

Camel Trail Mission Report, September 5th - 13th

This mission has been a delight in so many ways, discovering how God provides for us and opens doors, and finding many opportunities to meet and share with people each day. It is difficult to describe this adequately in a short report but we include some highlights later which we hope capture and convey something of our overall experiences.

It was wonderful to congregate in the gently breezy but sunny Padstow harbour area for the joint commissioning service where Paul and Paula Preston joined us for the first weekend along with two motivated and enthusiastic young men from her church, Ed and Tony. Our team then split to do some afternoon door visiting in both Padstow and St Merryn.

Our first stop was in the small village of St Merryn where we were warmly welcomed by the church warden to sleep in their church hall, earlier organised by George, and where we ended up staying for 3 nights. This is a short 3 mile walk from Padstow along a busy narrow road and was the first encounter for some of us with the steep coastal terrain in Cornwall, though the Camel Trail itself was mostly flat as it follows a disused railway line.



Stepping out in faith



Getting off to a good start on the first day

On Sunday 6th September we again split into two groups and were able to attend Padstow St Petroc and St Merryn communion services, at which we were given a short opportunity to introduce ourselves and even give a short testimony, as well as having engaging conversations with parishioners and visitors afterwards over coffee.



Taking part in Sunday services



Chatting over coffee with drop-in visitors

We were delighted to receive several kind monetary gifts that Sunday without any prompting, totalling £120! These gifts plus others we received along the way, including bags of shopping dropped off by people visiting the church, and meals provided by two host churches and a former TFMer, provided us with breakfast, lunch and dinner each day thereafter. It was only on the first Saturday evening that we went to bed feeling hungry and wondering how we were going to be sustained. All during the week we never had less than £35 in the kitty and on the last day were able to purchase our final meals. One man we met even provided a tab of £50 at the bar on the final evening. Praise God for this lovely provision which met our needs so well!



Relishing a given meal of Cornish pies with chips



Making breakfast eggs just with a kettle!

Four of the team had many good opportunities to meet and talk with others when walking along the Camel Trail to Wadebridge where we stayed at the Methodist church and then Egloshayle St Petrocs for one night each. We stayed at Lostwithiel St Bartholomew for two nights, and later walked some sections of the Saints Way to St Winnow church and finally to St Sampson church in Golant for our last night before the final celebration in Fowey harbour.

We did door-visiting in the towns where we stayed, with many engaging and impacting encounters, and handed out over 150 KGPs. Several hundred houses and also many businesses were visited and we completed 100 surveys. We were saddened, though, to discover how much apathy there was, with many, even older people with prior Christian church or Sunday school experience, having very little interest or understanding about the basic gospel message.

Having sunny and warm weather all week was a real blessing and provision from God and enabled us to have some very good encounters with people on the streets and doorways, walking along the way, and also in several pubs.



Pub encounters of the TFM kind



Engaging bar discussions

The short spots selected below will we hope give some idea of the many, very memorable highlights the team had:

- A group of men played pool with team members which resulted in a lively discussion, after which one man made a prayer commitment in front of them all
- A couple came to visit a pub after many years just out of curiosity and had a long conversation with team members who were there and took some literature on leaving
- A gentleman with a serious illness was prayed for in a pub and after some encouragement made a prayer commitment
- One of the pub/restaurant staff had a long and fruitful conversation with a team member, and was keen to make a prayer commitment
- A lady happened to visit the historic church and was interested to talk with the team during their coffee break. Although not a believer she was later quietly walked through a KGP and on the next morning dropped by to leave us a bag of food
- A woman who came to a church service was intrigued by the men in blue shirts and was given a leaflet about TFM. She later dropped into the church during team time and said that a week earlier she had prayed for a team of evangelists and a street preacher to visit the town! Our meeting up was a real encouragement to her as well as to us, and we felt she had a kindred desire to spread the Christian message!
- One lady offered to buy us all chips (which were much appreciated along with some Cornish pies another lady had kindly brought us!) and joined us for a time of worship and praise. We were also given a bag of fruit and baked goods the next morning!
- A young couple with very vague new age ideas staying in a holiday let did the survey together and spent time giving very thoughtful answers. They heard a testimony and took literature, and very warmly shook our hands when we left them
- Two team members did the survey separately with two ladies enjoying a relaxing afternoon in a garden and heard about difficult church and faith experiences. We were however kindly offered a Z bed by one lady which was welcome news for a team member with a back issue
- We drew a blank when phoning a church we had thought might host us, but when driving in the town spotted an open Methodist church. This was unusual as they normally only held a monthly coffee morning on a Saturday but it happened to be open that Monday prior to holding an exhibition on homelessness. We asked if they might put us up for one night, which we didn't think they might normally do, nor if we had just phoned up, but the minister had heard of the historic TFM walk missions (as had several others we approached that week), and warmly agreed to this with her staff!
- When a team member asked a store helper about food products we could buy to make a meal using only a kettle, he scratched his head then kindly offered to heat any food we bought in their office microwave, which we gladly accepted! When we pushed this door and politely asked if we might also borrow their staff toaster he

kindly agreed! We had some nourishing and creative meals that week cooked using only kettles!

- Multiple other conversations were held on doors, on the streets or parks, when walking the trail, or with walk-in visitors to the churches, with many offers for prayer accepted and touching many, including for a dog's injured leg

It was good to share this in brief notes with our prayer warriors and personal prayer supporters during the week, whose participation was really valued by us! Thank you, each one of you, and to God for all His goodness!