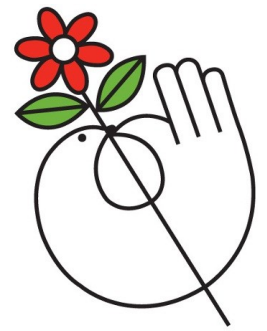


Emmaus Oxford

Working with the homeless



Jason's Story: Page 6



emmaus

The newsletter of Emmaus Oxford

Issue 1/ 2014

Celebrating our fifth birthday, building is underway with thanks to all our supporters

Emmaus Oxford celebrated its fifth birthday (since opening) in March this year. In five years we have provided over 40,000 nights of accommodation to total of more than 100 homeless people, or people vulnerable to homelessness. The people we house are called 'Companions' and they all work recycling furniture and other household goods. This in itself provides a valuable service to the public, saving goods that might otherwise have been dumped and preventing 900 tons in the period from going to landfill. Most importantly our Companions work together to help one another and to make a contribution to the community. We call this 'Solidarity' and there are some examples of it on page 4.

Plans to break even

Our long term plan is to break even - and pay all our bills for ourselves. That way we can all hold our heads up high and we will also be able to help others more. Since we began trading revenue from our two shops (the Superstore in Northway and a small shop in Templar's Square) has increased dramatically year on year. This has primarily been on account of the hard work of our Companions and dedicated staff. We think, however, that our existing Superstore is no longer fit for purpose, there isn't much room to learn new skills and process furniture and its not a good retail area. That's why we are building a brand new store in Barns Road.

Building is underway

At last, after considerable delays (not due to Emmaus Oxford) the contracts are all signed and building is beginning on our brand new Secondhand Superstore in Barns Road, Oxford. This will be Oxfordshire's largest charity shop and, we hope,

the lynchpin that will help us to break even. It is expected to be finished by the end of 2015.

The development is taking place as a partnership between Emmaus Oxford, Oxford City Council (who own the land), Greensquare Housing Association and the architectural company run by Kevin McCloud of TV's Grand Designs.



Kevin McCloud (right) discussing plans

As well as our new Superstore, the building on Barns Road will have flats with a residents' roof garden and a Community Centre. Meanwhile our existing Superstore in Northway is going to be pulled down and replaced with social housing as part of the overall project.

The new store will be purpose built - with slightly more retail space and considerably more space behind the scenes for Companions to sort, repair and process donations of furniture and other household goods. It will also be in a prime retail area.

Thank you

The store isn't free of course. It's costing us £578,000 and we've only been able to proceed with it because of the promise of a loan from Emmaus UK of £150,000 and with amazingly generous help from many of our supporters and a number of grant making bodies. Our heartfelt thanks go out to all of you.



Preliminary archaeological survey.
(Fortunately the holy grail wasn't found)

Help us by receiving newsletters electronically.

Posting this newsletter is becoming expensive. Please help reduce our costs by asking us to email it instead. email: wyonstansfeld@emmausoxford.org with the request. Thank you.

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Companion Art Work

A couple of Companions have been doing some excellent art work to improve the look of the superstore and the Community. Here are some examples of their art including the backdrop for a display area at the Superstore (top left) and a study of Abbe Pierre - founder of Emmaus (mid-left).



It could happen to you

by Companion Richard H.

Dark clouds seemed to follow, every step I made I stumbled,
A Cathedral was home all day when I had no place to go, when I had nothing to look forward to, when I was alone without a home. A day trip to Oxford, I jumped at the chance.

I met up with Emmaus and they showed me what they did, we visited their superstore, a busy place that day, then back to the community house a coffee and chat and that was that.

I wanted to move in that day but time had still to pass, a month I must wait and there's no guarantee, I must get on with what I can, be thankful I am free, make the most of what I have, walk around with fingers crossed...I hope they let me in...

The phone rang one cold winter day as I trudged along the road, Emmaus on the other end with news that made me smile, "You're in." They said.. My heart raced as the good news soaked in, at last some positive stuff—I no longer have to contemplate sleeping rough

I've never won the lottery but that day I felt a winner, A few days later I'm in a bright room and some nice person has made me dinner. Off to work, something to do, no more days walking in the blues, no more hours waiting for a call, I'm an Emmaus Companion and now I walk tall.

Dogs

Meet Emmaus Oxford's mascots. Rhymer has been with us for some time and enjoys the relaxed life. Ginger is a new arrival but is settling in well. He likes a good hoof to chew whilst rolling around.



Rhymer

Ginger



More Oxford homeless but less funding

Eddie Blaze, our general manager, reports.

Once a quarter the City Council do a 'count' of rough sleepers. This takes place in the early hours of the morning and the last one, in May, found 26 people sleeping rough on the streets of Oxford. This was a big increase on previous counts and, unfortunately, is in line with national trends. (the measure, of course, only records a proportion of the homeless- many more are never seen—so it's an indicator of a trend of increasing homelessness rather than of actual numbers, which are far greater). The increasing number of people sleeping on the streets of our towns and cities could be down to a number of things including austerity, changes to benefits and cuts to services and is in spite of new initiatives to help people off the streets such as 'No Second Night Out' and a dedicated homeless pathway involving all the Oxford city centre homeless services.

The situation however may well now get even worse. You may have seen in the local media recently that the County Council are consulting about a proposal to cut £1.5 million from services for the homeless between 2015 and 2017, with most of it happening next year. This consists of a proposed reduction of £450k to the 3 main hostels in the city: O'Hanlon House, Simon House and Lucy Faithfull House with removal of support from 23 beds in Simon house and Lucy Faithfull; cuts to Floating support services [£390k]; Move on accommodation services [£75k]; Substance misuse services [£214k] and Domestic abuse services [£132k].

This won't affect Emmaus Oxford directly, because we don't get any of the funding in question (and also, are already full to capacity). One of the great things about Emmaus is that we don't rely on large amounts of grant funding which can increase and decrease depending on the state's economic situation and whichever government is in power. Our lack of dependency is due to our amazing Companions, supporters, friends and customers who are helping us move closer to becoming self-sufficient (and thereby independent on any external funding). It will almost certainly mean however that more people will end up joining the significant numbers of those already suffering homelessness in our city.

Paris Salon

An account by Gerrie, Deputy Community Leader

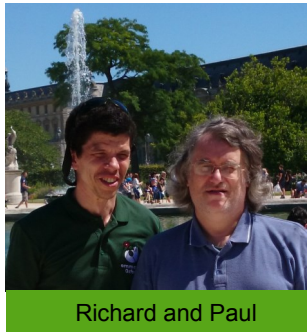


Gerrie

Every June bargain hunters from all over France flock to 'The Paris Salon' - a huge fundraising sale run by Emmaus charities from all of Europe in the Paris Expo Centre - a massive complex

bigger than a football stadium. Each community or region drives to Paris with a selection of items, aiming to sell as much as possible to raise money for charity. It's part of what we do for 'Solidarity', where Companions help others in need.

Emmaus Oxford's team this year was two stalwart companions: Paul Arkell and Richard Nimmons and myself. We set out at 6 a.m in a Luton van packed to the seams with teapots, furniture, and assorted paraphernalia. After a fretful journey into Paris we finally got to



Richard and Paul

the expo centre. Vans from all over Europe were pulling up, Companions, like leafcutter ants in lines carrying equipment and furniture into place. It was inspiring to watch the vast sea of people from all over Europe working together under the same Emmaus banner, and to merge into one community. Our set up went well, with all of the trestle tables covered with bric-a-brac, and bunting and flags for a finishing touch.

We managed to squeeze in some sight-seeing then took the tram to the expo centre early on Sunday morning, ready for the sale. As we arrived a crowd of customers was already beginning to snake it's way down Boulevard Victor. We joined the throng of companions, busying themselves with adjustments. There was excitement and anticipation in the giant hall, ratcheted up as every hour was counted down on the tannoy system, until the doors finally opened to the crowd...

It was like the grand national. Customers galloping into the hall, charging down the aisles and around the stalls in a giant loop to get a measure of what was on offer; then running back for their chosen bargains.



Every stall specialised in something different, some having a theme based on colour or a specific time period, one stall sold, for example, only orange objects from the 1960's and 70's, whilst another sold only red clothing. Rarely did a stall have overlapping objects with any other - testimony to the superb organisation of the event.

As usual we'd come armed with crates and crates of teapots and royal family souvenirs. Tea drinking has gripped Paris in the past few years and teapots are our number one seller.

Additionally things we would struggle to sell in Oxford, such as a Charles and Diana commemorative plate, are hot favourites in France. Emmaus Gloucester, who worked with us also did well selling English football shirts, although they had to entertain the inevitable World Cup jokes...

Companions Richard and Paul got stuck, from the start, haggling impressively with endless hordes of shoppers. Our stall rarely had less than a three deep line of customers all day. It was only towards the end that the customers began to thin out and Richard and Paul, along with the other companions 'at the coal face', began bartering in earnest to get the last few remaining items sold. Richard, who could sell snow to Eskimos, is also now the titleholder of 'seller of the unsellable' - awarded after managing to sell a plate of such epically tacky proportions that it should have spent its last days in a skip.



Our stall with tea pots

This year's salon was a great success. Early estimates for the stalls made up from the communities from the U.K. suggested that we had raised over 9,000 Euros for Solidarity - not bad for a day's work.

Tired and happy, we left Paris relying on our satnav to help us out of the city and homewards. Unfortunately it seemed to think 'home' was Barcelona and if it hadn't been for Paul whose cognitive skills were certainly working better than mine, we might have ended up there. I'd like to thank the companions not only for getting us back, but for their dedicated hard work. A big thank you too to all supporters of Emmaus Oxford for their donations. As the saying goes 'Keep calm and drink tea' ...and donate your tea pot to Emmaus please.

News about Hassan ...and a book



Many of you contacted us after the last newsletter to say how moved you were by Hassan's story. You may recall that he had escaped imprisonment and torture in Uganda and ended up destitute in this country after being refused refugee status. Eventually he found Emmaus Oxford and we helped him get refugee status. Since

then he's left us for independence and has a job looking after Downs Syndrome adults. We always knew he'd make a good citizen!

You may be interested also to know that there is a novel out, *Toggle* which features his story (amongst other things) and is by Wyon Stansfeld, (one of the staff at Emmaus). It has great reviews and is selling well online from Amazon as a paperback or a kindle download. Order your copy now!



Solidarity

Solidarity is the name we give to what we do for other people and it is a really important part of the project. Here are a few examples since the last newsletter.

Helping Holly and her mother

At the beginning of the year we helped Holly, pictured here with her mum, and now aged eight.

Holly was diagnosed a few years ago with encephalitis, a rare



Holly Manfreidi with her mum

swelling to the brain. The doctors told her parents she probably wouldn't survive the night. Thankfully, despite predictions, she pulled through with the help of family and friends.

But a problem remained. She was prone to suffering fits and because of this her mum, Donna, didn't want to leave her to sleep alone and she had never slept in her own bed as a result.

When Emmaus Oxford heard about this we researched for a device that would trigger an alarm if Holly went into a fit. We found a mattress with a sensor then looked for people who might help with a grant. There weren't any. Charities that might have helped had waiting lists of two years or more.

So the Companions all agreed to help and we stepped in and bought the mattress and then two Companions helped to install it. At last Holly was able to sleep on her own and her mum was able to get a good night's rest. We understand they are still doing well.

Terryl gets to go home

Terryl, a Companion, who came originally from St Vincent, lost his mother recently but couldn't afford to go home to her funeral.

Several Companions, staff and volunteers asked if we might help him with this. So we did. When told he was overcome with emotion.



Companion Terry

Kids books 4 Brazil

By Richard H, Companion



Companion Richard H

Early in March 2014, I met Oelito Brandao on Facebook from Emmaus Amor e Justica in Fortaleza, Brazil.

Within a few chats I asked him if there was anything I could do to help out in Brazil. Oelito told me about children who go to Emmaus each day after school to learn.

They have limited resources to teach English and that would be an area I may be able to assist in. Bingo! The idea was born and the appeal began. With the help of friends and family, staff and Emmaus Companions, over £500 was raised in two months. Educational books were purchased from Oxford University Press and flown out to the children in Brazil.

Many people have asked me why I decided to start this appeal. Simple answer: because I can.

I would like to thank Heather and all at Emmaus Mossley for raising money by selling books. Your support contributed to 1/5 of all monies raised. Special thanks too to Jon at Emmaus Oxford for great posters and fliers and big hugs to everyone who put in their change after being pressed-ganged by me.

All of us have made a positive contribution to improving the lives of some kids in Brazil. That's Amazing!



Kids at Emmaus Fortaleza enjoying the books

Yeah Baby

A couple of months ago we responded to advert for

'a man with a van for a charitable purposes'. It turned out that 'Yeah Baby' wanted help shifting heavy equipment around in preparation for their 6th free music festival in Abingdon. Yeah Baby are a non-profit making organisation that raises money for children's charities. Jon (Deputy Community Leader) and a Companion were happy to oblige and the event went on to raise £35,000 for local children's charities.

Recreation

Climb every mountain ... report by Gerrie, Deputy Community Leader



Being at Emmaus Oxford isn't just about working hard. We try to play hard too. Recreation is important. Recently nine Companions and two members of staff took on Snowdonia together. As a new member of staff, I was really pleased that Emmaus Oxford had encouraged the trip, recognising that events like this can provide rewarding therapeutic experiences and be fun too.

Standing at 3560ft, and used by Sir Edmund Hillary when training for Everest, we thought Snowdon would be a good challenge and part of a run up to us attempting the three peaks in 24 hours. For over three hours 10 of us (one opted to go by train) clambered up

the ever winding craggy paths to the summit. At the summit we stood in thick mist, exhausted and elated.

We finished off the weekend with a another healthy dose of adrenaline. Seven of us attempted Zip World Titan in the old slate mining town of Blaenau Ffestiniog. We were kitted out with red Jump suits, and like a human Red Arrow display team, we hurtled off of a mountainside and across a disused slate mine, not once, but on three separate zip lines. Still buzzing with excitement we drove back home to the community. Everyone came away with a sense of achievement and ready to take on the next challenge.



A couple of months ago some Companions and Gerrie (Deputy Community Leader) went paint-balling. Here's an account by Companion Paul.



Companion Paul

Our journey to the Paint Ball started early. We arrived dead on time and excitedly got our protective equipment, paint balls and 'grenades'. We put on helmets and dressed head to toe in overalls and padding. There were about 35 people there of all ages from the very young to the very old (me). We were divided into groups of about a dozen and given a strict safety lesson: do not take your helmet off or you will be sent home! After that we picked up our weapons (which was a cue for lots of 'mine's bigger than yours' quotes.) We had a little test firing (at dummy targets) then, after a short walk, we came to our first battle field (literally a field with barrels and bales of straw strewn about). The teams started at opposite ends with staff to adjudicate and battles to last 15 minutes. It was one hit and you were out. After a count down 3-2-1 GO! all chaos erupted! Some ran to the nearest barrel or bale. Some just stood there (not knowing what to do). Me? I hit the ground and crawled to the nearest barrel. People were shooting in every direction. After about 10 minutes, despite lying on the ground behind a barrel SPLAT, I got hit in the arm, and so ended the first battle. The team lost on account of so many casualties—but we

won the next one.

After that there were many other varied battles. For me the highlight was the fort battle (yes there was an actual fort, made of wood). One team defended while the other attacked. There was a flag by the fort that had to be raised. After many near misses the attacking team had got close to the flag. I was on the battlements nearby and spied some enemy down below. I took out my only grenade and threw it all over the battlements—straight onto them. BANG! Paint everywhere. But at that very second the ref blew the whistle for the battle to end. The enemy had raised the flag. All in all we had a great time and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Despite getting wet and hurt we would recommend it as a team-building exercise.



Paint-balling can hurt...

Jason's Story



Jason James

We are glad to be able to print Jason's story here, told in his own words. Jason, who refers to himself as 'in recovery' as a drug addict and alcoholic, has been a Companion at Emmaus Oxford since he came out of prison a few months ago. He wanted to tell his story in the hope of helping others who may be struggling with drugs and a life of crime.

Early influences

I was born in 1980, on New Year's day, to a white mother and a black West-Indian father. I was the first baby born in Haringey that year but instead of my picture going in the newspaper they put a white child in instead.

I grew up in Tottenham on the High Road. When I was about four I was addicted to Superman and I jumped out of a fourthth floor flat thinking I could fly. I flew – but I broke my leg.

My father used to drink a lot of alcohol. I wanted to taste it too but could never get my hands on it! He used to beat up my mum, which I thought was normal. In 1982 my sister, Nicola, whom I love, was born. We went to the play-scheme where my mum worked. I was popular. We used to play in an old double decker bus.

My mum struggled with money. She would swap price labels to get things cheap. I remember thinking I could do that too because it worked. She'd tell me to put on a coat and walk out of the shop with it. She had six brothers, my uncles. The youngest two used to come round and look after me and take me to funfairs and air-shows. I used to like that. They also got up to mischief. For instance they would drive at an erratic speed - I was maybe five or six then - it used to fascinate me.

No conflict with mixed race

I'm proud to be mixed race. I get the best out of both worlds. I saw myself as black man but I got on better with the white side of my family. My white uncles used to talk about my Dad as a darkie – but I don't think they were racist, it was just words. My father was from a background where you work and get your own house. He used to lay tiles and was good at what he did. But I always thought the black side frowned on me and judged my mother who'd been fostered. I thought my father looked down on me too and didn't love me. I used to go to my friends' houses where I felt more at home. My household cooked more white food which I didn't like – I preferred the taste of West Indian food.

My dad continued to drink and because of the domestic violence we had to run away to sheltered housing. We would end up in houses without a TV or anything. I remember feeling cold and not at home.

My attitude became really bad

Around this time my attitude became really bad, fighting, pouring water in electrics. I was the class clown, I used to go about with the jack-the-lads. When I was about eight my mum moved to a nice house and I went to a new school and then not long after that to another school. In the classrooms I used to make jokes and be the class clown again. I used to put swear words into the hymns in assembly. It was fun but if a

teacher caught me he would twist my ear proper. Most of my teachers were Asian which was good because they were stern and motivated me. It was good to see different colours in the school and a black person at the head. The head used to call me into his office and give me a clip around the year and kick me. Another teacher who wore a turban was a lovely man. He used to bring us sweet apples. He was teaching us how to be men.

By this time my dad was out of the picture, but my mother started to drink and smoke tobacco and then hash. Then she started dating. As a nine or ten year old kid I would be upstairs and they would be playing loud music, men and women. I used to join in at first, then I got fed up with it – her getting drunk and taking drugs. In my head my mother's dating didn't sit right because it wasn't what happened in my friends' houses. I didn't have a father figure like my friends.



Jason, aged about nine, bless him.

Roundabout this time I nicked some he-man toys from Woolworths. The security guard caught me and I slashed his leg with a screwdriver. My mum got a stern talking to by Social Services and I got into trouble too. I think I was put on a behaviour course or something.

At this time I used to mumble and people used to pull me up for that. I couldn't read properly or write or spell. I didn't know what was wrong with me, but I was good at practical stuff: swimming, rounders, drama, science, cooking, French too.

When I was 10 my mother met a good-looking black man called Jo, who looked like Eddie Murphy. We clicked. He was a mechanic, builder, barber, artist - so many skills. He'd sell drinks and wooden ornaments he'd made at the carnival. He used to put patterns in my hair, like in the magazines. I felt handsome and good looking so I was popular at school. I used to watch how he held the clippers as a haircutter. Then he gave me some clippers and I put a line in my head myself but I made a big bald patch. Jo was so angry when he found out. He used to hit me so I thought I was going to get beat hard but instead he cut all my hair so I was bald. For the first time in my life I felt shame. At school they called my Harry Krishna and said it looked like I had leukaemia. Then I changed school again.

My mum was a drug dealer

My mum used to get magic mushrooms from Hampstead Heath and I got interested. She used to get hash too, different types with different buzzes. I just watched and remembered. In the same way I used to like Superman and got influenced, I watched. My mum was a drug dealer, basically. I used to have to do drug runs for her. I remember travelling on my mountain bike with a £1,000 worth of hash. I'd show it to my friends to impress them.

One day I saw Jo coming towards me, crying. He was like my stepdad by now. He treated me well - he used to have a go at me - but for the right reasons. He said: "me and your mum have split up but me and you haven't." That meant a lot to me, that he'd stay friends with me. So on the weekends I would ride to his house and he would teach me haircutting and mechanics.

My mum at this time moved herself to Wood Green. We got a flat above the shops. I became busy - busy like the shopping centre. I'd

Magic Happens

grown my hair by this time - long plats, long silver jacket. I got a reputation for being tough which I liked but I also had a heart and I used to help my friends as well.

Things start to go badly wrong

When I was 13 Jo died suddenly - he fell drunk down some stairs and got a brain haemorrhage. I didn't know what to do, he was so important to me. I was angry with God for taking Jo away and somehow out of that I gave myself permission. I went to an older friend and he introduced me to crack cocaine. Before that I'd never taken drugs, not even tobacco. They told me it wouldn't be good for me - but I insisted. I took alcohol as well, and cannabis. I don't know how I got home. That night I sold my silver jacket for crack. My mum went out of her head when she found out but I was just thinking 'well you take loads of drugs'.

Next day I couldn't go to school and from there it just took off - I got addicted to the freedom of doing crimes, like grabbing someone's wallet and running. Jo had always told me not to do crime, but now he was dead.

I also started a gang called 'young mafia'. I was the toughest and oldest so became the leader. We used to do crimes all the time. I remember hanging around the gang and at the same time not wanting to be with them. Different neighbourhood gangs used to argue with each other. I knew that there were people in different gangs getting stabbed, shot and killed. At weekends I took crack. I was bunking off school and my life was revolving around crime, drugs and the gang.

Then one day, when I was 16, my house got raided and I got nicked for so many robberies. For the first time I was feeling guilty but even whilst I was on bail I carried on with crime. My mum was scared of me by now and our door got kicked down by other gang members.

I got a 3 - year sentence.

I got a three - year sentence. They put me in solitary confinement for the first five nights and for about a month I didn't see daylight. I was only 17 but everyone else was in their 20's, so I fought. I had to in order to protect my property. People used to get stabbed in the shower, a big guy would stand in front of the camera to block it. It never happened to me - maybe because I fought. There was one particular guy though, Marcus, who I was always fighting with but who I was frightened of. So I told the guard and got moved to another prison. But one day at the new prison I saw the sweat box (the prison bus) arriving with Marcus in it. It wasn't long before I got rushed by him and 20 others. They punched and kicked my head. An officer told me to report it but I didn't want to get into trouble for grassing. I thought it would make me stronger. I had black eyes but I didn't think much of it. Marcus didn't muck around. I thought if I didn't kill him he would kill me.

I still had friends on the outside. One of them told me that the street was mad out there, people were being killed and a close friend of mine, Casey, had been killed by being punched in the head. Casey wasn't even criminal. I didn't believe it at first and rang another friend who told me it was true. I smashed the phone, broke the billiards cue, hit the guard, threatened everyone. I would attack anyone. I'd got rid of the anger with Jo and now it all came out again over Casey. I wanted to kill myself as well. Casey, who was so close I had called him my cousin, had died.

Beginnings of recovery

Then a guard came to me and said: 'Let me chat to you for a minute. He kept on talking to me, for a whole hour, even though I was trying to put him off. He told me I was traumatised and that I was nice - and

although I didn't feel nice for what I was doing I knew deep down he was right, I was nice. I trusted that guard because he saw the good side of me. I realised that although I was saying I wasn't frightened, I was. From that moment I became a model prisoner. I also helped my cellmate, David, who'd become my friend. So then I went to an open prison - I was just 18 and I was one of the youngest to go to such a prison. David moved with me because of what I had passed on to him.



One day the prison officers called me and asked me to visit Karl, Casey's brother who was in prison for beating up people every day, including the guards. They wanted me to mentor him. I saw that this same madness was happening to him too. I was the only one who could get through to him because I knew the real Karl. I said: 'Trust me if you go the hard way you're not going to get anywhere and your brother wouldn't have wanted that. But if you do other things it'll get better. After that he got better.

Eight months after turning over the new leaf, and still in prison, I started to do community volunteering at Barnardo's - looking after kids of five or six who couldn't even feed themselves. That changed my view of the world - me still angry with the world and I'm seeing kids who are disabled but are not even angry. I respected those kids. I felt proud of myself, and my mother and family were proud of me, but I was still taking risks, smoking cannabis...

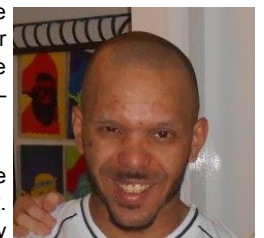
I started to celebrate too much

I got released out of prison in late 1998. Within two months, following Jo, I was a professional barber, trusted by grown men to cut their hair and their kids' hair. I did well but I started to celebrate too much. I wasn't doing robberies or major crime, I'd left the gang culture, I was off the crack, but I was still taking the pot. I was still adolescent and things began to slide. I didn't pay the rent on my new flat, I even got a gun. Everyone was scared of me or looking up to me saying I was big time. I used to buzz with that, thinking I was really powerful.

Back in prison

But by 2001 I'd lost my house because I hadn't paid the rent. Then I got arrested for kidnap and robbery. Even though I hadn't done anything and they had no evidence they still charged me. The police lied in court and a policewoman said I had taken heroin which wasn't true. My family thought I'd done it too. No-one believed me. I was told I could get 40 years for a crime I knew I hadn't done and they sent me to prison again to await a full trial.

Back in prison I was an angry man and straight away I was fighting again. I was fighting regardless - I might as well be in for something. I also felt suicidal. Then a guard came and offered me a job as a barber - he'd seen me about but hardly knew me. So he got me work and encouraged me. Then one day, when I was cutting hair, a guard came with good news and bad news. He said the bad news is you can't get the rest of the hair cut done. The good news is you're a free man. I was bailed for insufficient evidence - I'd been in prison for 11 months.



I went to see my dad straight away but he turned me away - he still thought I'd done it. My aunt let me in and I started to see my girlfriend, Kim, whom I'd known since I was

Continued next page

Jason's story

13. I moved in with her. But I still had a five day trial coming up which I was worried about. I couldn't eat and drink and sleep before it. My parents came to the trial and I got 'not guilty' but still I felt weak and depressed - I no longer felt like I fitted in anywhere.

Homelessness

Then a friend gave me some crack in a different more powerful way. I didn't feel depressed any more - I was high as a kite. I did it again at the weekends. Then I went half way through the week. Then it began to happen every day. I was still feeling depressed, only it was getting worse when I wasn't high. I wasn't able to put the drug down. The first thing I wanted in the morning was the drug. Then I started dealing because this was a way to make enough money to get more, then I started robbing again to get the drug. That felt so bad. I got rearrested for robberies and burglaries. So then I was on bail pending going back to prison and I started to smoke more and more. One night I went back home but it was locked - my girlfriend had gone on holiday. I got in and stole her savings and Child Benefit book. Everything of value I smoked. Then I went on the run. This was my first taste of homelessness. I was dirty, unshaven. My dad just gave me a sleeping bag but wouldn't let me in. My mum did the same. I was sleeping in the West End, on benches that kind of thing.

I'd become a crack-ass loner

I went back to Kim who forgave me. One day I threw all the drugs down the drain, saying: 'this ain't me'. I thought I'd done a good thing but by the next morning I wanted more. I beat Kim up in front of her son and then I went on the rampage. I couldn't believe I had done that. I was doing the same thing my dad had done to my mum.

Then a cycle started where I was in and out of prison over and over, taking crack, going back, over and over. I became part of the homeless community. I felt ashamed and powerless. When someone offered me heroin I started to take that, constantly. I don't know where the time went between 2003 and 2010. My family gave up on me, my mother, my father, my brother, Kim, I'd stolen from them all. The only contact I had was with crack addicts. I'd become a crack-ass-loner. My way was the high way that didn't go anywhere. I got stabbed in the eye and in the back. I had car crashes. I crashed a BMW at 100 mph. I just got out of the car and ran. All I cared about during the crash was the crack in my mouth - would it be OK? One time when the police were interviewing me I still had crack stones in my mouth.

Rehab



In 2010 I went to rehab and heard the magical word '**abstinence**'. They told me I had to give up everything. Cannabis, alcohol, everything. I thought they were mad. I didn't know I was an addict. I thought I just had a habit, but they told me I was powerless over my addiction. So I tried to give it all up. I did a lot of therapy and spoke

about Kim and Casey. It made me cry. I felt vulnerable for the first time in my life. But I was edgy with withdrawal symptoms and still had the attitude of an arsehole. I got kicked out for abusive behaviour. Three days later I was back using crack. I had learnt a lot in rehab but I hadn't wanted to take it in. Next time I got released from prison the council gave me a flat, but I was still in denial and using and soon I was back in

prison, where I carried on using, on a 10 - year sentence for robbery.

'I surrendered...and that wisdom has stayed with me'

Four months into my sentence I surrendered. I explained I was powerless and wanted help. I was moved to a therapeutic community in Devon. They told me I had anger and behaviour issues. I hadn't seen that anger was a problem. Then, after five months, I was kicked off the program for an aggressive outburst. It was the best thing though because after that, instead of me giving up and having another angry outburst or taking drugs, it woke me up. I felt disgraced. I didn't go back to drugs. The surrender was still with me. That wisdom has stayed with me. After six weeks I re-applied and was accepted back.



I started to understand

Around this time I learnt another new word: '**glorification**'. Glorification is when you just talk about the 'good' side, the glory, not the downside. You talk about the highs, the proceeds of crime, the good clothes etc. but really you are just telling lies. I started to understand what they were talking about. After two months I got

voted by staff and inmates for the job (for three months) of chief coordinator. I had to get up early, be organised. I had to chaperone people to make sure they didn't get into trouble.

After 12 months I was still clean. My drug worker from Northampton travelled all the way to Devon just to see me graduate. They took happy photographs. I could see the weight I had put on, the health I'd gained. I was moved back into the jungle (ordinary prison) and I stayed clean even though no one was challenging me. I was able to put up boundaries with people without insulting them. I was there for about six months. I was applying what I'd learnt when back in the jungle. In the past I had just imitated what people did around me. Now I didn't have to do that. So when I got transferred to a prison in Surrey where there were drugs right in my face I didn't cave in. Instead I applied to be a peer supporter in a program called RAPS - a 12 - step program for prisons. I was accepted and got employed, facilitating groups. I would facilitate 20 men by myself teaching them what 'abstinence' meant and 'glorification' - the same things I'd learnt myself. Some of the other inmates thought that I was an informer but others were overwhelmed by how much I have changed and told me I was helping them. It was then that I decided I wanted to be a drug worker. The governor believed in me and sent me to an open prison. This was a big risk for him. When I got the acceptance I was so happy.

In the past I had used strong emotions: happiness and joy as well as unhappiness and sadness all as an excuse to take drugs but this time I didn't mess up, and I haven't since.

In the open prison I got a job as a recovery advocate - something no inmate had done before - working with active addicts. It felt magical to get the very job I wanted. As it got near to my release date I knew I needed support. I didn't want to end up in a hostel, then a friend who told me about Emmaus. Homelessness was something I could relate to. The word charity also reached me. My ego didn't want charity, so instead I saw it as opportunity. Also I saw how little Emmaus pays a

My continued

week in allowance but then I realised there was more to this than money. I was going for the opportunity. I had an interview with quite a few people and it was quite scary because people say the way I talk etc. can put people off. But I knew I don't have to change the outside - it's the inside that matters.

I've been at Emmaus for three months now. All my drug tests have been negative. I'm not complacent though. When I first got to Emmaus a Companion called Blessing said 'everyone has their own story no one is better than another'. So I started talking to people. I found I could be friends with a big range of different people - they're all human beings! Staff dynamics are really good here. The support you get from them is great, it cheers you up. It is hard not getting paid much but I like working. It is hard work on the van but it is for the good, it's to help people.

You can turn a negative into a positive.

Problems with my family are getting better now. A month ago I saw my mother and sister for the first time in four years. My sister said she hadn't seen the real Jason for 15 years. My mum says she feels like she has won the lottery. My nan says that 'he has turned out to be such a lovely man you would never know he had been to prison.' I'm hoping to see my father whom I haven't seen for nine years. Magical things happen.

Recently I went to a young offender's prison in Aylesbury to speak to some of the youngsters about addiction. The staff said 'you walk the same as them and talk the same as them maybe you can get through to them because of what you've been through'. I think I did. I wish I'd met someone like me 18 years ago. Another thing I'm doing is writing to the prison I was at, to help things along. When I was there an ex-con who was seven years clean wrote in to us. That influenced me and helped - and now I'm doing it!

I think part of why I've stayed clean is that I repeated rehabilitation. First time around all I could hear was the badness. The only complement I could take was a glorification complement. I believed people who were negative about me. When I went back I did seven months on why I bought into people being negative about me. I let the therapy I received influence me. You can turn the negative into a positive. Another thing is that when I get angry with someone I've learnt to react differently to how I used to. I felt ashamed at first when I didn't act physically when someone upset me - but now I know a different way: I tell them I'm not perfect and I may do things wrong. I try not to judge others, just look at myself.

I was overwhelmed by other people's belief in me

I also know I couldn't have done this thing if all those people hadn't had belief in me. I'm in recovery because I was overwhelmed by other people's belief in me. Those people are still phoning me and wishing me well and congratulating me. It makes me feel I've achieved stuff. Here are some of the people who helped me:

The rehab team: Victoria - She breathed happiness and was totally dedicated. Tina - with a skinhead haircut and a loving and caring personality, as soon as she talks she is so kind and friendly. Mandy who was so good at motivating me. It knocked me for six that prison officers wanted to help.

Al - she was the boss at the programme who employed me, the one that interviewed me and gave me a chance. Straight away she made me feel a part of the team. Same thing: the belief in change was written all over her face. Her staff team were wonderful people too. They gave me the opportunity to pass the message on to other people.

Family members: my mum - although she might not have kept up the

house and so on she never gave up on me. Sometimes she wouldn't contact me when she was angry but she'd always talk to me eventually. She never gave up. My uncle Fred never lost contact either - In my madness he told me the truth but he never shut the door on me.

Many others. Not one person hasn't been glad at my recovery.

We contacted Victoria, Jason's recovery worker referred to above and this is what she had to say:

"It's really wonderful to hear how well Jason is doing and it is inspirational for our community to hear such great successes. Jason came to our community ready to work towards his recovery and he did just that. He understood the importance of taking responsibility for his actions and worked hard to maintain a positive focus in his life. He showed his ability to remain committed and motivated to change and put his recovery first. He shared with others his passion for his recovery and developed a high level of self awareness and empathy for others.

Jason always set himself realistic and progressive goals that would assist his further ambitions to live a comfortable, drug free life. Jason was a liked and respected member of the community and it was a pleasure to work with him. I wish him well for the future."

Finally here are some of Jason's tips for recovery which he wanted us to print by way of helping others:

Jason's tips

Commit to yourself, not anyone else. My story shows how influenced I was by others, good and bad. You need to find your own influence and talk to yourself positive.

Stay motivated to listen to your heart rather than your head. My heart is right. My will power comes from my heart. When you are motivated to keep a clean heart you have so much energy it's unbelievable.

Courage. At first, in recovery, you get a lot of feelings back - the ones you've been bottling up. Courage lets you take each hour at a time then each day then each month then a year. With that year comes a whole strength of courage, like biceps in your brain - you get a six-pack in your brain! The more courage you use the more you gain.

Laughter. Keep laughing. When you laugh sober and clean your emotions come back better.

All these things work together and feed each other. Like a chain on a bike, it rotates. Change is possible. Magical things happen.



Jason with Emmaus Community Leader, Steve

Events

Emmaus Oxford has a very well organised team of volunteers who run events as part of our fundraising. Here are some of the events since the last newsletter and news of upcoming events.

Since the last newsletter:



Ripon College

December 2013, Carol Service

The Clarendon Consort under the direction of Paul Lindsell treated us to a wonderful traditional Carol Service in the new Chapel at Ripon College; the music was sublime, the setting beautiful and Terry Waite's address very moving. We would like to thank Paul and the choristers, Terry, Revd Canon Professor Martyn Percy, the Principal, and the Cuddesdon Sisters for giving us such a memorable event. The event was so successful we are running another similar one this Christmas (see upcoming events).

February 2014, Annual Shrieval Lecture

The High Sheriff, Graham Upton, hosted this annual lecture on behalf of Emmaus Oxford. James Chilton gave a fascinating and affectionate insight into Burma entitled 'A Burmese Experience', accompanied by many stunning photographs which brought the country vividly to life with pictures of



tribal festivals, local markets and rural towns away from the tourist centres. Our thanks go to James, Steppes Travel for sponsoring the event and the Said Business School who hosted us. A Solidarity donation was made to the Heal Kids Foundation from the proceeds.



Terry Cudbird

June 2014, Book Launch

Terry Cudbird treated us to an illustrated lecture of his latest book '*Walking the Retreat*'. The event was held at St Thomas of Canterbury Church, Elsfield and close to 50 people came on a really beautiful evening. Terry's enlightening talk about his walk in France retracing the retreat of a million French and British soldiers at the beginning of WW1 was very well received and supporters were seen leaving with both books and Emmaus pamphlets tucked under their arms. Interest in the Salviati mosaics at the church was huge and Anthony Hughes was at hand to add much meaningful detail after Terry's presentation. Exceptionally delicious cake and plentiful tea and coffee were enjoyed by all. The event raised £312 and Terry kindly donated the proceeds of his book sales—a further £351.

Upcoming Events

Carol Service.

Following the success of last year we are repeating the carol service at Ripon College (see picture of the amazing chapel above). If you were unable to come last year or would like to repeat the experience this year, please put 7.00pm on 15th December in your diaries. Paul and the Clarendon Consort have offered to sing again for us and Selwyn Image CBE, the man who brought Emmaus to the UK from France, will give the address.

Shakespeare Lecture.

Professor Laurie Maguire, Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, and Gwyn Daniel, a Family Therapist working in private practice and at the Tavistock Institute in London, both published authors, will give a lecture on Family and Relationships in Shakespeare in late February/early March. Look out for more information nearer the time.

To book events

Contact Jeanne White at Emmaus Oxford 01865 590593 or email admin@emmausoxford.org

All thanks to the events committee:

Dianne Bayfield, Louise Milford, Maura Allen, Siobhan Graham, Anne Stern and Dee Murray, for all the time and work they put in to deliver events of such consistent high quality. Anyone who would like to help in the future, please ring Dianne Bayfield on 01865 316628 or email Dianne@Bayfields.com

Volunteering

The volunteers team currently consists of more than ten people (apart from the events team and trustees), with roles varying from driving and woodwork to public relations and art valuing.

Our newest recruit is Helen Lynas as Public Relations Consultant, see opposite.

We are always on the look out for new people and in particular are currently recruiting for two key roles:

Secretary to the Trustees

This administrative position is suitable for an organised, meticulous person who can take confidential minutes at the monthly Trustees meetings, compile the minutes and distribute to the board of Trustees. Meetings usually take place early evening for a couple of hours and are held at the Emmaus Community in Cowley.

eBay expert

Would suit someone who is experienced in buying and selling on eBay. The successful candidate would be able to take on the whole ebay project, from the initial selection of items to pricing, display and despatch.

Other roles

There are many other different roles and we would love to hear from you to discuss various volunteering options at either the Secondhand Superstore or the Community

- * Social Work Placements
- * Personal Development
- * Technology
- * Telephonist duties at the store.
- * Fund Raising
- * Therapeutic Activities
- * Administration Roles

How we will support you?

Thorough induction and training. Regular catch-up and supervision sessions and a named member of staff responsible for you. We will also organise social activities to meet other volunteers.

Interested?

please contact our Volunteer co-ordinator: Gabriella Putnam GabriellaPutnam@emmausoxford.org. To offer driving please contact Kevin Gardner KevinGardner@emmausoxford.org
For an application form please go to our website: http://www.emmaus.org.uk/oxford/get_involved/volunteering and complete on line.

New Trustee

Maureen Margrie has just joined us as a trustee. She has seven years' experience in the Emmaus movement having held staff and volunteer positions at Emmaus UK and Emmaus Gloucestershire.

Maureen brings knowledge and skills in business, finance, human resources and Emmaus community life to her new role with us where she hopes to demonstrate solidarity with the Emmaus movement and others less fortunate.



Maureen Margrie

Profiles

New Volunteer

Meet one of our newest volunteers, Helen Lynas, who is helping to spread the word about Emmaus Oxford.

Since joining us as our PR consultant earlier this summer, Helen has been working on raising our public profile and is establishing an ongoing PR strategy in preparation for the launch of our new superstore next year.



"I'm inspired by the wonderful work done by the people—companions, volunteers and staff—who make up this organisation," she said. "Emmaus deserves wider recognition and I'd like to help achieve that so that it continues to flourish and help even more people at risk of homelessness."

Helen has many years experience in PR and journalism, and recently returned from six years' living in the USA, where she volunteered with a charity helping women and children in some of the poorest communities in the New York area.

She is married with three grown-up children and recently launched her own business selling home decor items online.

Our Big thanks:

to two gallant fundraisers:

Claire Hamnett who has just completed a Lands End to John o'Groats bike ride. The trip took 18 days and she raised over £1,540 for Emmaus. Clair, who, judging by her

facebook account kept up her spirits throughout wrote "It's been incredible to experience the freedom of the road whilst cycling through beautiful countryside. I won't miss the sweaty lycra and close encounters with vans, but I will miss the stunning scenery, wild life and 360 deg views. Thanks so much to all family and friends for your support, sponsorship and good wishes.

Thomas Cranshaw who, as we go to press is about to cycle 250km in one day from Paris-Roubaix. The route includes 50km of cobbles, and is one of the hardest and most painful one day cycling events in the world. "It's that bad — it's ridiculous." He is hoping to raise over £1,000 for us and has already raised more than £500 before setting out.



Many thanks to both for your kindness and guts.



Many thanks to all our supporters!



Emmaus Oxford would not exist without the incredibly generous on-going support received from many individuals and grant-making bodies over about 15 years. So a big thank you to all of you who have helped in this way. For those of you who wish to contribute or continue



7 ways you can help us



Donate furniture and other household goods

Tel: **01865 763698** to arrange a **free collection** or email: furniture@emmausoxford.org. Items can also be brought direct to our shops during working hours.



Buy from our two shops:

Secondhand Superstore
Westlands Drive
Northway Estate
Oxford OX3 9QY

Mon-Fri 9.30-5.00
Sat 10.00-4.00
No 13 bus

31 Upper Barr
Templars Square
Cowley
Oxford OX4 3UX

Mon-Fri 9.30-5.00
Sat 10.00-4.00
Bus 1 (Stagecoach)
Bus 5 (Bus Co)



Volunteer

See page 11 for more information on openings for volunteers and our current drive to recruit more volunteers.

If you would like to talk about volunteering possibilities please contact our volunteer coordinator Gabriella Putnam:

gabriellaputnam@emmausoxford.org

If you feel that you could help us on the driving side or in the administration of deliveries and collections please email Kevin Gardner:
KevinGardner@emmausoxford.org



Come to our events

To join the mailing list for our fund-raising events or for information about events just email: JeanneWhite@emmausoxford.org.



Make a financial donation

Visit: www.virginmoneygiving.com, select 'donation' then type in 'Emmaus Oxford'. You can indicate gift aid eligibility too.

To donate by cheque, CAF voucher or standing order visit our website: www.emmausoxford.org

Donate with a legacy You may also wish to consider remembering us in your will. Please contact wyonstansfeld@emmausoxford.org to discuss the matter in confidence.



Become a friend

Friends are supporters willing to help us through regular monthly donations towards the costs of helping ex-homeless people turn their lives around. Friends will receive regular updates giving cameos and highlights of our community and work together, important news as it happens and advance notice and priority booking for some events plus an invitation to occasional Friends open afternoons at the Community. Please email us for a copy of our Friends of Emmaus Oxford leaflet: admin@emmausoxford.org



Tell your friends

If you like what we do—tell your friends about us! We are also very happy to come to churches, schools and other social gatherings to give talks and explain more about what we do.



Emmaus Oxford, 171 Oxford Road, Cowley, Oxford OX42ES
Community: Tel. 01865 402073 email. admin@emmausoxford.org
Collections and Shop: Tel. 01865 763698 email: furniture@emmausoxford.org
www.emmausoxford.org. Emmaus Oxford is a registered charity no. 1066618

