

## Reader Retreat at Launde 2015

I



had the privilege of getting to know other Readers at the Reader retreat at Launde Abbey at the end of October. Having been meaning to go on retreat for a while, I was now doing two in a month as I had been on the pre-licensing retreat as well. Having got slightly lost on the way there in the dark and proving once again that navigating is not my top skill (Launde really is in the middle of the countryside) it was quite a relief to arrive.

Sally Buck led the retreat which was on Mark's Gospel. Over the weekend we enjoyed praying and worshipping together and sharing fellowship over meals, We also explored the beautiful grounds of Launde when the rain stopped. I suspect I arrived at Launde a bit shell-shocked from the business of life leading up to the licensing and organising things at home so I could leave my family to go on retreat for the second time in a fortnight. I had survived the pre-licensing retreat – parts of which were in silence – and found that very intense and moving. This retreat was rather more relaxed which was a good thing as it turned out what I needed was a bit of time and space to decompress.

My experience at Launde was one of being in gentle companionship with God. I enjoyed the quiet but it wasn't an intense contemplative silence. Once I relaxed I started to accept what was happening which was some non-pressured processing of what had already happened and some preparation of body and soul for what was to come. So whilst in some ways it felt a little uneventful it was actually an important lesson – to live in the moment a little more, to pay attention to what body and mind

require and to allow processing at a deeper level. I like to be in control, to have a plan and to know what happens next, the retreat at Launde calmed me down a bit. One of my aims this year is to allow things to unfold and happen and to seek God more in the now and the ordinary.

Clare Lindsay

### **Sally Buck's thoughts - whilst at Launde Abbey...**

Where are you Lord?

Follow me and fish for people YOU said.

Well, we hardly had to fish did we?

They flooded our space, drained your strength and pushed us aside.

Listen to me YOU said.

But how could we hear when you were always hurrying ahead to heal and forgive?

Peace be still YOU said. Calmed the waves, stilled our storms, called us by name and trusted us.

Life with you was a roller coaster. Fast and furious then gentle - meandering. Never knowing what was next. We just thought we got you then you changed. We looked for you and found you healing outcasts, calling women 'daughter', walking on water, caring for officials and beggar, cursing fig trees and money lenders.

We found you where we least expected you to be. We followed you.

Had to leave our cloaks, our purses, our fathers behind.

But we did it to draw close to you. And now what? Where are you now, Lord? Dead and gone? Crowded out?

Even our ritual acts of ministry can't bring us close. He's gone ahead of you HE says to Galilee.

We came from our ordinary places to draw close to you, Lord.

Come away YOU said Go back HE says and expect to find him there in the crowds, in the storms, healing outcasts, walking on water, caring for officials and beggars, cursing fig trees and money lenders. Expect to find him where you least expect him in the place that you came from, in the place you take back with you BUT usually one step ahead saying My daughter My son Your faith has made you whole. Follow me.

**John, be prepared.**

Who said that? (*alarmed*)

**I did.**

Who is there? (*even more worried*)

**I am.**

And you are?

**I am.**

Good Lord!

**Yes I'm listening.**

Lord you are worthy to be praised! (*acclamation*)

**I know.**

You know everything... you...

**Be still. Do you want to hear what I intend?**

O yes please Lord!

**Then listen!**

Yes Lord. (*subdued tone*)

**I need you to complete a mission.**

Me Lord? Why me?

**Because I called you by name.**

You did Lord. You said 'John be prepared.'

**And are you?**

Well err... do you think I am up for it?

**What!** (*slightly exasperated!*)

This mission. I mean I am a sinner. Surely I am unworthy.

**Are you repentant?**

Yes Lord.

**Well then you are forgiven.**

What's the mission Lord. I am not a soldier.

**Follow my son and he will enable you.**

To do what Lord?

**To fish for people.**

People?

**People like you.**

People like me?

**Those who repent.**

You said prepare Lord.

**Yes. He will come soon.**

How will I know him Lord?

**He will be filled with my spirit and say: 'Follow me.'**

What's his name Lord?

**Jesus. He will proclaim the Good News and so will you!**

That's the mission?

**Yes that's the mission. I want all my children to know me.**

That's a tall order Lord.

**I know that... but my spirit will reach all the nations.**

I awoke.

He had warmed my heart, stirred my soul and filled me with hope!

## **John Marshall**

### **Rowena Ward-Barrow Reflects...**

'I have known Launde since 1989/90 when I commenced my Reader training in Leicester Diocese. Launde was significantly revamped in the period 2007-10 and everything is certainly rather more luxurious than it was in those earlier days!

Our Reader weekend retreat, led by our Warden, Sally Buck, was excellent. We have had interesting away weekends in previous years but they have been fairly action packed with visits and talks. This time, we worked our way through the Gospel of Mark but in a much more relaxed and thought provoking way, with plenty of time to go off and 'do our own thing', whether being creative or contemplative. It was much more relaxed and therefore, in my thinking, more of a retreat. Little silence though, as we were a jolly bunch and had many laughs together!

Saturday it poured with rain and some of us ventured out for a walk. Avoiding the deep horse rutted mud of a bridleway, we opted to take what looked like a footpath (unmarked) and ended up walking round the 4 sides of a large field and back to where we'd left the track. As we did so, the rain abated and we walked back to Launde for a quick shower or whatever before tea. It was good to get out in the fresh air and walk off some of the excellent food we partook of over the weekend!

On Sunday, Revd Helen joined us at coffee time, for the rest of our time at Launde. In the service of Holy Communion which she presided at in the afternoon, she gave us some thought provoking stuff, much based on her prison ministry experience. We had a box of windfall apples in front of

the altar with other creative pieces and contributions from each of us as we'd reflected on the gospel and the weekend. Helen focused on the apple with the thought that living life is like a fresh crisp apple as you bite into it. 'Enjoy it while its fresh. Don't leave it till its past its best.'

**Ro**