

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

25 July 2012: Rev'd Will Hughes, St Peter's, Petersfield

On a Journey

On Monday 16th Petersfield was packed with people gathered to watch the Olympic torch pass through the town. The build-up started some time before the promised hour, with the chance to buy medals and flags as groups gathered and the pavements filled. Then came the first group of police motorcycles, followed by various buses and cars in Olympic yellow, followed by sponsors in their great floats, waving and smiling. Then at last, the long awaited moment, and a beaming man with a torch ran past, and was gone.



The crowds seemed to wait a moment to see if anything else would happen, and then, in a moment, they disappeared into the rain, and the streets were empty.

It was not an anti-climax, nor a disappointment, but it was strange to come to see a thing which did not happen, but only passed us by. It was not an event, a spectacle which we could watch, but instead was a moment, a journey which passed us, and drew our eyes, not to it, but to its end. The torch will only achieve its task when it sets fire to the great brazier in London, and the games, the true spectacle, begin. If there were no games, none of us would have come to watch a torch be carried through a town. Because it is going to the games, the torch passing through Petersfield made us a part of the games, and connected our streets with the tracks and courses and fields and ranges where feats of excellence will be done.

The long journey of the flame makes us aware of the preparation and training required before any great achievement, not just in sport, but in the things we want to do in our homes and town. Watching the torch was as unsatisfactory as a dress rehearsal or a training session, and so it has reminded us that anything worth watching is the result of a road travelled and a flame kindled. I'm glad I saw it.