

ARC EUROPE - MILAN - OCTOBER 2004

Representatives from each ARC Board gather twice yearly to review past activities, and discuss developments. *The Autumn 2004 meeting took place in Milan just prior to the feast of All Saints. Our coordinator Iona reports:*

We met in the precincts of the church of Santa Maria Nascente, a short walk from the Youth Hostel where most were staying. As usual there was a mix of familiar faces and newcomers. I had exchanged many emails with Giulio, the retiring secretary of ARC Italia, but it was good to finally meet him. There were also new representatives from France; the elections to their national *bureau* had taken place the previous weekend. Our Spanish partners were regrettably unrepresented.

We began by discussing matters that had arisen during the summer's projects. All listened carefully to one another and consensus on the appropriate courses of action was soon reached. Practical matters being settled, we moved on to deeper discussion. Faith commitment formed our first topic of debate. Clear and shared guidelines are essential for healthy recruitment, but faith is a difficult area to legislate. ARC provides an opportunity for young people who are in a stage of 'seeking' as well as for those with an fixed denomination. This year we were obliged to reexamine our remit when believers from non-Christian faith communities asked to participate. Through discussion of the implications we were able to establish two criterion which will be used when judging whether a hopeful volunteer is suited to ARC's scheme: Each volunteer will need to demonstrate both knowledge of Christianity and a willingness to participate fully in a time of Christian prayer.

The subsequent issue for discussion was familiar, age. ARC volunteers are typically between 18 and 30. But some exceptions have occurred. Are older volunteers to be sanctioned? Those present were divided, some advocating flexibility and the consideration of each case on its merits, while others felt the advantage of maintaining a firm boundary. Although our views could not be wholly reconciled, we did agree a policy for handling proposed exceptions. In such a case all parties, including the host cathedral, are to be consulted before a placement is offered. With age discrimination legislation in the pipeline, this concern remains high on our agenda.

But our discussions were not always contentious. James' offer to take on the redevelopment of the European web site was greeted enthusiastically by all. The site has long been due an overhaul and we look forward to seeing the results. Our gatherings are also an occasion for informal exchange, and when all the business had been dealt with we reconvened in central Milan. A *gelato* put the finishing touches to a generous buffet before we went our separate ways. We meet again in Ghent, just in time to be April fools.

ARC PROJECTS 2005

ARC is now recruiting volunteers for projects in Anney, Bonn, Bordeaux, Erfurt, Florence, Gent, Leuven, London (St Paul's and Southwark), Luxembourg, Reims, Trier. Other locations yet to be confirmed.

ARC would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their support in 2004:

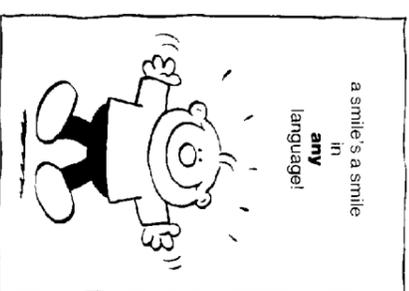
Dr Julia Shear
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 Revd Ian Thompson
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 Jan Nicolls and all at Emmanuel URC, Cambridge
 The Master and Fellows of Selwyn College, Cambridge

THANK YOU!

Everyone speaking double Dutch??

Feeling lost in translation??

Remember:



ARC UK NEWSLETTER 2005



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 stones speak*

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Accueil, Rencontre, Communauté

Welcome to the third ARC UK newsletter. This year we have a bumper issue, including reports from ARC volunteers in Erfurt and Salisbury projects, an update from the autumn European meeting held in Milan and a very useful guide to church architecture by Pamela Davie. Our first article, however, really sums up the role of an ARC volunteer, in the words of Jeroen the co-ordinator in Ghent cathedral.

This year, the ARC UK board has seen a couple of changes. Jennifer Burns and Nathan Koblintz have jointly taken on the PR role from Rob Hayward who did a sterling job over the past two years. Jennifer is currently studying for an MA in Medieval Studies at Bristol, while Nathan recently graduated from Cambridge.

Rebekah McKeown is the new Recruitment overseer. She is studying Theology at St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, and will graduate in June. Rebecca Hodgson has taken over as Secretary. She is a second-year History student at Oriel College, Oxford. Pamela Davie has also joined the team to help out with recruitment administration. Pamela has an MA in History of Art and has worked for both the National Trust for Scotland and the Marischal College Museum Aberdeen.

A VIEW FROM GHENT

Jeroen van Pottelberge is the co-ordinator for the ARC project in Ghent, well-known for 'flexing his polyglot skills'. He shares his views on the important role of ARC volunteers.

ARC Netherlands/Flanders has had a project in Saint Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent for several years. Ghent is a provincial capital in the west of Belgium with a rich historical heritage. The most famous attractions in the city are the Castle of the Counts (a medieval castle, formerly the residence of the count of Flanders) and Saint Bavo's Cathedral. The cathedral's showpiece is the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb by Jan van Eyck and his brother Hubert. Every year, tens of thousands of tourists from all over the world visit the cathedral.

The ARC project in Saint Bavo's Cathedral is part of an effort to make the cathedral a place where visitors can meet people: people who welcome them, who tell something about the monument and its works of art, and something about the faith by which the builders and artists were inspired. It is a public space, where you can come and go whenever you want, stay as long as you want. This makes the cathedral an excellent meeting point.

ARC volunteers, together with local volunteers, show people around, answer questions, or simply give some practical information. **Are they imitating professional tourist business? Surely not. Are they imitating professional counselling services? No. But what would be, then, the use of their presence? To evangelise, to convert people? Not really.** As I already said, the cathedral is a meeting point. It provides an opportunity to talk about the monument, to talk about Christian history, to talk about Christian life in the past and today, in face-to-face conversation, in a friendly and open atmosphere. These occasions are getting increasingly rare in our society. And this makes the work of the volunteers, all ordinary people with very different backgrounds, so valuable.

For many visitors, visiting the cathedral is an intellectual experience: to look at art, to learn about the past. Others just enjoy the beauty of the architecture, the colours, the pictures. For some of them, it is also a spiritual experience. They are all most welcome, and we are happy they are interested in our historical and religious heritage, for it belongs to everyone in the world. The ARC volunteers testify to a living heritage, and make the cathedral something very different from a museum or an archive.

