

Parish News

St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden

St John, Little Walden and St James, Sewards End

Part of Saffron Walden & Villages Team Ministry

April 2022

FREE

FAIRTRADE



Alison and Hazel would like to thank everyone who supported the pop-up Fairtrade Stall on Sunday 6th March. We sold almost everything. The most popular items were chocolate and biscuits. We hope to organise more Fairtrade stalls in the future. Watch this space!



Contents for April 2022

RECTOR'S LETTER 4

NOTICEBOARD

From the registers 14

Calendar 18

REPORTS

Fairtrade-Traidcraft Stall Report 2

Mothers' Union AGM 27

St Mary's Music News 28

FEATURES

It's a Gas, gas, gas! 6

The Book Club: Bleak House 9

Archive Group: March 1927 cont. 11

Prayer for the Month 14

The Carpenter: Georges de la Tour 16

Tribute to Eunice Harris 17

Vaughan Williams at St Mary's 20

You in the Pew 22

The Tree 25

An Easter Reflection 30

Gelio 31

PARISH NEWS - EDITORIAL DEADLINE

The deadline for contributions for each issue is the 1st Sunday of the previous month. Hence, the deadline for the **May** issue is **Sunday 3rd April**.

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The Rector's Letter

From The Rev'd Jeremy Trew

Jeremy writes...

A man fell off a cliff but managed to grab hold of a branch on the way down. He hung there and shouted to the top, "Is anyone up there?"

"Yes," came the reply, "God is up here!"

"Can you help me, God?"

"Yes."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Let go of the branch."

There was an agonising pause.

"Is there anybody else up there?"

Faith is a tricky issue. It is something that cannot be seen or proven. It is beyond our ability to rationally explain. Faith may even be something we do not know we possess until we have reason to express it: It may be the prayer of our heart grieving for the one we have lost: It may be the declaration of love though we cannot give the reason why. Faith is both maddeningly perplexing and joyously rewarding. It may be many things, but you cannot pin it down.

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

Hebrews 11:1

Faith is also the great theme of Easter. At Easter we remember the crucifixion of Jesus; a real and tortuous event. But, unless there is faith, this event demonstrates nothing more than the barbarity humanity is capable of. Easter invites us to believe that these events possessed meaning far beyond their actual content: that the suffering of that lonely man was for a purpose and that in a mysterious way it achieved something that no normal death could ever achieve. That is the theme we explore over Easter, and I would like to invite you to join in the various activities of our church as we do this; to let go of the branch and discover what God will do.

Sadly, human barbarity has never ended. Recent events in Ukraine have shown us that. But these events are just the latest and nearest to grab our attention. Syria, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Yemen; these are just a few of the places where humanity's foolishness rumbles on. And we would do well to remember that there have been many seeking safety on our shores long before Putin's act of war. Fear is a powerful motivator. It has motivated



those seeking sanctuary. It has motivated others to stay and fight. It may even be the motivation behind Russia's actions. The first word Jesus spoke after the resurrection to his fearful disciples was "peace". If we meet those who live in fear with our own fears, there will never be an end to conflict. But, if we can conquer our own fears and respond with peace then there is hope. That is no easy task. In fact, it is near impossible by ourselves, for it requires that we let go of the branch.

Yours
Jeremy



From the editor...



Your editor will be pleased to receive copy on any topic of general interest to our readers. These can be sent at any time and will be considered for inclusion in future editions. Please note:

1. The opinions expressed in the articles in this magazine are those of the authors.
2. The Editor reserves the right to edit, or exclude, any article submitted. Please be aware when submitting articles 400 words fits comfortably onto a page and that any article over 800 words will need to be edited to ensure readability.
3. Illustrations and photographs are the property of the copyright holders and should not be reused without permission.
4. The Parish News cannot accept responsibility for the goods or services advertised in this magazine - advertisements are accepted in good faith.

Many thanks in anticipation!

It's a Gas, gas, gas!

With gas prices soaring even before the outbreak of war in Ukraine, National Insurance about to go up and inflation on the rise, some are claiming that now is not the time to make the switch to clean energy or to worry about the climate crisis.

It has seemed to me unarguable that, in order to fund the transition away from fossil fuels to clean energy, we need to stop subsidising fossil fuels and embark on a low, but escalating carbon tax, which would fund the switch to clean energy and fully insulated homes, creating green jobs and leaving nobody out of pocket.

But how can we possibly embark on such a tax with gas prices soaring as they are? On the other hand, we have just suffered four extreme storms in quick succession: Corrie, Dudley, Eunice and Franklin, each causing suffering, loss of life and livelihoods and bringing their own costs in damage. The three storms of the winter of 2019-20 cost the insurance industry £800 million; probably a fraction of the uninsured losses people have had to fund from their own pockets!

As I write, the latest IPCC report (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) has stated with high confidence that, 'The rise in weather and climate extremes has led to some irreversible impacts as natural and human systems are pushed beyond their ability to adapt.' The report makes very grim reading indeed as it describes levels of species extinctions, mass mortality events and irreversible changes to permafrost and ice sheets. https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf

Of course the appalling and tragic war in Ukraine is preoccupying our thoughts and prayers most, filling us with horror and sympathy for the Ukrainian people, while bracing ourselves for the sacrifice of further increases in gas and petrol prices.

As increased fuel bills land on our doorsteps, those in fuel poverty will have a very hard time, not least because three initiatives designed to help them over



the last decade have been abandoned. In 2015 the Government terminated its flagship Green Deal for Home insulation because it said take-up had been too low. It had been hailed as “transformational” and the “biggest home improvement programme since the second world war” by ministers when it was launched in 2013.

Also in 2015, the government scrapped plans to make all new UK homes carbon neutral. The Zero Carbon Homes policy, first announced in 2006, was due to come into effect in 2016. It would have ensured that all new dwellings would generate as much energy through renewable sources, such as wind or solar power as they would use in heating, hot water, lighting and ventilation. Hundreds of thousands of homes would have been completely free of gas and electricity bills!

Then in 2021, just over six months after its launch, the Government scrapped the Green Homes Grant scheme, which had been the centrepiece of Boris Johnson’s promise to ‘build back greener’. The abandonment of this £1.5bn programme, which would have offered poorer households grants of up to £10,000 for insulation or low-carbon heating, leaves the UK without a plan for tackling one of the biggest sources of greenhouse gas.

We are now very exposed to the current rises in gas prices as Germany and all Europe finally try to extricate themselves from dependence on Russian gas. My fervent hope is that this will provide a massive stimulus to clean energy production. Further delay would mean that the cost of mitigation gets higher; we will have to pay more to adapt to extreme weather conditions and the costs of loss and damage mount ever higher. Delay has cost us dear, with the poorest in the UK and around the world suffering most.

Despite the horrors and suffering unfolding in Ukraine, I hang on grimly to my vision of a world where we no longer have to wage war to secure oil and gas supplies. Every country in the world has the opportunity to be self-sufficient in clean, sustainable energy, whether from solar, wind, hydro, tidal or ground source energy. We don’t need to be beholden to inhumane autocrats and kleptocrats. We are blessed with a sun which every hour gives us enough energy to satisfy global demands for a whole year!

God has created a world in which peace and freedom from fuel poverty are perfectly possible. We just need the faith and the political will to get there.

Edward Gildea, Eco Team Leader



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The Book Club enjoys Bleak House

19th century writers never really understood the art of marketing their products. If you have to write an epic novel, around 1,000 pages with a multiplicity of characters and sub-plots, why should you also give it an off-putting title? Victor Hugo did it with *Les Misérables*, Dostoevsky did it with *Crime and Punishment* and Dickens did it with *Bleak House*. All three are reckoned to be among the greatest books ever written, and it was the last of these that the Book Group met to discuss on 25th February. 7 of us were there, and it would have been 8 if one of our most voracious readers hadn't returned her copy of the book, half-finished, saying that it was "too gloomy". Well, it is pretty gloomy in parts, but she missed out on what was probably the first ever 'whodunnit', and one of the most endearing detectives in British literature, Inspector Bucket.

Dickens wrote *Bleak House* to be enjoyed in 20 monthly instalments, and we discussed whether this meant that he didn't know how the plot would unravel when he began, altering details in response to his readers. We decided that he probably didn't, but that some of the characterisation was influenced by their response. Much of the novel is written from the standpoint of Esther Summerson, an unconvincingly 'nice' heroine who suffers, like many of Dickens' women, from being reluctant to describe her own feelings. Consequently, she often comes across as passive and somewhat feeble. This is a serious handicap for the television age (*Bleak House* has been televised 3 times by the BBC), which struggles with modesty and gentleness, but it must have been more realistic when read aloud, the custom in Victorian times.

The gloom that I referred to above is sometimes literal – the book begins with a famous description of London fog – but more often it shows Dickens at his most savage and satirical, attacking the slums and poverty in London (then, the most prosperous city in the world), the hypocritical 'telescopic philanthropy' of certain do-gooders, and the self-indulgence of the legal system. Lawyers come very badly out of *Bleak House*, as do clergymen, but Dickens seems to have had a soft-spot for the medical profession. And detectives.

Our next book is barely 600 pages long and entitled '*Lamentation*' (by C.J.Sansom). Time will tell whether it bears comparison with the books I mentioned above.

John Pickthorn

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Muniments Room

Archive Group

A monthly record of
pieces of interest
from our past
Parish Magazines

March 1927

Continued from March 1927 ...

My dear Parishioners,

The eagerly awaited report of Sir Charles Nicholson on the condition of the Church Roof is printed in full in another column with a few footnotes, explaining some of the more technical terms. It is very gratifying to know that the most serious defect is remedied in a truly efficient and workmanlike manner. But the document is not altogether free from misgivings as to the future, and reading between the lines of it I draw two very clear and definite conclusions. First we must have a competent survey of the fabric at least every two or three years in order that any signs of weakness, obvious only to the trained eye of the expert, may be at once taken in hand. There was formerly a Norman Church on the present site, what became of it? There was once too a Decorated Church, what became of it; Both fell into ruin and decay. The present building all but collapsed in 1789 and again in 1859. Do we want these painful chapters of local history to be repeated in our time? Does not every reasonable owner of property find it pay best to have defects promptly put right and not indefinitely postponed? A periodic survey by a competent architect would be step number one in the pursuit of this policy.

Yours very sincerely

L. Hughes

I would have given more detail of what Charles Nicholson had to say in this 1927 issue of the 'Parish Magazine' but it was full of reference to rafters, main beams, ridge pieces, wooden arches etc which would be difficult to précis.

Canon Chris Bishop. Archivist



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From the Registers

Funerals

17th February Andrew Rushton

18th February Robert Spitzer

23rd February Eunice Harris

Prayer for the month *provided by the Prayer Team*



As we continue, in April, through Lent to Holy Week and the Joy of Easter let us pray: -

God our Father,
the strength of all who put their trust in you,
mercifully accept our prayers; and because, in our weakness,
we can do nothing good without you,
grant us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments
we may please you, both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Littlebury Plant Sale

Sunday 24 April - 2.00 - 4pm

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Joseph the Carpenter by Georges de La Tour

One of my favourite paintings in The Louvre is this masterpiece by Georges de La Tour of Joseph the carpenter with his son, Jesus. The dramatic use of light is immediately striking. This form of chiaroscuro, called Tenebrism, is often the hallmark of a La Tour painting: a strong light, shaded by Jesus' hand, throwing the composition into sharp contrasts of light and shade.

Stronger than any normal candlelight, it is a spiritual light rather than a terrestrial one. It falls most strongly on Jesus' face, leaving us in no doubt that he is, or will be, the Light of the World. It also glistens on Joseph's wrinkled forehead, creating a dramatic contrast of youth and age: however young we are, to this mortal end we will all eventually come.

Joseph is at work as a carpenter. The light falls on the twists of his shirt and his strong arms, employed in their physical labour: physicality captured and celebrated in the spiritual light. He is working with an augur, drilling a hole in a substantial beam of wood. A beam clearly stout enough to become part of a cross. The fate of Jesus lies already at his feet.

But Joseph is not really concentrating on his work. His brow is furrowed not with the strain of turning the augur, despite the glistening sweat, but by glancing up to look at his son. His eyes are focused upwards, in stoical restraint not expressing much emotion, but I sense surprise: surprise at what Jesus is saying.

Because if we look back now at the face of Jesus, we see that he is talking, his lips gently open, and his focus is on his father, not on his father's work. This recalls the episode of Jesus in the temple astounding the elders. Joseph is indeed astounded as he glances at his son, reminded that his is no ordinary son, no ordinary apprentice learning how to follow in his father's footsteps. He has another Father and other footsteps to follow.

But let's look still more deeply. The left hand of Jesus shading the candle is wonderfully depicted as the light comes through the flesh, making his fingers glow with translucency. It is beautiful. One of La Tour's signature innovations. The spirituality of the flame animating the physicality of the flesh.



But look closer still. Jesus has dirty fingernails. This is my favourite detail of the painting. Partly the simple realism that boys generally have dirt under their fingernails; but what greater expression can you have of the idea of God made Flesh and dwelling among us? Those dirty fingernails, silhouetted against the spiritual light of the flame, capture the essence of our faith.

Edward Gildea

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Tribute to Eunice Harris

Eunice was a member of St Mary's Mothers' Union and a great supporter of its valuable overseas work. I would like to pay tribute to her memory on behalf of the members.

I first met Eunice when I moved to Saffron Walden nine years ago, and joined St Mary's branch of the Mothers' Union. She was always cheerful and very positive and she made me feel very welcome. At that time, despite her age she was secretary of the branch, having been a member for many years.

Several years later I became branch leader and she gave me much needed encouragement and support. Later Eunice became honorary secretary. As time moved on, she called herself 'kitchen supervisor' when she prepared and served members with a cup of tea during the meeting. Whilst she was able, she always made a contribution to the branch and its members.

One of our meetings was devoted to celebrating Eunice's 90th birthday with a special birthday cake made by one of the members. Eunice was very hospitable, always inviting us to her home for committee meetings, and very generous, contributing to the cost of hot cross buns after our Holy Week service and mince pies after our Advent Meditation service, both at Berden.

Eunice's Christian faith was very evident in the life she led and the example she set. She was a Lancashire lass and that warmth of spirit always shone through.

The contribution she made to our branch made a difference and has played a part in building the foundation on which it continues today. Thank you, Eunice from all our members.

Brenda Sheath, Branch Leader

Calendar for April 2022

This calendar is provisional and subject to change due to Covid restrictions. See The Grapevine or the church website for the latest information particularly for streaming of services.

St Mary's, Saffron Walden

All services now take place in church unless shown otherwise. One service in church each Sunday is also streamed on YouTube [Y]: details on the church website.

7th March - 15th April

Lent Prayer Stations

Sunday 3 April

8am BCP Holy Communion
10am Holy Communion [Y]
6.30pm H2H Youth-led Service for All



Thursday 7 April

1pm Service with Prayers for Wholeness & Healing

Holy Week

Palm Sunday 10 April

8am BCP Holy Communion
10am Holy Communion with Passion Reading [Y]
6.30pm Choral Evensong

Monday 11 April

9.30am Holy Communion
8pm Bible Study and Compline in Parish Rooms

Tuesday 12 April

9.30am Holy Communion
2pm Mothers' Union - Holy Week Meditation
5pm Evening Prayer by Zoom
8pm Bible Study and Compline

Wednesday 13 April

8am Morning Prayer
9.30am Holy Communion
8pm Bible Study and Compline in Parish Rooms

Maundy Thursday 14 April

9.30am Holy Communion
8pm Choral Eucharist with washing of 12 volunteers' feet
Crucifixus - Lotti, Merbecke setting

Good Friday 15 April

- 10.30am Procession of Witness from Abbey Lane to service in church
2pm Hour at the Cross: quiet prayer and structured devotions
7.30pm Devotional offering - *Mozart Requiem in D Minor* with St Mary's Choir and East Anglia Chamber Orchestra

Easter Sunday 17 April

- 6am Sunrise Holy Communion
8am BCP Holy Communion
10am Family Eucharist (inc. Admission to Holy Communion and Renewal of Baptismal Vows) [Y]
6.30pm Choral Evensong
The Strife is O'er - Ley, This Joyful Eventide - Wood, Hallelujah Chorus - Handel
Rawsthorne Festive Service - with St Mary's Brass Group

Sunday 24th April

- 8am BCP Holy Communion [Y]
10am Family Service
6.30pm Evensong

Regular weekday services at St Mary's

Tuesdays

- 5pm Evening Prayer by Zoom, see weekly bulletin for login details

Wednesdays

- 8am Morning Prayer
9.30am Holy Communion

St James', Swards End

Palm Sunday 10 April

- 9.30am Morning Praise

Good Friday 15 April

- 12noon 'Glimpsing the Light'
A Reflection for Good Friday



Easter Sunday 17 April

- 9.30am Easter Holy Communion

St John's, Little Walden

Palm Sunday 10 April

- 11.15am Family Service

Easter Sunday 17 April

- 11.15am Easter Holy Communion



Vaughan Williams at St Mary's

Some of the singers in St Mary's choir also sing in a local chamber choir, Granta Chorale, and we are putting on a concert of Vaughan Williams's music in St Mary's on Saturday 2 April at 7.30pm. This is part of the national celebrations for the composer's 150th birthday.

When researching the concert, we were delighted to learn about Vaughan Williams' connections not just to Saffron Walden, but to St Mary's itself. We thought the congregation would be interested too.



At the outbreak of the First World War, Ralph Vaughan Williams was 41 years old: too old to serve in the infantry. By the end of 1914, with the war not over as quickly as expected, Vaughan Williams resolved to play his part and signed up as a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Frustratingly, he was not to see active service for eighteen months, as he was assigned to the London Field Ambulance to learn how to be a wagon orderly. This meant undertaking drills, going on route marches to get fit, and having lectures about camp hygiene and medical practices.

In May 1915, after being based in Dorking and Watford, Vaughan Williams and his unit marched 55 miles through Ware, Dunmow and Thaxted to Saffron Walden. He must have smiled as he marched past his friend Gustav Holst's cottage in Monk Street, Thaxted, on the way.

Billeting sergeant CR Wellum later recalled: "I don't think we will ever forget that trek.. through some very pretty country... nor ... our stay in Saffron Walden, the quiet quaint old Quaker town with its fine church and historic inns... Being an old-fashioned town, Saffron Walden was not an ideal place for procuring billets... it is a marvel that some of the fellows did not crack their skulls or break their necks where they had to go through the family's bedroom to reach a wooden ladder which led up to their loft." (Tales of a Field Ambulance, 1935)

Initially billeted with a family in Bridge Street, Vaughan Williams was only round the corner from St Mary's and one can imagine him walking up the path and poking his head in at the door of the church. His widow Ursula later wrote that, "here Ralph spent much of his free time playing the organ in the church,

Bach being the most certain refuge from the soul-destroying routine of an army in training. ... For Ralph this was the happiest time of all his army days..." (RVW - a Biography, 1964). Later that summer of 1915, the unit went to camp in Audley End Park, and at the end of October moved to billets in Bishop's Stortford.

Vaughan Williams' war-time service means there is a five-year gap in his catalogue of compositions. Nevertheless, his experiences - training in Saffron Walden, serving in France (twice), Greece and Germany, and becoming an artillery officer - were to influence his music, and it is clear that he was sketching musical ideas all through this period.

Ursula's reference to Bach provided a clue to organ authority John Francis, who discovered an unpublished letter in the British Library (see issue 63 of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal, June 2015). In the letter, organist Henry Ley recalls meeting Vaughan Williams regularly in 1919, not long after the composer's demobilisation: "He brought me his 3 organ preludes on Welsh hymn tunes for me to play to him one day ... Sometime after, he again brought me his Organ Prelude and Fugue in C Minor which he modelled on Bach's big Prelude and Fugue in C minor (written during the 1st war at Saffron Walden where he was stationed. He got leave to go & play the organ in that lovely church in the evenings)."

For John Francis, this shows that Vaughan Williams was actively composing during the Great War, including in St Mary's on your organ. Francis concludes that not only the Prelude and Fugue, but the Three Preludes founded on Welsh Hymn Tunes were composed in St Mary's - "he would have had a copy of the English Hymnal to hand, and there is nothing more natural than that he should have been inspired to composition by playing tunes with which he had become very familiar some years earlier" [as editor of the English Hymnal].

So, in John Francis' words, "St Mary's holds a unique place in musical history, especially among those of us who like organ music."

Do come and listen to Vaughan Williams in St Mary's on 2 April, including the much-loved organ piece Rhosymedre that he probably composed on your very own organ. The programme also includes The Lark Ascending, the Mass in G minor and folk songs such as Linden Lea.

Philip Parker of Granta Chorale

Tickets from www.grantachorale.org.uk (see page 35)

YOUinthe**PEW** interviewed by Chris Bishop

Jan Siewertsen

I was born in a place called Tyringham-cum-Filgrave, Buckinghamshire, which sounds awfully posh but in fact was a huge country house given over as part maternity hospital during the war away from the bombing. My family were living in Chadwell Heath at the time. After I was born, we returned to Chadwell Heath until my baptism at 6 weeks and then I was evacuated with my mum and brother to Sheffield.



After the war we returned to live in Ilford. I attended a secondary modern school and although I passed the scholarship, my parents didn't believe in further education for girls so I left school at 15 years of age and this started me on what was to be a succession of office jobs so I became quite an all rounder. When I eventually retired, I was working for a team of accountants in the City producing their reports.

I met George when I was 15 and we married in 1962 and had three daughters, Janine, Sheona and Alison. We moved to Saffron Walden in 2011 because Sheona and Alison lived here and they said we were getting old and it seemed the sensible thing to do. We have never regretted it for a moment. George was diagnosed with Alzheimers in late 2011 so it proved to be a sensible move as having the girls nearby for support was a help and the town was emphasising the fact that it was a dementia friendly town.

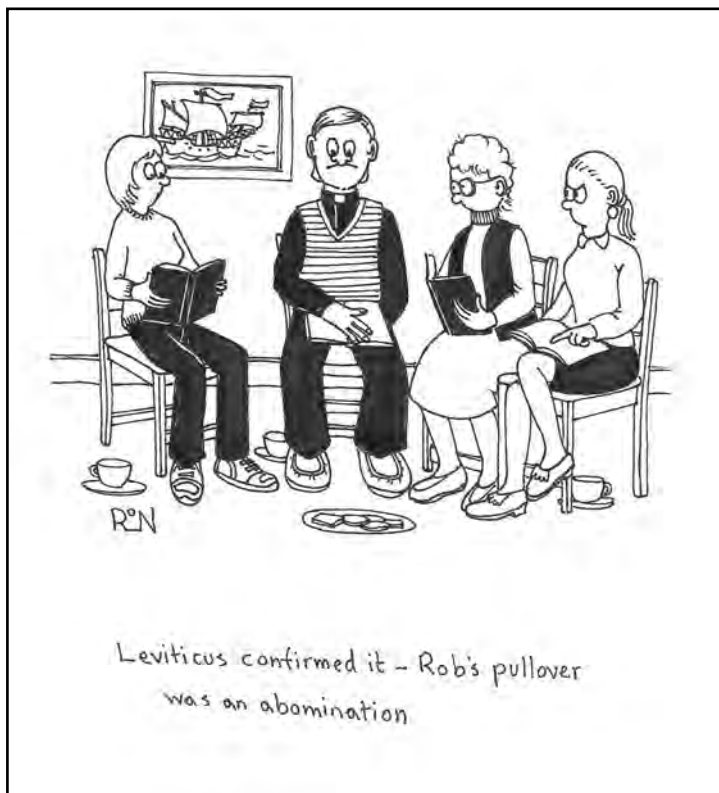
George was a brilliant runner and I went along to his runs as a baggage handler, but was eventually dragged into running. Anyone who knows me will know that I am built for comfort, not speed. We completed the London and New York marathons back in the 90s, although George also completed Paris and Rotterdam. I volunteered to organise a water station at the 4 mile mark at the London Marathon, and did this for 25 years until 2015.

I joined St Mary's first and was made so welcome. Sheilah was the first to welcome me. George followed me to church after a few weeks. We attended a course run by David and Lydia and were later confirmed in 2014 by Bishop Stephen Cottrell. Such a wonderful close knit congregation. I have since taken on various roles within the church, first helping in the Parish Office, then sidesman, vergers and now Assistant Churchwarden. I am also an active member of our Mothers' Union, serving as a committee member. I was told when I first came here that if you stand still long enough, someone will give you a job. Ha!ha!

George and I celebrated our Golden anniversary in 2012 by renewing our vows. The service was conducted by David and was really lovely and we were

surrounded by family and friends.. Sadly, George died in 2015.

I had never thought of a motto, but my wise mum always impressed on us 'you'll never get a second chance to make a first impression' so I think this is relevant.



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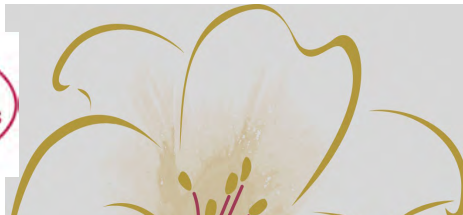
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The Tree

I did not grow for this.

When my roots first snaked into the earth
and anchored in its wholesomeness,
I fed on riches, drank from secret springs
and stood a testament to your creation.
I did not grow for this.

And when I broadened year by year
and ring on ring betrayed my age,
with gnarled and thickened bark to guard
the springtime sapping heart of me –
I did not grow for this.

And when my branches reached for Heaven,
leaves unfurling to the sun,
your breezes set them whispering,
you let their dry lips taste the rain.
I did not grow for this.

You grew me, God, and now, cut down
they hew away my groaning boughs
and hammer nails into my side.
Instead of springtime pledge of leaf and bud,
I carry agony, and beads of blood.

© Christine Ractliff (Sewards End)

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Report on the Mothers' Union AGM

Twenty-three members attended the Mothers' Union AGM on Thursday 10th February 2022. The meeting was chaired by our Chaplain Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop. The first hymn was 'Praise my Soul the King of Heaven,' the reading was Philippians Chapter 4.4-7, followed by intercessions.

A tribute to Eunice Harris was made by Gwynneth Nicholas. Eunice was a dear friend and MU member who was enthusiastic, hospitable and generous. Her deep faith was reflected in the life she lived and the example she set, for which we are all grateful.

On Tuesday 8th Feb our member **Joan Towers celebrated her 90th birthday** and was visited by Helen and Gwynneth with a bouquet of flowers and a card signed from us all. We are thankful that she has returned home from hospital with support and is making good progress.

The AGM opened with prayer and with 2 apologies for absence. The minutes were read and approved and there were no matters arising. The treasurer circulated the accounts and gave a step-by-step explanation to members and also thanked the examiner of the accounts Mr Alan Hawkes.

The Branch Leader began her report by reminding members that most of us were receiving our first and second vaccinations at the beginning of 2021 and that all MU meetings were cancelled due to Covid. In May 2021 meetings recommenced in the church by kind permission of the Churchwardens, according to the strict government regulations practised on Sundays in Church.

The first meeting was our Ascension Day Service when we welcomed Rev'd Alex Jeewan as preacher. He inspired us with his sermon 'Looking Forward to the Future and Leaving the Past behind' which encouraged us all. We continued to hold meetings in church until October when after 2 years absence we returned to the Parish Rooms.

Elections took place and the Branch Leader, Treasurer, the Programme and Minutes Secretaries were re-elected and three other Committee members.

Following the AGM, discussion took place over a cup of tea about 'How we go forward to elect a new Branch leader in preparation for next year.'

Our final hymn was a tribute to Eunice and one of her favourites 'How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds in a Believer's Ear' and the meeting closed with the Mothers' Union and Mary Sumner Prayer.

Brenda Sheath



St Mary's Music News

The first part of February seemed indeed like the start of Ordinary Time, before the shocking events later in the month.

Services in late February were very exciting for some of the newest members of the Junior Choir, as they made their first appearances at regular morning worship with the adults. They join the pre-service rehearsals at 9.30, then sit with the congregation until they come back to the chancel during Communion to sing the anthem and later hymns, mentored and prompted by the more experienced Juniors. We very much hope that the 2 choirs will be fully reunited by Easter, both in rehearsals and for services.

Meanwhile, Alison Lawrence organised a highly successful party for the Junior Choir on 5 March, ably assisted by other members of the Adult Choir. Creative talents were required to turn chairs first into thrones (comparatively easy), and then into monsters (much harder).



Things then got very competitive, as the 9 choristers tried to outdo each other in constructing origami corner bookmarks. The excellent refreshments included rainbow cakes.

On 13 February Choral Evensong was an opportunity for quiet contemplation, much appreciated by both congregation and choir, albeit the

choir outnumbered the congregation by approximately 2 to 1. The anthem was Birstow's *Blessed City, Heavenly Salem*, with Alison as the soloist. The next Choral Evensong will have taken place on Sunday 13 March, with April's scheduled for 10 April. These services normally take place on the second Sunday of the month, and are highly recommended as an oasis of calm in our busy and often stressful lives.

Now that Lent is upon us, the choir is supporting worship as usual, starting with the Ash Wednesday service. On Good Friday, 15 April, at 7.30 pm they will be performing Mozart's Requiem as a devotional offering. Everyone is very welcome, especially after 2 years when Covid-19 put a stop to any such musical events.

Of course, the end of February has seen the invasion of Ukraine. On 6 March the choir sang an 8 part motet by Henry Purcell with the repeated refrain *Hear My Prayer O Lord, and Let My Cry Come Unto Thee*. This was chosen for Lent, but very apposite for these troubled times.

Oli King has put together a fund-raising concert on Saturday 12 March at very short notice. We are very grateful to Andrew Malcolm for stepping in, and to all the choir and musicians who have worked hard and fast to produce this event. The music includes the *Ave Verum* and *Lacrimosa* from Mozart's Requiem, as well as pieces by Holst, Faure, Rheinberger and Lauridsen, among others. We hope that this concert will raise funds to support the British Red Cross, UNICEF and WITH Ukraine.

The 2022 AGM of the SMMA will have taken place in the Parish Rooms after the Sunday service on 20 March by the time this Newsletter is published. There will be a full report in the next Newsletter.

Ottilie Lefever, with thanks to Jim Butler for the picture.

Advice to gardeners:

The easiest way to tell the difference between young plants and weeds is to pull up everything. If they come up again, they're weeds. – *Anon*

An Easter reflection

“When you die, that’s it. Nothing. Out like a light.” That’s what the man in the pub said, and his mates all nodded, though the one whose mother had died the week before wasn’t really quite so certain. Still, it seemed to make sense.

After all, we know what ‘dead’ means: dead leaves, dead batteries, dead fish, dead pets . . . and dead people, to be honest. While we recognise that it’s all too easy to go from alive to dead, we’ve got serious doubts about the possibility of any return journeys.

Which is why Christians have an uphill task at Easter.

Jesus was a great man, and people want to remember how He died. Fair enough. But it starts getting complicated when Christians insist that Jesus died - but didn’t stay dead - in fact, that He’s alive now. That ‘return journey’ has happened, they say.

That’s the problem about Easter, Christians persisting in what sounds like a ridiculous belief. If they just dropped the resurrection bit and concentrated on the wonderful teaching of Jesus and His example of generosity, compassion and love then everybody would find Christianity much more believable. Wouldn’t that make sense? And wouldn’t that fill the churches again?

Well it might (or, more likely, it might not). But in any case, the trouble is that it wouldn’t be Christianity at all. The faith of Christians actually depends on the resurrection of Jesus, and always has done, right from the earliest days.

After the crucifixion the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross by some of His friends and put in a rock tomb with a heavy stone rolled across the doorway. Yet the following Sunday, the third day after His death, His followers claimed that they had met Him, seen Him, talked with Him.



So certain was their belief that nothing could make them recant it. Not ridicule, not torture, not even death itself. They couldn't deny His resurrection, because they were absolutely convinced that it had happened. Plenty of clever and powerful people at the time had a vested interest in proving them wrong. It shouldn't have been difficult to prove that a dead man had stayed dead, especially when you have at your disposal the resources of the greatest empire in history. Yet they didn't do it, because it couldn't be done.

Still today millions of people all over the world believe that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead. They include brilliant scientists and philosophers as well as plenty of 'ordinary' men and women of all ages. They believe it because they respect the witness of those first Christians, and because in many cases their own lives have been transformed by a relationship with Jesus - a relationship that wouldn't make sense if He were dead!

Christians don't put their faith in a dead hero from the past, but in someone who is alive and *active in their own lives and in the world*. That, in a nutshell, is the real message of Easter.

Canon David Winter (Parish Pump)

(Photograph: by Pisit Heng on Unsplash)





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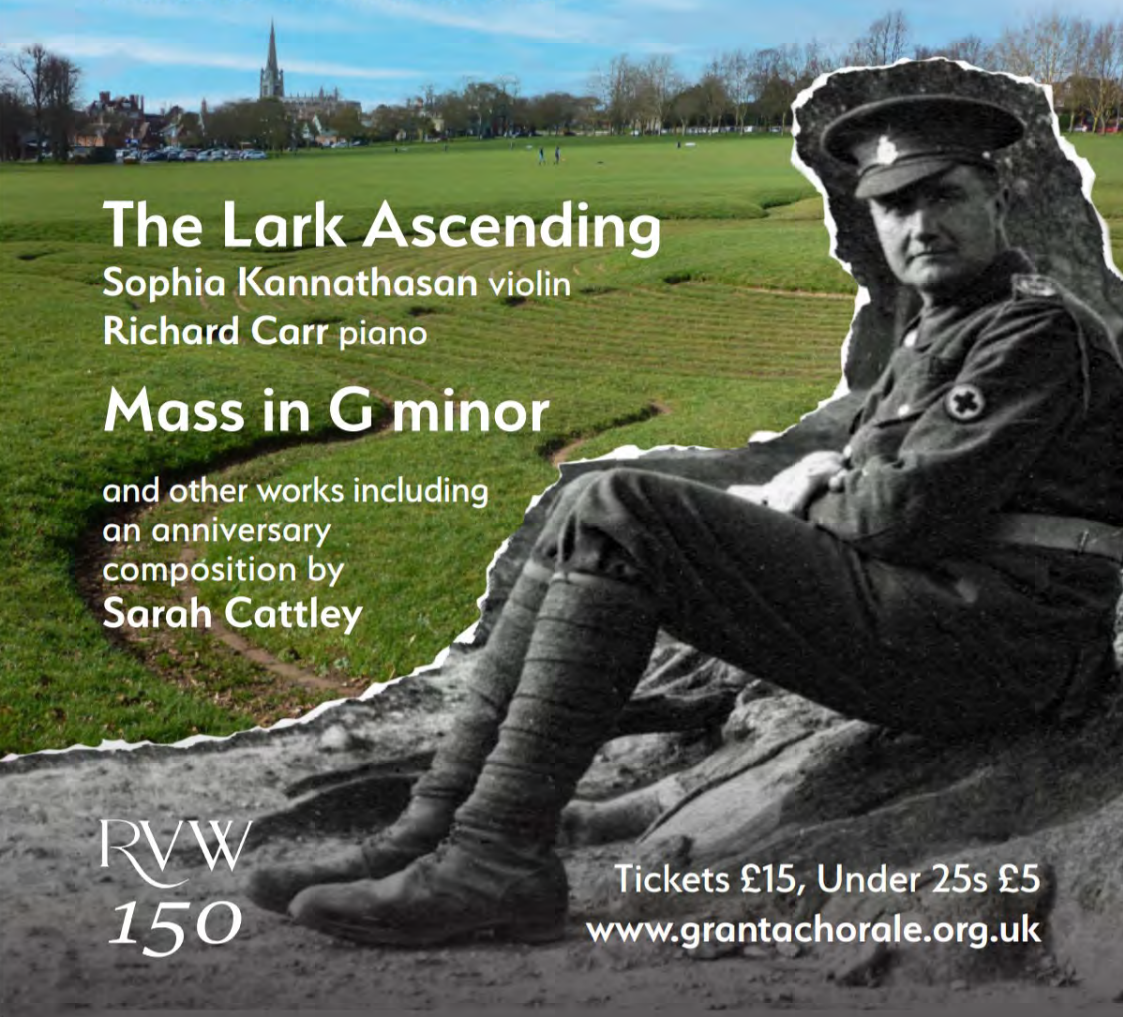
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