighting. In deep, cloying irrigation ditches and on the flat, vulnerable tabletop surfaces of fields recently hand-harvested, young men on both sides of the insurgency will be clawing at the ground; the crack and thump of bullets splitting the air around them. Again. It has been the same almost every day.

The almost thousand men (and nine women) I'm responsible for have the unenviable, complex and desperately dangerous task of dragging an inherently corrupt, feudal, self-serving population away from the tempting short-term Taliban offer of poppy and guns. We offer them a dangerous and potentially bloody avenue out of over three decades of privation and pain. These people know war better than probably any people on earth. They exist within it. It is so hard to break the cycle of violence amongst a people who know only violence.

Yesterday, I sat strapped into the rear seat of a gargantuan armoured vehicle codenamed Mastiff. We slowly halted to check for a potential bomb at a particularly vulnerable point on a road. Our surveillance systems had noticed disturbed earth, an ominous indication that an Improvised Explosive Device may have been dug in. The search team disgorged from the vehicle in front and as the engine idled, I had a few moments of dusty peace. Cocooned in my vehicle, shadows appeared through the tiny, dirty armoured rear window. I saw young children playing around the back of the vehicle. I started to peel away the multiple layers of protection. Those layers that both prevent me being vaporised but also prevent me communicating with the locals, the people I'm here to help, the people who might tell me where the bombs are. I undid the four point harness that securely locked me into

*Nowadays everybody seems to send a round-robin with their Christmas cards – looking back on a busy year. I forgot. But here is the one I meant to send...*

### **PHEW !!! – DAVID IN DINARD 2010**

Now I'm retired, I'm busier than ever. Each day follows the next - just like me, non-stop ! (*Some of us can't ever slow down, can we ?*)

My daily doings : I'm up every morning at ten – often under the impression it's eleven, because I'm not *quite* such an avid clock-watcher these days. I busy myself turning things on, then off, then on again if needs be, until twelvish, or thereabouts. When it's not raining – and even when it is, I look out of the window to see whether it is or not, or I often just have a sit down. I never fail to have a shower, if I remember. I've got so many Post-Its on the fridge, I've forgotten why most of them are there !! You're supposed to write something on them, apparently, but I never remember to !! (*Are you like me ? I am !*)

After that I start thinking about my lunch, and it's usually then I realize I haven't had my breakfast ! (*Oops !*) So I have something like a tin of something or a bar of chocolate or a sausage. By now it can be about two and I'll have missed my lunch anyway, so often I just have a little zzzzz. (*Pardonnez my French !*)

In the afternoon – if it still *is* the afternoon – I might wander over in the direction of the church library and put the books in order. (I always keep a copy of the alphabet in my pocket.) I'm sorry but I'm still a wee bit of a 'time-and-motion fanatic' (*old habits !*) so I mainly concentrate on the books that aren't in order already.

After that - if I have time – I'll walk along the seafront watching the tide coming in or going out, wondering which it's doing - and why. (*Keeps the old brainbox ticking over, hopefully !*) I did start to play online Sun Bingo for the same reason but I couldn't get the hang of it and kept

The email was signed

Warm regards

Andy Harrison, Lieutenant Colonel, Commanding Officer 2 PARA

I do not know how Col. Harrison came by my email. Perhaps our own Col Gary gave it to him. I was deeply moved by it.

The poem brings great emotion to me and perhaps to you as it reminds us of all who gave and continue to give their lives that the evil embodied in the NAZI regime of the past and evil regimes of the present might be overcome. It was at great sacrifice. It continues to be a great sacrifice. Today we wear our Poppies with pride because they are a token of gratitude but also a reminder of new life. The Poppy is a symbol of hope.

'When you go home, tell them of us and say...for your tomorrows we gave our today'. They made that sacrifice for us. Many of our soldiers are making that sacrifice day by day. The perennial sacrifice in the unending battle of goodness against life denying evil, is embodied in the incarnation of Jesus and realised in his crucifixion and resurrection. I can therefore with confidence repeat the Gospel text.

***Greater love has no man than this,  
that he lay down his life for his friends.***

*Padre Richard*

Graeme Whitecross  
died 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2010  
RIP

my seat, opened the heavy, inch-thick armoured door, removed my protective glasses, lowered my weapon, pulled off my helmet and at last presented a sweat-soaked human face. In front of me were six children aged five to fifteen. All had the obvious cheek of any confident, fun-loving kid anywhere in the world. My thoughts turned fleetingly to my three girls back home, almost identical ages. How the accident of birth geography can be so kind, or so cruel.

My interpreter translated the words but anyone could have read the smiles, the mimics, the optimistic begging; "Kalam, Kalam" - pen pen. We talked for 15 minutes, they rapidly earned a cylume glow-stick for their energetic efforts, and soon a greater barter began. The boy had part of one of our "tanks". Would I buy it? He disappeared. Within minutes he was back with a heavy, space-aged looking infra-red light of one of our vehicles. Negotiations could begin.

The crack of the bullet came from nowhere obvious. Shouts immediately followed, soldiers sprinted into the cover of the armoured vehicles, the turret span around, the huge Grenade Machine Gun now pointing directly at the nearest mud compound, in the general direction of the threat. But amongst the adrenaline-soaked drills of a dozen soldiers, crouching behind cover, scanning arcs with lazer sights and barking fire control orders, one thing was totally incongruous; the children.

The report of the rifle, so obviously familiar to these tiny kids, had caused an instinctive reaction. As one they ducked. But as one they also recovered their composure. They knew this was not serious; there was no machine gun, no RPG, no grenades, no immediate escalation. And so in the lives of these young kids, bred in the short term survivalism of Helmand, their most important issue changed in a literal heartbeat. Instantly their focus returned from the bullet to the barter.

From under my body armour, I clumsily pulled five dollars from my pocket. He looked at the note disdainfully. At fifteen, he would already give Lord Sugar a run for his money. He started to haggle but a second crack reverberated over our heads. Enough. The troops sprinted back to the vehicles and in a cloud of dust and gravel we were off again. I had the light, he had the dollars. We were all safe. Life in; simply survival.

Ten minutes later we were in Patrol Base 1. Nameless but infamous. The previous occupants, Malta Company, had ground out a small area of “protected community” around the base. But at what price? When I had first visited PB1 six months ago it was occupied by a vibrant, confident Rifle Company, optimistic and full of the buzz of escaping a dozen “contacts”, our euphemism for battles. No-one had been killed, their luck had held. But now the tiny memorial at the front of the small base was overflowing with names. Seven of that Company had subsequently died, 49 had been wounded.

Five bullet cases welded together into a cross. The cross on a simple, rough stone cairn in memoriam. It represents the saddest of ironies; the crucifix memorial to the Prince of Peace constructed with the weapons of war; a memorial to friends shot and killed, commemorated by the soulless instruments of violence.

A dust-beaten plank of wood lay against the memorial with words childishly scribbled upon it by a friend. By a friend who will now be enduring the reality of the loss, probably living in the raw, visceral aftermath of crushingly painful meetings with grieving family or friends.

The words, accompanied by a felt-tip drawing of a helmet resting on an upturned rifle, read:

“Do not call me hero,  
When you see the medals that I wear,  
Medals maketh not the hero,  
They just prove that I was there.

Do not call me hero,  
Now that I am old and grey,  
I left a lad, returned a man,  
They stole my youth that day.

Do not call me hero,  
When we ran the wall of hail,  
The blood, the fears, the cries, the tears  
We left them where they fell.

Do not call me hero,  
Each night I stop and pray,  
For all the friends I knew and lost,  
I survived my longest day.

Do not call me hero,  
In the years that pass,  
For all the real true heroes,  
Have crosses, lined up on the grass.”

That anonymous friend did not make up those words, but he wrote them. He wrote them for Daz. **Daz** who died on the third of May, 2010. Daz, who would have been full of life, full of optimism and full of hope on the eleventh of November 2009, when last we remembered

Rest In Peace Daz, and may your sacrifice help the children. I pray our luck holds better than yours.