



# St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden

St John, Little Walden and St James, Swards End

Part of Saffron Walden & Villages Team Ministry



**June 2022**

**FREE**

## Celebrating the Platinum Jubilee

A special extended bank holiday weekend this month will give communities across the UK a chance to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. In February this year, HM the Queen became the first British monarch to celebrate 70 years of service. The weekend, from Thursday June 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday June 5<sup>th</sup> will include a birthday parade, beacons across the country, a



‘platinum party’ at Buckingham Palace, a pageant and thousands of street parties and lunches. Many churches will be holding special services and events.

A centrepiece of the celebrations will be a Service of Thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral, London, on Friday June 3<sup>rd</sup>. It's fitting that the service will form a key part of the Jubilee, as the Queen has been vocal in speaking about her Christian faith in a series of high-profile broadcasts. In her Christmas Day broadcast in 2016, she said:

“Jesus Christ lived obscurely for most of his life, and never travelled far. He was maligned and rejected by many, though he had done no wrong. And yet billions of people now follow his teaching and find in him the guiding light for their lives. I am one of them, because Christ's example helps me see the value of doing small things with great love, whoever does them and whatever they themselves believe.”

Journalist Catherine Butcher, who has written ‘Our Faithful Queen – 70 years of faith and service’ to mark the Platinum Jubilee, recalls: “The Queen Mother subscribed to daily devotional Bible reading notes. She regularly read Bible stories to the young princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret and taught them to pray. Both girls started their weekly school lessons with half an hour of Bible reading, under the guidance of their governess, and weekly church attendance has been a lifelong pattern for the Queen, who is said to keep a well-read Bible by her bedside.” Catherine Butcher tells how evangelist Billy Graham wrote in his autobiography, ‘Just as I am’ about meeting the Queen on several occasions. He said: “I always found her very interested in the Bible and its message.”

The Queen is Supreme Governor of the Church of England but her interest in faith goes well beyond this title. She holds a strong Christian faith and has exemplified this in her lifetime of dedicated service.

Peter Crumpler (Parish Pump)

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## PARISH NEWS - EDITORIAL DEADLINE

The deadline for contributions for each issue is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the previous month. Hence, the deadline for the **July** issue is **Sunday 5th June**.

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## The Rector's Letter

From The Rev'd Jeremy Trew

Jeremy writes...

I visited an old Puritan Chapel recently. Lovely place. Simple, even austere, but possessing a serenity through its simplicity; a place to unwind, meditate and pray. The Puritans are regarded as having had their heyday at the time of the Commonwealth – those years following the civil war – and to have provided a legacy that shapes our society even now. Attitudes towards work and play are two very important areas where Puritans are said to have left a lasting influence. But often their story is wrongly told.

In the world of work we hear of the “Protestant work ethic”, supposedly shaped largely by the Puritans, though actually owing more to economic thinkers such as Adam Smith whose celebration of self-interest is a driving force in Conservatism even today. His works have fed the concept that work is at the heart of our personal identity and that it rightly demands any level of sacrifice required on its altar. The Puritans themselves had a much healthier attitude, believing that work was to be our servant, meeting our needs and the needs of others, but always remaining subservient to justice and personal freedom.

Likewise, in the world of leisure and play the Puritans have done undeservedly badly. We all remember the tale of how Christmas was banned for a time, and this certainly seems a cut-back too far. This, though, was in the context of a society that celebrated so many high and holy days that nearly half of the year was lost to public holidays. The economy was collapsing through an excessive and not always sincere dose of religion. The Puritans merely believed that religion, work and play should all be held in balance and viewed collectively as our worship of God – God was not just experienced on Sundays and Festivals, but also to be found in our labour and in our leisure. In fact, the Puritans held views on leisure, alcohol, sexuality and many other things that would often seem liberal even by the standards of today: If you have ever wondered why the Prayer Book Marriage Service puts such a heavy emphasis on child-bearing (and who hasn't!), it is because the Puritans encouraged couples to cohabit until the first child was on the way.

So, maybe we should give the Puritans the credit they deserve; for thinking around the problems their culture faced to seek to build a healthy and just society centred on the Gospel; for encouraging a balanced and rewarding



lifestyle; and for recognising that true Christianity is found in the workplace and on the beach as much as in the chapel. Heaven is in the ordinary, and now nothing can ever be ordinary again.

Amen, and pass the cork-screw.

Best wishes

Jeremy

## **The Communion of Saints**

Those of us familiar with Morning and Evening Prayer are also familiar with the Apostle's Creed, which ends:

'I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.'

As Alan and I prepare to leave Saffron Walden and St Mary's after nearly 35 years, the phrase 'the communion of saints' has suddenly come into focus for me as a way of describing the strong link that I feel with everyone who has been part of our journey of faith over this time, and whom we take with us as we leave.

St Mary's has been an important part of our lives. Alan was already a licensed Reader when we arrived and he has contributed in many ways. With our three daughters, I became involved in Sunday School, and it was here that the girls were all confirmed. It was here that I was ordained priest in 2005, although my curacy was in Stansted. And through it all, we travelled with so many people, some of whom have become permanent friends, others cherished companions on the road. Familiar faces at every church service or event. Lately we have been in Ashdon and Hadstock, where more people have been added to the list. Of course in that time some have left the church, others joined and some have died. All have made a mark on our lives.

We started our working lives as mission partners with CMS in North West Pakistan, where we worshipped with other Christians, and later also worked and worshipped with the Church in Melanesia. More recently, we were in Sussex for eight years. In every phase, our lives have been touched and changed by fellow Christians and different ways of worship. Our faith has been challenged as well as supported along the way, not least in study groups. From the early shock (for me, at least) of evangelical Christianity in missionary training college, through to

the songs and lyrics of Celtic Christianity, different forms of worship and - most importantly - the people who have advocated them, have become part of us.

It is sad to be leaving Saffron Walden, St Marys and now especially the churches and people of Ashdon and Hadstock. There are so many moments and stories we have shared. In the case of weddings, baptisms and funerals, it is always a great privilege, as a priest, to be part of some very particular transitions and events. But no less important are the routine aspects of church life, including weekly worship and discussions over coffee afterwards.

Sad though it is to be leaving, we have a great sense that we remain in communion with you. We are all – living and departed, in this country and elsewhere – part of that great ‘communion of saints’ that make up the Body of Christ. Thank you for everything.

Caroline and Alan Curren

## Can democracy save us?

I am getting increasingly concerned that democracy is incapable of addressing climate change. It has a spectacularly long record of failing to do so!

It is 30 years since 154 states at the United Nations signed an international treaty to combat “dangerous human interference with the climate system,” and 33 years since Margaret Thatcher delivered her famous speech to the UN on Climate Change <sup>1</sup>:



“What we are now doing to the world, by degrading the land surfaces, by polluting the waters and by adding greenhouse gases to the air at an unprecedented rate—all this is new in the experience of the earth. It is mankind and his activities which are changing the environment of our planet in damaging and dangerous ways.

Our ability to come together to stop or limit damage to the world's environment will be perhaps the greatest test of how far we can act as a world community,” she said. “We shall need statesmanship of a rare order.... so that we do not live at the expense of future generations,”

It was a brilliant speech, informed by her scientific background and clear grasp of what the evidence was telling us. But nothing happened. A third of a century later we are still pouring greenhouse gases into the atmosphere at a rate of over 36 billion tonnes a year <sup>2</sup> and holding conferences where there is much posturing but negligible substantive agreement.

Rather than blame the negligence of successive political leaders, though, shouldn't we recognise that there is something inherent in democracy itself that is incapable of effective action?

Politics around the world is totally lacking in 'Cathedral Thinking'. Great civilizations build for great time frames, way beyond the economic or pragmatic needs of the present. Our church is an example. Elected politicians, however, are compelled to think in very short time frames; specifically, the desire to get re-elected in 4-5 years' time. They prioritise the issues they hear on the doorstep, and climate change doesn't feature there.

This leaves the interests of future generations unrepresented, neglected and abused. Successive governments have kicked the challenge into 'the long grass' rather than take actions that might prejudice their electability, during which time the crises have become deeper, more dangerous and far more expensive to fix.

Professor Rebecca Willis has interviewed MPs extensively as part of her research<sup>3</sup>. She found that although they accepted the science of climate change, most showed a reluctance to discuss the far-reaching implications for human society. 'Taking an active role on climate doesn't fit current institutional norms.' 'If you are too forthright you may not be seen as a suitable candidate for ministerial office.' Politicians appear to be presenting climate change as 'a relatively unthreatening, manageable problem,' and although their position is not supported by science, 'climate change deniers have a solid foothold in mainstream politics.' A form of 'socially organised denial' is operating, where politicians play down the depth and extent of the crisis, so their electorate assume that the crisis cannot therefore be very real.

To effectively address the Climate and Environmental Crises we are going to need deep seated reform to the way our system of government operates. There is very little chance of that, but since the House of Lords is long overdue to complete its reform, maybe we could make a start there?

Wouldn't it be great if the House of Lords were a more democratic institution? But if it were, how could we avoid introducing the short-term mindset that has hitherto prevented effective action on Climate Change?

I have a cunning plan for that....

Edward Gildea, Eco Team Leader

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnAzoDtwCBg>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.iea.org/news/global-co2-emissions-rebounded-to-their-highest-level-in-history-in-2021>

<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Willis, Too Hot to Handle, Bristol University Press 2020



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## What kind of Queen?

Traditional images of monarchy portray power, status, and superiority over other people. In biblical times, monarchs were to be feared. When teaching His disciples about leadership, Jesus said, “The kings of the Gentiles (pagans) lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors.” A benefactor was a conspicuously generous person who acted in a way that made the recipient feel obligated.



All this was in complete contrast to Christ’s own style, which was to act like a servant. This radical stance was adopted by the young Princess Elizabeth, when she promised the British Commonwealth, “I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service ...”. It was just the same when she became Queen in 1952. Queen Elizabeth has consciously and deliberately applied Christ’s teaching to her reign for 70 years. She has outlived scores of leaders, some with ambitions beyond their abilities, and a few with delusions of grandeur. Her ideals have outlasted theirs. Consistent, determined, charming, and single-minded, she has held before her the model of Christ, washing His disciples’ feet.

Those closest to her also speak of the Queen’s sense of humour. It emerged publicly at the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games in London, when she took part in a spoof scene with James Bond, before seemingly parachuting into the Stadium.

This year we celebrate her Majesty’s Platinum Jubilee. Over 50 countries will light beacons on 2nd June to start four days of events: a spectacular pageant, a live concert at Buckingham Palace, Jubilee lunches and street parties across the nation, plus a nationwide bake-off competition to create a new ‘platinum pudding’.

From the northernmost tip of Scotland to the Channel Islands and beyond, 848 public events are planned, plus 1,171 parties or private events.

So popular is Britain’s monarch, that there are calls to perpetuate the occasion with a new public holiday each year. This month we shall sing, ‘God save the Queen’ with more gusto than ever.

The Ven John Barton (Parish Pump)

*Photograph: Jacob King/PA Wire/PA Images.*

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Muniments Room

## Archive Group

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

### June 1927

*A little different this month as there was not really anything to interest you, so I thought you might like these two adverts from this month in 1927 instead.*

### Church Travellers' Club

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Handbook for 1927 now ready.

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**Canon Chris Bishop. Archivist**



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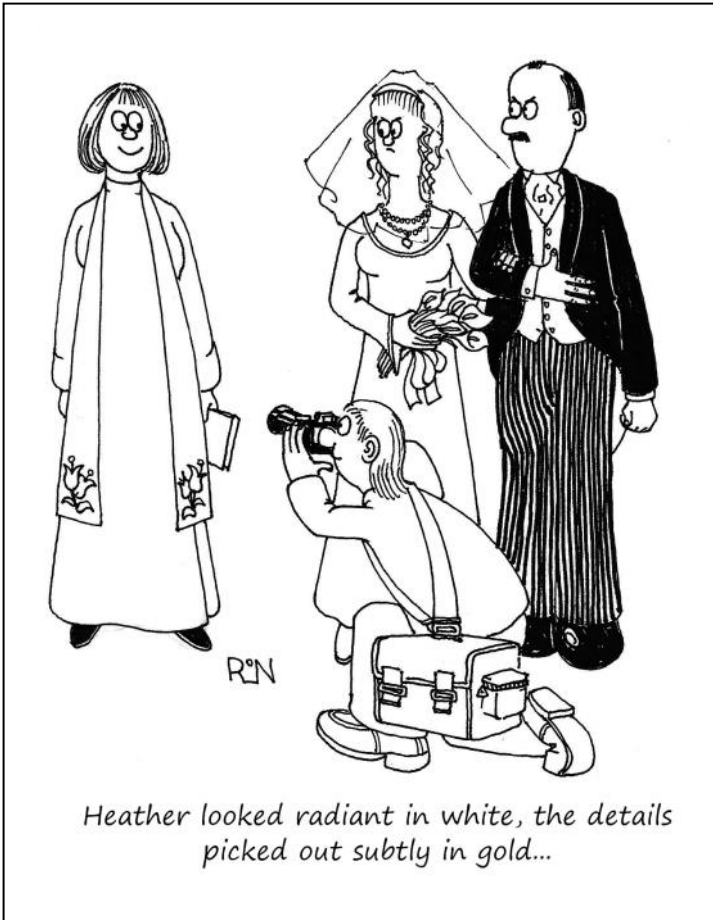
## From the Registers

### *Baptisms*

- 6th March: Willis Jack Macdonald  
20th March: Benedict Louis Chaffey-Ford  
27th March: India Rose Bicknell

### *Weddings*

- 9th April: James Hesketh and Zoe Bull (St Mary's Church)



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## Prayer for the month *provided by the Prayer Team*

Almighty God,  
 whose Son Jesus Christ exchanged  
 the glory of a heavenly throne  
 for the form of a servant,  
 we thank you that you have given Elizabeth our Queen  
 a heart to serve her people,  
 and have kept her devoted in this service  
 beyond all who were before her.  
 Encourage us by her example  
 to serve one another,  
 and to seek the common good,  
 until you call us to reign with Christ  
 in your eternal kingdom.  
 Amen.



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# Calendar for June 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

One service in church each Sunday is streamed on YouTube [Y]: details on the church website.

### Wednesday 1 June

10am Silent Prayer (in the Parish Rooms)  
1.10pm Lunchtime Concert

### Thursday 2 June

1pm Service with Prayers for Wholeness & Healing

### Sunday 5 June Pentecost

8am BCP Holy Communion  
10am Platinum Jubilee Civic Service [Y]

### Wednesday 8 June

1.10pm Lunchtime Concert

### Sunday 12 June Trinity Sunday

8am BCP Holy Communion  
10am Holy Communion [Y]  
6.30pm SMMA Festal Evensong



### Wednesday 15 June

1.10pm Lunchtime Concert

### Thursday 16 June Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion

8pm Corpus Christi Solemn Eucharist

### Sunday 19 June

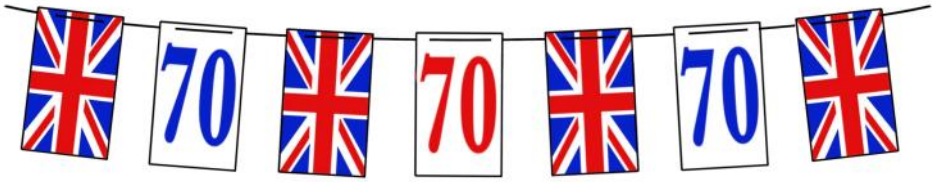
8am BCP Holy Communion [Y]  
10am Family Service  
6.30pm Service with Prayers for Wholeness and Healing

### Wednesday 22 June

1.10pm Lunchtime Concert

### Sunday 26 June

8am BCP Holy Communion  
10am Holy Communion [Y]  
6.30pm Evening Prayer



## 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', Sewards End

### Friday 3 June

10am Platinum Jubilee Coffee in Village Hall

### Sunday 5 June

Platinum Jubilee Afternoon Tea in church garden.

### Sunday 12 June Trinity Sunday

9.30am Holy Communion

### Sunday 26 June

9.30am Morning Praise

## St John's, Little Walden

### Sunday 12 June Trinity Sunday

11.15am Family Service

### Sunday 26 June

11.15am Holy Communion



## Transition Project continued through COVID

The Transition Project was formed in 2009 to offer free support to those seeking employment or career change. The volunteers running this service are collectively able to draw on a very wide range of experience and have continued to work throughout the pandemic. CV production and interview practice are the main requirements but we also assist with email and on-line job search training to promote client self-sufficiency.

Very few people have been seeking help from the Transition Project in the past few months as there are many unfilled jobs available. However, we have been able to help a few and the following is an extract from an email from a recent grateful client.

*“I honestly cannot thank you kind people enough for helping me put together from scratch an upgraded and up to date CV and profile of myself.*

*It is nice to know that there is still compassion and kindness out there, when someone is going through a difficult time in their life and needs a helping hand to guide them on their way, I mean that most sincerely. Once again, thank you so much.”*

Although we are not offering a drop-in service at the moment, due to both the Covid constraints and low client numbers, we do quickly respond to email and telephone enquiries by phone, Zoom or face to face meetings in the Parish Rooms as appropriate. An email to [swtransitionproject@gmail.com](mailto:swtransitionproject@gmail.com) or a call to 0790 1173 763 will reach an Advisor.

The work of the project is supported by St Mary’s Church PCC and we were also pleased to receive a Ward Members’ Initiative Grant of £250 from Councillor Heather Asker. This grant will be used to contribute to the costs of our weekly advert in the Walden Local Weekly. Last year we also received a grant from the Education Services 2010 to support this voluntary work.

The low client numbers means that the existing team is able to meet current demand but we would welcome enquiries from anyone who is able to bring further experience to the team.

Gerald Gardner

*Ed: Good news! The ‘recent grateful client’ referred to in the article has since found work.*



## Walden Community Action for Refugees

I'm sure none of us will be able to forget the images of desperate Afghans trying to flee Kabul airport after the Taliban regained power last year. We were certainly overwhelmed by a feeling of helplessness and frustration as well as a deep sadness particularly for women over there. Although, of course, there is very little we in Saffron Walden can do to turn the situation around in Afghanistan, there is something we can do to help refugees in this country.

The UK government introduced the Community Sponsorship programme to enable community groups to welcome one refugee family into their neighbourhood by sponsoring them not only financially but on a practical level too for a minimum of two years. We set up Walden Community Action for Refugees in order to apply for a family to come to our town.

There are several criteria that we have to fulfill before we are matched with a family including raising £9,000 (so far, we have raised £4,000 through a quiz night, ceilidh, cake sales and corporate charity donations) and undergoing safeguarding training, for example. ***However, the biggest challenge is finding private accommodation in Saffron Walden for a reasonable rent so if you know of any philanthropic landlords out there, please do get in touch!***

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees matches a family to our group and once they land in the UK they are granted indefinite leave to remain and full access to benefits. It is likely they will be from either Syria or Afghanistan.

Interested in helping? Here is what you can do:

- Know any Arabic or Pashtu speakers? Please encourage them to get in touch. We will need several interpreters to help the family particularly in the early days
- Are you a qualified TEFL/ESOL teacher? We have to commit to offering the adults 8 hours of English language tuition a week
- Got a property in Saffron Walden? Please let us know. We wouldn't be asking for it rent-free but a preferential rate means we can support the family with other services eg counselling
- Visit [www.wcar.org.uk](http://www.wcar.org.uk) to make a donation.

Isabelle Page

For more information, please contact Isabelle Page, Project Leader at [info@wcar.org.uk](mailto:info@wcar.org.uk) or check out our Walden Community Action for Refugees Facebook group for regular updates on the project.

## **YOU**inthe**PEW** interviewed by Chris Bishop

### **Pam Jenner**

Pam was born and brought up in Loughton. Her father was a leading member of St John's Church, where she sang in the choir and was also at one point a Sunday School teacher.

After leaving school she got a job as a journalist on the West Essex Gazette, but couldn't wait to leave home and, once she had qualified, went to work on a paper in North London and moved out to share a flat in Highgate with three other girls.

Pam moved to Saffron Walden when her son was a baby. He is now married and she has a grandchild of 15!

When she first moved to the town Pam attended the Baptist Church, at the time when Rev'd Dennis Horwood was the minister. She also attended the Methodist Church and later the Pentecostal New Life Church but eventually returned to her roots in the Church of England and started coming to St Mary's.

Highlights of her time at St Mary's include taking part in the Parish Weekend Away in 2018 with her grandson; devising sketches based on the bible readings for the Family Service a few years ago; and more recently being part of two home groups.

Apart from her church life, the most memorable occasions since moving to Saffron Walden decades ago have been the marriage of her son, the birth of her grandson and being awarded a PhD.

Her work life includes being a senior journalist at the Cambridge Evening News for many years; working on projects in India with young people; helping to run arts conferences in Switzerland; being an associate lecturer in drama at Anglia Ruskin University and currently working as course leader at the School of Journalism, Harlow FE College.

When asked what motto she would have on a family coat of arms she said: 'Failure is the road to success'.



## Belfry News: HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Sunday 6 February 2022 marked the 70th anniversary of HM Queen Elizabeth II's accession. To mark this most historic occasion the bells of St Mary's Church Saffron Walden were rung in celebration. (*a photograph of the ringers who took part is below*). The main Platinum Jubilee celebrations for HM The Queen take place over an extended Bank Holiday from Thursday 2 June to Sunday 5 June and again the bells of St Mary's will ring out.



On Thursday 2 June there will be a tower open morning from 11 am to 1 pm to give the people of Saffron Walden and visitors an opportunity to visit the tower and see ringing in action. On Friday 3 June, starting at 10 am, a full peal on all 12 bells of 'Cambridge Surprise Maximus' will be attempted. For those not familiar with bell ringing, a peal is the ringers' equivalent of a marathon requiring great concentration and stamina and, at St Mary's, takes about 3 hours and 30 minutes to ring due to the weight and number of bells. On Sunday 5 June the bells will be rung both before and immediately after the Civic service of celebration at St Mary's which starts at 10 am.

### Great Ringing Day - Saturday 2 July 2022

An important date in the history of the bells of St Mary's is 16 June 1623, the date of the Thomas Turner bequest and the anniversary which is known as 'Great Ringing Day'. Thomas Turner was a wealthy mercer in the town and also a great benefactor of the poor; he died in 1623 and in his will he left a bequest for the bells to be rung every year on the date of his death, and for payment to the ringers 33s 4d each year. Great Ringing Day takes place this year on Saturday 2 July and the ringers are holding a walk around local parishes and ringing at churches along the way. The route will take in Rickling, Newport, Wendens Ambo, Littlebury and finish at Saffron Walden. Members of the church congregation would be most welcome to join the walk, details of which will be published on the church website.

Stephen Wood



## St Mary's Music News

April was the month of Easter, which naturally meant the majority of the choir, Oli, and Jeremy spent most of Holy Week camped out at the church either rehearsing or singing in the services taking place. Palm Sunday heralded the return not only of Junior and Senior Choirs singing together again, but also processing amid the congregation. The first time in over two years! This hiatus required a brief rehearsal for newer members of the Junior and Senior Choirs to be introduced to the intricacies of crisp corners, a stately walk, and no waving at mum as they pass up and down the nave at the start and end of each service (and a helpful refresher for our long term members too!). The rehearsal clearly paid off as the procession on Palm Sunday went without a hitch. The choir also sang for Choral Evensong on the evening of Palm Sunday, singing the *Morley Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis - Fauxbourdon*, Smith responses and *O Lord, Look Down from Heaven* by Battishill.

We were extremely pleased to be joined by the East Anglia Chamber Orchestra who accompanied the *Mozart Requiem* as part of our Devotional Offering on the evening of Good Friday. As the first time the Junior and Senior Choirs have performed in a major choral event since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was wonderful to be supported by such a rich and vibrant sound. For a number of our Junior Choir this was the first performance of this scale they had ever taken part in, and they all did fantastically! The SATB solos in the requiem were shared between existing members of the choir: Helena Auty, Karin Fischer-Buder and Lizzie Bennet (soprano), Diana Hoy and Ellie Beare (Alto), Steve Cass and Toby Prevost (Tenor), Liam Goddard and Peter De Vile (Bass). In addition to singing the Requiem, the Choir began the performance with a *Kyrie Eleison* written by a Ukrainian composer, Myroslav Skoryk, which they have also been singing in services leading up to Easter, and *Thou Knowest Lord* by Purcell. There was a retiring collection for DEC Ukraine, which raised over £2,300.

The morning service for Easter Day saw both choir and Brass Group reunited in front of the screen singing and playing together, again, a first since the start of the Pandemic. The Brass Group played before the service and accompanied the choir in the Easter Hymns and in a rousing congregational rendition of the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah*. Evensong on Easter Day featured more from the *Messiah* – Handel's *Worthy is the Lamb* ending with the grand *Amen*.



Overall, Holy Week 2022 saw a number of firsts post-pandemic with a growing sense that, while total pre-pandemic normalcy is not quite there, we are well on our way to returning to many of the things we have dearly missed during the last two difficult years. The choir had a well earned rest the week after Easter, though family service on the 24<sup>th</sup> April was supported by a select group of volunteers to give the Junior choir a break. The choir were back rehearsing on the 29<sup>th</sup> April, preparing music for May and beyond.

Ellie Beare

*Ed: see page 32 for the list of Lunchtime Concerts during June.*



## **The Friends visit to Ely Cathedral: 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

The Friends visit to Ely Cathedral was enjoyed by all. We had a tour of the Cathedral which was really informative and interesting, followed by a lovely lunch together in the Almonry.

The group then went their separate ways in the afternoon exploring the town, the market full of local produce, wandering down to the river to check out all the boats moored in the marina and walking through the Cathedral grounds.

We are looking forward to our visit to Bury St Edmunds Cathedral in June and to Lincoln, hopefully in September (watch this space for a date).

Pamela Mugliston, Secretary of the Friends

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## Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks

If there were training classes for older humans run by dogs, I could learn a few new tricks. Firstly, a daily walk, or twice daily. Up and out of that chair!

Notice how a happy dog greets another dog. Each encounter is a fresh delight! They are genuinely pleased to greet each other. A lick, a sniff and on they go, both the better for it.

Pull on the lead, champ at the bit! Life is for living. The world is for exploring. Never mind what you look like, what other people think, just go for it. Except, of course, when curiosity takes over. Each leaf, each lamppost, each blade of grass is worth an inspection, a sniff - even a territorial marker! Stop to smell the lilac and wisteria. Pause to admire those tiny perfections of creation, the daisy. As W. H. Davies says, "What is this life, if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?"

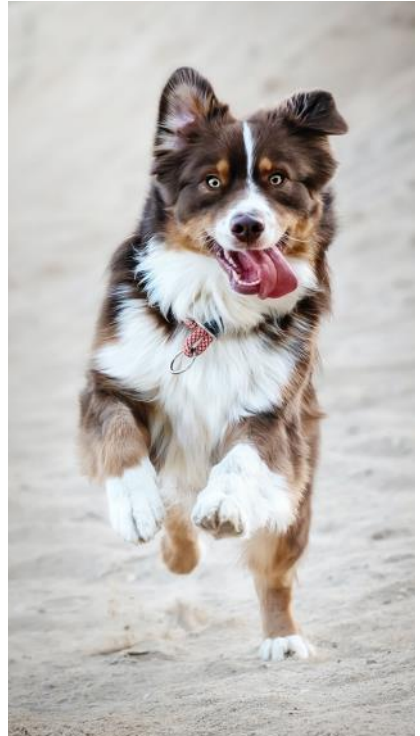
Secondly a dog could teach us how to respond to snubs and growls and bullying - because there are a few dogs with 'behavioural issues'. They move on. Don't bear grudges. Don't take it personally. Instant forgiveness. If only humans could learn to do that whole body canine shake. A dog doesn't usually hold trauma in its body.

Thirdly, a dog knows how to rest, with that enviable sigh of contentment after food, after play, after a cuddle, after a walk. (Though an elderly human like myself might find the lying down with paws in the air a little hard to emulate, let alone to ever get up again!) Dogs might not use the words gratitude, thankfulness, contentment but they show it as they curl up in their basket and close their eyes.

Perhaps most importantly a contented dog can demonstrate the "unconditional positive regard" of a trained therapist.

It's possible to see our dog training as about 'Sit', 'Heel', 'Leave' and a bag of treats. Maybe their training would be 'Look', 'Listen' and 'Love'.

Margaret Collingwood





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## Stort Valley Schools Trust Anniversary Celebration

2020 marked the thirtieth anniversary of Stort Valley Schools Trust and our ministry to schools in Saffron Walden, Bishop's Stortford and the surrounding area. Established in 1990, the Trust was set up to provide Christian input to secondary schools, later developing to include primaries too. Over the years we have had various opportunities to share a Christian message and something of God's love through assemblies, seasonal events, transition workshops, 1:1 mentoring sessions, prayer spaces, by visiting lessons and running lunchtime and after school clubs, to mention just a few.



Currently we provide a Chaplaincy service to SWCHS, Katherine Semar, St Thomas More, St Mary's and Birchwood High School. We work with students on a one to one basis, providing a listening/mentoring service and also run Scripture Union Rooted Hubs which offer a safe space for children to explore themes of identity and belonging and to consider some of life's big questions in a group setting. We've also recently been able to run some Prayer Spaces, where students can take part in interactive stations to explore various prayer themes such as; saying sorry, giving thanks, asking for God's guidance and considering those in need across the world.

On Sunday 12th June, from 2.30pm to 4.30pm we are hosting a celebration event to give thanks for what is now a milestone thirty two years of ministry to schools. We would love for you to join us, whether you are a longstanding supporter, have recently come to learn about the work, or have yet to get involved! The event is being held at St James' Church in Thorley, Bishop's Stortford and everybody is welcome. There will be BBQ food, sweet treats, a bouncy castle, craft activities and more besides so please do save the date!

Our work is made possible thanks to the faithful, prayerful and financial support of individuals and church partners and we are looking forward to bringing everyone together in celebration and thanksgiving at this event. If you would like to find out more about the Celebration or our work in general, you can visit our website – [www.svst.org.uk](http://www.svst.org.uk) or speak to Nicola Williamson.

Nicola Williamson

# Ashdon Open Gardens



Proceeds to All Saints Church, Ashdon  
Tickets - £5 per adult, Children FREE  
Refreshments and lunches available

**Sunday 12th June 2022**  
**11am - 5pm**

*Tickets from 'The Cart' (cash only) in the centre of the village on the bridge - CB10 2ET  
and All Saints Church Rooms in Church Lane*

## St Mary's Church Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts

All the concerts start at 1.10pm and last approximately 40 minutes.  
Refreshments available from 12.30pm.  
Free Admission with retiring collection.

### **Wednesday 1 June**

Duo Kottos  
Cameron Smith Guitar  
Tom Gamble Cello

### **Wednesday 8 June**

Anna Le Hair Piano  
Arwen Newband Violin

### **Wednesday 15 June**

Students from SWCHS

### **Wednesday 22 June**

Krassimira Jeliaskova Violin  
Elizabeth Mucha Piano  
Veronica Henderson Cello

### **Wednesday 29 June**

No recital this week



## St Mary's Book Group have been reading Bill Bryson's *Notes from a Small Island*

The Group met on 22nd April to discuss Bill Bryson's 1995 book, the extremely popular *Notes from a Small Island*. The small island, in this case, being Britain. At the time of his writing it, BB had lived here for many years, and wanted to make this special trip around Britain before returning to the United States. His book is classified as a Travel Book, but it is much more than that, as many details of life in Britain in the 1990s come under scrutiny. It is a light-hearted social commentary, with hilarious episodes, although BB himself is frequently disappointed, especially by the architectural blots on the landscape!

He embarks on his journey, for the most part by public transport, across the length and breadth of mainland Britain, taking us to the major towns/cities/tourist spots in the country – about 50 places in all. His destinations are extremely well-chosen and diverse. Interestingly, it is occasionally the less likely locations that receive his approval. Wigan for example, and his enjoyable time in 'Coronation Street'. And (weather apart) - Port Sunlight! Blackpool, though not particularly praiseworthy, provided some amazing statistics, notably that more chips are eaten there than anywhere else in the world – 40 acres of potatoes a day!

Each destination had its joys and disappointments. Accommodation and places to eat usually falling into the latter, with memorable exceptions in Bradford and Liverpool. Bed and breakfast establishments – well, we won't go there! Hotels, even the better ones, came under fire. One fabulous quote referring to hotel dinners of the time was priceless: "£17.95 for three courses of pompous description and overcooked disappointment"! It was the 90's...

His chance visit to Durham was exceptionally rewarding. He describes the cathedral there as "the best on planet earth". The city itself was also one of his joys. He recommends that everyone visit Durham.

During his encounters, there are many anecdotes on an American's difficulties with British-English vocabulary. The word 'counterpane' was a challenge! One does have to brace oneself occasionally for BB's own language, but it is usually in context, and the result of frustration.

Despite some negative comments, Bill Bryson, a man with a social conscience, clearly has great love for Britain, and huge respect for its people.

Travel is often a bitter-sweet experience, which is certainly captured in this volume. It can be fun and has other benefits. But if I've read Mr Bryson correctly, there is still no place like home.

Our next book will be *Fathomless Riches*, an autobiography by Rev'd Richard Coles.

Aileen Downham

## **The Madeleine at the Nightlight by Georges de La Tour**

Over the years, Mary Magdalen has provided the opportunity for some highly erotic forms of religious art. She features in the Gospels as one of Jesus' followers who was a witness to both his crucifixion and resurrection. In one of the non-canonical gospels, Philip's, she is described as the disciple Jesus loved most and the one Jesus kissed on the mouth. But it was only in 591 AD that she became characterised by Pope Gregory as the repentant prostitute. This gave artists during the High Renaissance and Counter Reformation the chance to depict her in agonising throes of penance, tears in her upturned eyes, while inadvertently letting her blouse slip from one of her breasts, as a titillating reminder of her sinful past.

De La Tour does none of that. The emotion of this painting runs deeply and inwardly. It is lit by the smoking nightlight, which produces powerful contrasts of light and shade. It is a spiritual light, which also leaves two trails of sooty black smoke twisting upwards, as a reminder perhaps of the sinfulness of our mortality and the duality of our nature. The calm, stillness of the composition derives from its structure of vertical and horizontal lines. The vertical elements include the flame itself, her right upper arm, with the shadow running down it, her left forearm, the rope running to the floor at the back of her skirt, and the angle that bisects her two shins and the hem of her dress. Perhaps the strongest vertical line, though, is formed by the shadow cast by her forearm onto her chest.

Horizontality is provided by the massive blocks which form the table, the neckline of her blouse, her thighs, the heavy books and the stout cross that lies on the table. That cross also projects the third dimension directly at us, strongly foreshortened, bringing us into the space. Set against that geometry is glorious delicacy in the handling of the light. It shines brightly on her face and lower forearm, but it also gently penetrates the sleeve to allow the upper part of her left forearm to glow beyond the shade thrown by the cuff. It brilliantly lights the convoluted folds of the sleeve of her right arm, through which shades of fleshly pink can be seen illuminating the shadows. Delicate shades of pink bring all her flesh to soft and inner life.

There are allusions to her past alleged sinfulness. Her blouse reveals one shoulder. She is wearing the red of the harlot rather than the blue of the Virgin Mary, but it is coarse, penitential fabric; hardly a harlot's dress. Her hair is long, which was a frequently regarded sign of female sexuality, and indeed a strand of her hair has come loose, falling as a delicate sweeping curve in the composition, and perhaps hinting at moral looseness. Most worrying, though, is the bound rope on the table: intended for self-flagellation and with worryingly heavy weights attached to the end.



*The Madeleine at the Night Light is a painting by Georges de La Tour painted around 1640-1645. (Public Domain).*

La Tour's Mary does not look at us. She is not playing to the audience or indulging in her emotions. If anything, her face is turned slightly away as she stares into the flame and explores her inner being. The silhouetted curve of her head is in counterpoint to the horizontality and verticality of the composition. It is complemented by the longer and gentler curve of her hair as it sweeps past her temple, cheek and neck.

There is, of course, another spherical shape in the painting: that of the skull she is cradling on her lap. It is a classic 'memento mori' symbol. Remember death. Never lose sight of your mortality and your accountability at the last. The skull gleams in the light of the flame, as a highly polished and maybe even a much-loved skull. The fingers that cradle it follow its curve as if they have no knuckles. She is very comfortable with it.

But we are not done yet. There is one more sphere in the painting. Look at the rope that runs over her belly. How curved it is. Any mother will have noticed far earlier than I did that Mary is pregnant. If you like, you can read it as part of the myth that Dan Brown made use of in his *Da Vinci Code*, that Mary was carrying Jesus' baby when he died. But I think that is a distraction. For me, I read the painting as Mary's profound contemplation on the human condition: life past, life present and life to come. The skull, her own head and her womb, all brilliantly lit by the light of Christ and our own spirituality.

Edward Gildea



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