



This is the second Companions Newsletter and I am writing to introduce myself to most of you in my new role as Chairman of the Companions. I am very excited to have been asked to take this on and look forward to helping develop the Companions into an effective volunteer group.

The Order of Malta in Britain recognises that to expand its hospitaller work throughout the UK and increase the funding for its international charitable activities, it needs a large and strong volunteer force which has hitherto not been achievable. The Companions has therefore been created to pursue these aims and we are delighted that you are already a Companion and have thereby shown a willingness to support this new initiative.

These are early days in our development but we see Companions participating in three fundamental ways although I would like to stress that participation is totally optional:

- Practical help
- Financial support and
- Spiritual participation

On the practical side, in addition to the Order's annual pilgrimages, we have started a pilot scheme headed by Sarah Sherston (Cornell) who lives in Cirencester. She has successfully recruited existing and new Companions to organise various outings for the residents of one of the Orders of St John Care Trust homes in Malmesbury during July and August. She is also busy compiling a list of Companions who will visit that particular home throughout the year. If this is successful, we will roll out this type of scheme to as many of the Order's other 73 care homes as possible. Please let me know if you are keen to visit one of the Order's care homes near you (see [www.osjct.co.uk](http://www.osjct.co.uk) for locations) as this can easily be arranged.

If you don't have a local St John's Care Home near you but know of or are already visiting a care home, hospice or hospital that would benefit from a team of visiting Companions then do also please let me know.

There are other ideas that we are pursuing that will enable Companions to provide other invaluable 'hands-on' work and we will keep you all informed as these initiatives are developed.

On the financial side, as you are aware, there is an annual Companions Membership fee of £60. Those of you who join the Order's annual pilgrimage to Lourdes are already exempted from the levy that is charged to every helper. I hope this will be an incentive for you to join the pilgrimage in 2010. With the funds that we raise through membership subscriptions and donations as well as future fund-raising activities, we hope to be able to support existing and new charitable ventures at home and overseas.

We have recently agreed to support one of our Companions, Alice Murphy, who is going to Kenya shortly in order to set up a fundraising operation there to support the Order's charities. We will keep you updated on her progress.

On the spiritual side, although membership of the Companions is not restricted to a specific religious faith, our unifying factor is that members are fully committed to the ethos and spiritual objectives of the Order. There will be invitations to attend the religious services organised by the Order and a varied spiritual programme is also being planned that may hopefully be of broad appeal to you but are of course completely optional.

On 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009, we are planning an evening concert in London at St. Patrick's Church Soho Square in conjunction with Fr. Alexander Sherbrooke, the Parish Priest, specifically for Companions and donors to and supporters of the St Patrick's Appeal. St. Patrick's Church has become an official project of the Order and I very much hope that you will be able to come. I will have more details in the next newsletter but please save the date. It will not be a fundraiser as such but more a welcome to the Companions and a thank you to the donors and supporters of St. Patrick's Parish, many of whom are Companions and/or members of the Order.

For all Companions living in Scotland, your local contact will be Henry Lorimer. He is organising a Scottish Companions Committee of 6-8 people and anyone interested in joining this committee should apply to Henry on [henry@henrylorimer.org](mailto:henry@henrylorimer.org).

Please do get in touch (by e-mail is best) if you have any comments or thoughts about anything in this letter or if you know of anyone whom you feel might be interested in joining as a Companion or may wish to know more about us.

Finally, one of our Scottish Companions Hugh Fraser has recently undergone major surgery. Please pray, if you can, for his complete recovery.

It leaves me now only to wish you all a very happy and hopefully restful summer.

Millie Wentworth-Stanley  
Chairman