

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

We Need to Talk About Iran

A call to action in a time of crisis

Teenagers & Social Media

Is a ban the right way forward?

Kings Norton's Imperial Roubles

Russian banknotes & a forgotten military campaign



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PHOTO BY ED VAN DWIJN

Four Iranian Christians 4

We Need to Talk About Iran
Humanity, dignity & freedom

Mark Sandilands 9

Off to Italy, Part 3
Pisa & Perugia

M.G.M. 12

Mystery & Mirth
Modern religious art

Claire Lindow 14

Conquering Clay, Cultivating Roots
Growing root vegetables

The Nostalgist 17

The High Street Lives On...
...in Bromsgrove

Thelma Mitchell 22

Who do you think you are?
Thoughts on Christian identity

Emily Setty 25

Teenagers & Social Media
What do young people really need?

Craig Wilson 28

The Broken Window
A poem

Michael Kennedy 30

Kings Norton's Imperial Roubles
A little-known military campaign

Adam the Gardener 34

Things New and Special
Growing begonias & cosmos

Alf Rogers 36

Looking Back No.9
When horses pulled canal boats

Lent, Holy Week & Easter 38

The Lent Course & Easter Services
Dates, times & places

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Welcome

EDITORIAL

A picture, they say, is worth a thousand words. So what does this month's cover evoke for you? Perhaps Irving Berlin's 1926 hit 'Blue Skies' springs to mind. After weeks of relentless rain, we could all use a dose of that joyful optimism, even if lines like 'Never saw the sun shining so bright; never saw things going so right' are unlikely to grace a 2026 playlist.

Or perhaps, amid recent events in Iran, you might see it as a metaphor for the hope stirring hundreds of thousands within its borders, and those compelled to flee, sustaining their belief in a brighter future. The image beckons us to lift our gaze beyond the mosque's enclosing dome, toward the boundless freedom of the sky above. What has this to do with us? The impassioned article on p. 4 will explain.

Our Spring edition blends dark clouds and sunshine, as befits this season in the Church's year. On one hand, we confront reminders of war's folly, humanity's potential for destruction, and the risks posed by unchecked technology. On the other, we celebrate the joy of creativity, restoration, new growth, foreign travel, and life's simpler pleasures.

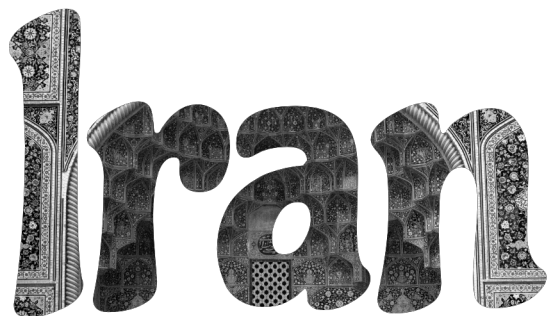
Holy Week and Easter trace a similar path: from despair to hope, from the darkness of betrayal and crucifixion to the blue skies of resurrection and new life. If you'd like to join us on this journey, you'll find the dates of all our services at St Nicolas' Church on p. 38. And if you'd like to contribute to our next edition, due out at the end of April, I'd be delighted to hear from you. New writers are always welcome.



Wishing you a springtime filled with sunshine.

David Ash

We Need to Talk About



Introduction by Pauline Weaver

By the time you read this, the world may have moved into a new phase. We live in strange and changing times. But as I write today, unrest and indiscriminate slaughter continue across Iran. Thousands and thousands of people have been protesting against a brutal regime. Estimates vary as to the number killed but the stories emerging are of horrific scenes of violence and countless deaths. The picture is unclear as the internet has been shut down, which makes contact difficult. Those Iranians living outside the country are struggling to contact family and friends and don't know who is safe.

We are encouraged to be the voice of Iran. So instead of my telling you about what is happening, I have invited some of the Iranians who form part of our church community to tell us in their own words.

Parisa writes:

Many of us grew up hearing the words 'never again', a promise made after unimaginable human

suffering, when the world learned the cost of silence and indifference.

Today, the people of Iran live under a régime that responds to peaceful calls for freedom and dignity with fear, imprisonment, and violence. Families are left grieving and voices are deliberately silenced. Unofficial reports from human rights groups suggest that more than 100,000 people may have lost their lives at the hands of the Iranian authorities in recent years. The full truth is hard to know, because independent reporting is not allowed.

History reminds us that great tragedies do not happen overnight. They take root when injustice is ignored and when the suffering of others feels too distant to matter. Many observers warn that the same patterns we once vowed never to repeat are appearing again.

As a church community, we may feel far removed, but we are not powerless. We can choose to remember, to speak, and to care.

I would encourage members of the congregations at St Nicolas' Church to write or speak to their Member of Parliament and to ask the Government to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard

Corps as a terrorist organisation. This has already been done by our allies in the United States and EU. I would also ask you to keep the people of Iran in your prayers and in their conversations. Above all, please do not stop talking about Iran. Silence has never protected the innocent.

A Prayer

God of justice and compassion, we pray for the people of Iran, for those who mourn, those who are imprisoned, and those who live in fear. Grant courage to the oppressed, wisdom to world leaders, and mercy to all. Help us never to turn away when our voices are needed. Amen.

Mostafa writes:

We ask you to pray for a land soaked in the blood of its own

children. Over 40,000 innocent souls have been taken from us, slaughtered not just by a dictator, but by foreign mercenaries brought in to silence a nation that only wanted freedom. These were not just numbers; they were students, artists, and dreamers.

Thousands more are vanishing into prisons, facing imminent execution without trial. The régime wants to bury their stories, but we refuse to let them be forgotten.

You must know the truth about what we want. We are not just fighting against a régime, we are fighting for a return to our roots. Amidst the tear gas and bullets, the loudest chant heard across Iran is the call for the Crown Prince, Reza Pahlavi. The people are shouting his name because he represents a time when we were respected, prosperous, and at peace with the world.

Do you have a family? Imagine what it would feel like if your children were not safe walking the streets. This is the reality for Iranian mothers today. We are fighting so that the next generation can breathe in a free country under a leadership



that loves them. Your solidarity tells us we are not alone. Please be our voice.

Negin writes:

In addition to everything my friends have already written, I just want to speak from the heart.

Please forgive me for being this direct, but if the world does not stand with the people of Iran today, many will not realise the danger that is quietly growing. This is not a threat limited to Iran. It does not stop at borders. It affects all of us, including countries like the UK.

This is not about religion or personal belief. It is about an extremist ideology that seeks power through control, fear, and force. Wherever it takes hold, it tries to dominate society, silence people, and strip away freedom, equality, and basic human rights.

What you are hearing from Iran today is more than a cry for one nation's freedom. It is a warning. It is a call to the world. When Iranians speak up, we are not only fighting for ourselves, we are standing up for values that belong to

everyone: freedom, dignity, and the right to live without oppression.

If the world does not stand with the people of Iran, a serious danger is waiting, not just for us, but for everyone. This is something we Iranians understand deeply, because we live with it every single day. That is why today we are raising our voices as loudly as we can.

I'm sharing this to explain why this moment matters so deeply. Right now, people all over the world, anyone who truly believes in basic human rights, must become the voice of the Iranian people.

Our innocent people have been killed. Even now, they are being executed. Protesters who were injured were shot again in hospitals, finished off simply for being there. This created so much fear that many wounded people stayed at home with bullets still in their bodies, terrified of going to hospital. Doctors who helped these injured protesters were arrested and today, some of them are facing the risk of execution.

Iranians are still living under constant pressure and threats. People are repeatedly interrogated and intimidated. Even those inside Iran who post a simple story on social media, anything that shows opposition to the regime, are quickly

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arrested, forced into confessions, and then executed.

Today, the shout coming from Iranians is one voice. Across all political views, beliefs, and religions, the demand is the same: freedom. And change. People are calling for régime change. They shout the name of Reza Pahlavi (*photo, right*) because they see him as the only true representative of the people, someone they want to return to lead a transition period and to help Iran move away from the criminal regime of the Islamic Republic.

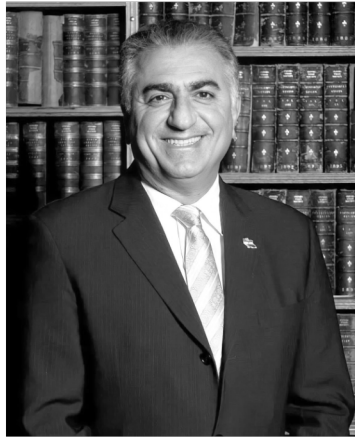
This is why silence is not an option. This is not just Iran's fight anymore. This is about humanity, dignity, and the right to live without fear.

Hani writes:

Following the 1979 Revolution and the rise of an Islamic government, it did not take long for the Iranian people to recognise the régime's leanings toward dictatorship, which ignited the first civil movements.

For 47 years, Iranians have repeatedly striven to preserve their fundamental citizenship rights, peaceful efforts that were met with the most extreme forms of violence and suppression by the ruling state.

As the world witnessed the bravery of the people during the 'Woman, Life, Freedom'



◀CROWN
PRINCE REZA
PAHLAVI

revolution, despite the massive scale of the suppression with which it was met, the people returned to the streets three years later. They rose up not for economic issues or livelihoods, but to liberate themselves from a religious dictatorship.

In January 2026 (Dey 1404), the people took to the streets in response to the call of Prince Reza Pahlavi. Millions of Iranians joined the protests, not only in major cities but also in significant numbers across small towns. Protesters of all political persuasions answered Prince Reza Pahlavi's call, believing he could serve as a leader for the transition from this bloodthirsty religious régime.

In its first move, the government cut communication lines to prevent the transmission of images showing the millions-strong presence of Iranians. In the darkness of the internet blackout and the absence of free

media, the Islamic Republic's killing machine could more easily carry out its massacre. Thousands upon thousands of Iranians were killed by the regime with live ammunition.

Yet, this was not the end of the régime's cruelty. According to evidence and statements from medical staff, government agents prevented the treatment and resuscitation of the wounded. There are dozens of images of the deceased showing that even while they were in the process of receiving medical treatment, agents shot them in the head.

In the next step, the government began arresting doctors and nurses who had assisted the injured, whether publicly or in secret. Currently, based on documented evidence, several members of the medical staff are

in detention. There is no transparent information regarding those arrested in the recent revolution, as no transparency exists within the corrupt system of the Islamic Republic. Only long lists of those executed are released from time to time.

If Iranian society is currently making a rightful plea for help to the international community, it is for one reason only: both we and the world know that this level of evil and cruelty is not the Islamic Republic's final point. The Islamic Republic is capable of massacring millions, people who go to war against a foe armed to the teeth with nothing but their bare hands and their voices.

As has been proven to the world time and again, Iran's wealth, which belongs to the Iranian people, is being spent on funding and arming the Islamic Republic's proxy forces, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and Al-Hashd al-Shaabi. Iranians believe that the removal of the Islamic Republic will ultimately lead to fewer conflicts and may even resolve the Palestinian issue in the region.

Ultimately, it can be said that this is a historical turning point for the salvation of humanity.

**ACCORDING TO
EVIDENCE
AND STATEMENTS
FROM MEDICAL
STAFF,
GOVERNMENT
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PREVENTED THE
TREATMENT AND
RESUSCITATION
OF THE
WOUNDED.**

Off To Italy : Part 3

Mark Sandilands,
Church Warden at
St Nicolas',
continues the story of
his 70th birthday
road trip across
Europe

Having spent a restful night in our very small basement apartment in Parma during which Mary enjoyed the sofa bed (we pulled rank and nicked the one proper bed!) we were up bright and early to pack the car and set off for Pisa. We had planned a very long day as we were visiting Pisa on the way to our overnight stop in Pescara, a total journey of 427 kilometres (265 miles to us Brits).

Fortunately, most of this was to be on Italy's eclectic 'autostrade' enlivened by the average Italian motorist's shall we say 'forthright' style of driving. Speed limits can be difficult to be certain of, mainly because it appears to

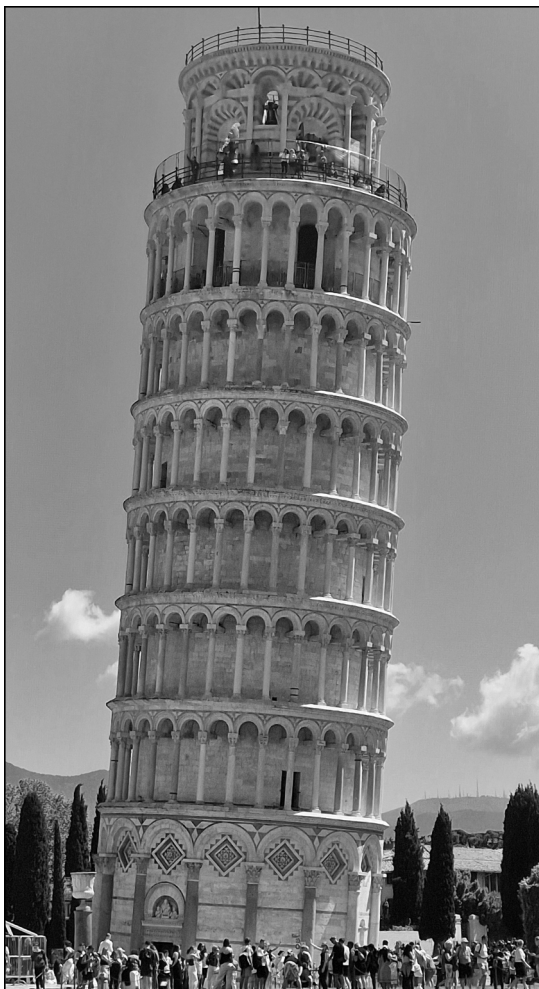


PHOTO BY MARK SANDILANDS

be the Italian custom to post the speed limits for the next exit on the main motorway before you get to the junction, or that is what Sue and I had concluded. Otherwise, you were

constantly yo-yoing between 50 and 100 kph, which was as tiresome as it was dangerous. The other confusing habit is that people joining (or indeed leaving) a road put their indicators on and just leave them switched on. That is just lazy, not to mention annoying to the very well-disciplined Brits who are enjoying the frequently astonishing scenery and bright sunny weather.

Just before midday we arrived at Pisa. Now, having done much research before leaving home, I realised that, as in very many 'tourist' destinations in Italy, theft from tourists' parked cars is very common indeed. So parking on the street is not only challenging but risky and leaving absolutely anything visible in a parked car is very much tempting fate.

I had picked out a car park very near to the entrance to the cathedral grounds where the leaning tower is situated. Oh joy! We managed to get in to the car park AND find an empty space. Huzzah! Taking care that none of our belongings were visible, we locked the car and set off.

Finding the site was not at all difficult for obvious reasons (well, really just the Leaning Tower itself) and, on the square outside, there

was an open market selling all of the usual tourist stuff. What attracted us were several stalls selling hats. Since it was such a hot, sunny day they were very much needed. Even I realised that it would not take too long for my head to get burnt under that sun. I chose a light straw fedora and very dashing it is too.

Paying our €11 entry fee, we entered the 'Piazza del Duomo' or Square of Miracles that is home to the Cathedral, the Tower, the Baptistry and the Camposanto. Although we were visiting very early in the season it was rather busy with many students from local schools on day trips. We were approached by several hawkers trying to sell us stuff, but they did not get very far. Since they had obviously not heard of the Sandilands family before, they did try very hard.

Mary insisted on having her photograph taken in the classic pose of supporting the Leaning Tower. Sadly, my photographic efforts (*left*) were not brilliant.

Having visited the main attractions, we set off back to the car which, to my surprise, had not been touched; and so we set off on the final leg of our day's journey down to Perugia.

Perugia is located in the middle of the country, half



PHOTO BY MARK SANDLANDS

way to Naples and, from my reading, is an historic city which is the capital of the district of Umbria. There is much to see there but, unfortunately, we did not have time to do any exploring as we were only stopping for one night on our way to the Naples area. Our apartment turned out to be in a lovely nineteen-sixties block towards the edge of town looking down into the valley. Finding somewhere to eat was more than a little challenging but we managed it in the end, although we did have to do more walking than expected.

After a light breakfast provided by our host, we set off the following morning to fill the car with diesel for the day. As was to become normal during our travels, Google was our friend and took us to the cheapest fuel station for miles around. This was completely unmanned. I have never seen anything like it in the UK. After poking at the pump I found that it could give instructions in English and so I filled the car up using my debit card Euro Holiday account. Getting a receipt was the problem as the pump did not automatically print one out when I had finished! (I later found out that you have to put your debit card back into the machine before it will print the receipt. Oh well!)

And so we set off for Naples, about which more next time.



Letter to the Editor

I am thoroughly enjoying Mark Sandilands' accounts of his, Sue's and Mary's travels through Italy. And I am also mighty relieved that my recommendation, to make sure they visited the Cathedral (Duomo) of Parma, went so well! They seemed to have loved it as much as I do.

Parma Cathedral (*above*) is a tiny gem, by cathedral standards, which we always visited whenever we were in the area. The city, an old university town, is also compact and a pleasure to visit. There are pedestrianised streets to wander round and shops selling locally-produced specialities to buy, including Parma ham and cheese.

Looking forward to more travels through Italy in an Alfa Romeo!

Thelma Mitchell

Mystery & Mirth

A Look at Modern Religious Art

If you've ever wandered into a church, synagogue, or temple in recent years and wondered whether the modern art on display was a profound spiritual metaphor or simply the result of an overenthusiastic Sunday school craft session, you're not alone. Modern religious art, it turns out, is rather like Marmite: you either love it or you need a cup of tea to recover from the shock. But behind the bewildering installations and abstract murals, there's a curious blend of reverence, rebellion, and the occasional dash of humour that makes modern sacred art the most entertaining genre since gilded cherubs got their wings.

Gone are the days when religious art was all about haloed saints gazing soulfully into the ether, or angels balancing precariously atop fluffy clouds. Today, religious art has swapped the gold leaf for neon lights, and the serene Madonnas for, well, a Madonna who might just be wearing Doc Martens. The shift began in the 20th century, when artists like

Marc Chagall fused Jewish folklore with dazzling colours, creating stained glass windows that looked more like psychedelic dream sequences than traditional biblical tales.

Fast forward to the present and you'll find installations that would make your grandmother clutch her pearls. Take Damien Hirst's 'The Anatomy of an Angel', for example: a marble cherub, sliced open to reveal its innards, as if heaven has adopted NHS transparency. It's a piece that asks the big questions, such as, 'Do angels have pancreases?' and 'Should we be worried?'

Let's consider the 'Light of the World' at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London. It's a modern sculpture that's less about glowing halos and more about LED bulbs artfully arranged to look like a cosmic disco ball. Worshippers can reflect on the meaning of light, or simply wonder if the church is moonlighting as a nightclub.



"MGM" writes on cinema, theatre and the arts.



Another gem is Mark Wallinger's 'Ecce Homo', a statue of Christ perched atop Trafalgar Square's Fourth Plinth, barefoot and crowned with barbed wire. Rather than being carved from marble and placed high above the altar, this Jesus stands at ground level, eye-to-eye with pigeons and tourists alike. The message? Holiness is now accessible, though you might want to mind the pigeons.

If you're in Liverpool, don't miss Tracey Emin's 'For You' in the Anglican Cathedral, a neon sign declaring, 'I felt you and I knew you loved me.' Its pink glow bathes the stone pillars, offering worshippers a choice: reflect on divine love, or contemplate whether God is now communicating in subtle nightclub signage.

The humour in modern religious art comes not just from the unexpected materials, but from the unexpected messages. The 'Holy Rollers' by Banksy, for instance, features angels on skateboards, suggesting that heaven has finally embraced extreme sports.

And then there's the infamous 'Jesus Toast', a slice of bread burned with the face of Christ, which has inspired both reverence and a booming trade in novelty kitchen appliances.

Even the Vatican, previously known for its solemnity, has dabbled in contemporary art

exhibitions. In 2019, it hosted a show featuring works by contemporary artists, including a sculpture resembling an exploding Bible. The message was undoubtedly profound, but many visitors left wondering whether it was a metaphor for divine revelation or simply an ill-fated attempt at modern pyrotechnics.

Modern religious art is not only a reflection of changing spiritual landscapes, but also of the human desire to connect, question, and occasionally laugh at the mysteries of faith. Whether you're moved by neon-lit scripture or baffled by angelic anatomy, there's something for everyone in the sacred galleries of the 21st century. So next time you encounter a holy installation that looks suspiciously like a pile of bricks, remember: it might just be the new burning bush, waiting for someone to notice.

Modern religious art, it turns out, is rather like Marmite: you either love it or you need a cup of tea to recover from the shock.

CONQUERING CLAY

& Cultivating Roots

Soil is the womb for plants, fungi and habitat for many animals, insects and more besides, so full of nutrients and minerals. If you nurture it, you will be rewarded. I am blessed with clay soil as is much of South Birmingham. It is full of minerals but, because these particles are small, it has a tendency to bake in the sun or to hold too much water. People buy clay soil in some parts of the world!

Last summer my soil baked, but a lot of plants made a comeback in the autumn when many experienced a second spring. I had a second flush of flowers on my clematis. This winter we had snow, ice and a lot of rain.

Spring is an excellent season during which to care for your soil with mulch. You don't need anything expensive. Even the clippings of plants that are pruned or cut back; even spent plants. I have perennials that have died back over winter leaving dying brown leaves on the ground. This is wonderful material for mulch. I mulch whenever the soil needs it.

In summer, mulch locks in any precious moisture that the soil has and, if it is uncovered after a few weeks, the soil looks rich, healthy and slightly moist. If you see a few worms, you know that it's working.

In autumn, when beds have been cleared of vegetables or plants have completed their cycle, I mulch. If you have plants in a bed which you want to protect and feed in this way, you can mulch around them, leaving them in place. I am sure they will thank you for the fresh nutrients.



Claire is a keen kitchen gardener, ably assisted by her son Charles.

In the spring, I place a good 2 inches (3 cm) of mulch on the surface. Sometimes that is all I do and sometimes I add topsoil.

As for roots, in the past I've found it difficult to succeed in growing them in clay soil as it compacts easily. Some root vegetables like clay soil such as the brassica family (e.g. turnips) and salsify. The other root vegetables which I tried to grow would produce beautiful healthy leaves but nothing below the surface.

Last year, I drew inspiration from the no-dig movement. What if I put a few inches of top soil on the surface? I chose top soil for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it is half the price of multi purpose compost. Roots like the soil to be soft rather than heavy.

I bought about 10 bags of top soil to get the right depth in my raised bed. I imagined the depth of a good sized carrot.

My son Charles helped me to sow the seeds and was watering them regularly for me. I was pleased that he sowed some radishes and turnips as these come up quickly, which makes them rewarding for a child's patience. Everything is so immediate now with online orders arriving the next day, I don't think children are used to waiting for anything. Growing teaches patience. Charles loves to help me with the watering and was so excited to see his seedlings emerging.



The first successes were the Chinese radishes, which had very pleasing fat and long roots and tasted wonderful in a stew (I didn't stew too long so as to keep some firmness in the roots).



Other successes were the turnips and beetroots, which had much fuller roots. The carrots actually germinated! I initially thought that the slugs were taking my seedlings, but now I think that they didn't germinate in the clay.

The roots I sowed in the bed were: salsify, carrots, radishes (red radish, mooli and chinese radish), celeriac, beetroot, turnips and parsley root. Parsley root is delicious and the leaves make a wonderful salad or pesto. You can eat and cook it in all the same ways as a carrot: add it to stews, dehydrate it for crisps, salad, fermenting and many other ways besides.

Recipe: Sweet and Sour Roots and Chard

Ingredients

Roots cut into stick shapes (e.g. carrot, parsnips, parsley root, salsify, beetroot), chard leaves and stalks, a thumb of ginger grated, miso.

1. Fry your roots and chopped chard stalks on a high heat in fat/oil of your choice (I used butter), keep them moving so they don't burn but so that they brown and char a little. It should take no more than 5-10 minutes. Then set aside in a bowl.
2. Put the chard and ginger in the frying pan on a high heat until wilted then remove and in a different bowl coat the chard in miso. 2-5 minutes.
3. Mix a little honey or maple syrup into the roots.

This will give you a very quick sweet and sour dish made from ingredients that are easily grown in the home garden. If your chard is of a variety of colours like rainbow chard it will be adding a little diversity to your plate. The miso is just a suggestion, other sour sauces would work just as well. Perhaps some soy sauce or lemon juice would work.

Enjoy watching your garden wake up in the spring. It really is my favourite season. And don't forget to start sowing your seeds and chitting your potatoes.

The High Street Lives On in Bromsgrove

It has to be said that most museums, however worthy their subject, can be a bit of a grind to visit. You have to have an awful lot of imagination to visualise the displayed items in their original context, and the

general ambience can be, for want of a better word, rather staid.

This is very far from the case with a small but exhilarating museum I've just discovered in Bromsgrove. In fact, I've already begun to consider it as the museum Kings Norton never had. Of course we have our historic buildings, each of which is truly spectacular, but with the closure of the Tudor Merchant's House that became St Nicolas' Place, we don't have anything much that captures in one location the essence of our heritage.

Bromsgrove and Kings Norton are, of course, very closely linked, having for centuries been part of the ancient diocese of Worcester: both were significant areas for farming and then manufacturing, but for a hundred years and more they have developed in distinctly different ways. Now, it has to be said, while Bromsgrove retains a distinct identity as a historic town, our own history has progressively been obscured since we became just another suburb of Birmingham.

The Dennis Norton Collection is a museum in the centre of Bromsgrove which is in many ways unique. It's the product of the untiring efforts of one man over nearly a century (he's



PHOTO BY THE NOSTALGIST



now 94) to collect items which represent not only the history of his town, but to show aspects of daily life generally as it once was. It's achieved in particular by a spectacular display of shop fronts, all packed with items going back to the days when there was no online buying and no supermarkets, but where each shop had its own identity and specialisation.

Although the Norton Museum, in the Birmingham Road as you reach the centre of the town, looks small and unlikely to have much to keep you, in fact when you go in it's like Dr Who's Tardis: it seems to go on for ever. The shop window technique works on both floors:



stand in certain places and it's literally like being on a traditional High Street.

On the ground floor is a remarkable range of exhibits, covering Bromsgrove's long manufacturing history: nail making and metal forging (featuring items representing Garrington's, the nationally known drop forging company). There's motorcycle manufacture, with two examples of Banshee motorbikes, (made in the town from 1932), one with a wickerwork sidecar, in a garage setting that includes dozens of examples of automotive paraphernalia; the other in the museum's front window with a sidecar in the shape of a boot! There's much more from former local industries, once nationally successful and now just a memory, including button making, glassware and salt refining. Perhaps most significant of all, upstairs there's a fascinating display about the once world-famous Bromsgrove Guild, a group of skilled craftsmen who gathered in the town around 1900 and who, amongst other achievements, made the gates of Buckingham Palace and the famous Liver Birds that still dominate the Liverpool skyline. Alongside are displays about the town's social history and development, including the medieval Court Leet which is still active; its place in the

development of Chartism in the early 1800s; and even a history of Town Crying.

It's also upstairs that you'll find that truly involving High Street area, shops selling food, clothing & haberdashery, toys and games, music, newsagents, footwear, books, tobacco, photography and so on, in a way which wraps around you and bathes you in happy nostalgia. The content of these displays is just right for people aged 60 plus, who will remember seeing many of the items as children, but is also fascinating for younger ones to see what their parents and grandparents were buying in the decades before, during and after the Second World War. The museum calls it 'period merchandise'.

You can look at the rather austere fashions of the period in a gents' outfitters and a drapery shop; see a phonograph store in the era of the 78 rpm shellac record; recall toys from the time of early Meccano and Hornby (anyone remember Mamod Steam Engines?); see the magazines and newspapers people were reading from the 1930s onwards, including Needlework, Wireless Magazine, Health & Efficiency and the Boy's Own Paper; see displays of shoes, cameras and related gear, jewellery and



silverware, and wirelasses (including crystal sets). Don't miss the chemist's shop, selling nasal atomisers, kidney and bladder pills, cough mixture, coal tar soap, tins of ointment and 'nutritional supplements' such as malt extract. Look at the tobacconist's, with so many cigarette brands that seemed exotic and stylish when we were young, like Balkan Sobranie, Passing Cloud and State Express 555.

All this is down to one man. Dennis Norton BEM is still available to give talks, and his is a unique story. His unrelenting passion for collecting items from the area goes back into the 1940s when he started taking things back to his house in Upton Warren. Then he took over a derelict residence in the centre of Bromsgrove from the mid 1970s and progressively filled up the space there. Ultimately he moved his collection into the building's former coach house, where it lives now. Apparently there are thousands more objects which he has no room to display.

It's open from Friday to Sunday from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. Entry is £5, free for children under 16, for whom there is a range of activities. Though it's a hidden gem, it's very prominent, at 26 Birmingham Road, as you drive through the town, just after Lidl and immediately opposite Aldi, adjacent to the Davenal House Medical Centre (Dennis' former property). The museum's literature suggests you allow up to two hours for your visit.

YOUR PARISH CHURCH

If you cannot find what you are looking for here, you will probably find it on the Parish Website (www.kingsnorton.org.uk). Alternatively, please ask questions at the Parish Office, which is open between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm, Monday to Thursday.

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Parish Lay* MinisterPauline Weaver
Honorary Assistant Priest The Revd Jayne Crooks
Lay* Readers (Licensed Lay Ministers) David Ash, Cate Bennett, Fay Fearon,
..... Sylvia Fox, Ruth Howman, Dorothea Matsveru, Parisa Pordelkhaki
Lay* Preacher Steve Wright
Music Minister..... Sylvia Fox
Pastoral Care Team Coordinator The Revd Jayne Crooks
Pastoral Care Advisor Susan Farrell

THE CHURCH WARDENS

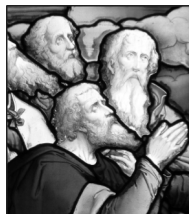
St. Nicolas' Church Annette Dickens, Mark Sandilands
Hawkesley Church Jim Clarke

OTHER CONTACTS

Parish Administrator..... Cate Bennett
Treasurer David Badger
Verger and Groundskeeper Shane Williams
Safeguarding Coordinator Annette Dickens
Regular Giving The Revd Jayne Crooks
Flower Arranging Alison Blumer

*(*Lay = not ordained as a priest)*

We are a Church of England Parish serving all in Kings Norton through St Nicolas' Parish Church, and, in partnership with the Methodist Church, through Hawkesley Church, meeting in the Primary Academy.



We believe that the church in Kings Norton exists to be a worshipping, transforming partnership in Christ, to live out God's radical hospitality for all and to be equipped for work in God's world

1 st Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) - Said
10.30 am	Holy Communion with Choir
6.00 pm	Taizé Prayer

2 nd Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Sung Matins (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Morning Praise for All Ages
6.00 pm	Holy Communion with Anointing & Prayer for Healing

3 rd Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) - Said
10.30 am	Holy Communion with Choir
6.00 pm	Compline

4 th Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Sung Matins (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Morning Praise for All Ages
6.00 pm	Holy Communion

5 th Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Morning Prayer (Book of Common Prayer) - Said
10.30 am	Holy Communion with Hawkesley Church & Choir
6.00 pm	Celtic Worship

All services are held at St Nicolas' Church. For further details, see the weekly newsletter on the Parish Website at www.kingsnorton.org.uk

Who do you think you are?

We are in mid-Lent, with Easter on the near horizon. Longer, brighter days, Spring flowers in abundance, especially swathes of daffodils. A. A. Milne, the author of *Winnie the Pooh*, wrote much more widely, including a body of poetry. One charming verse, which he wrote for children and published in 1924, is 'Daffodowndilly'. The daffodil is presented as a girl in a sun-yellow bonnet and green gown, celebrating the end of winter.

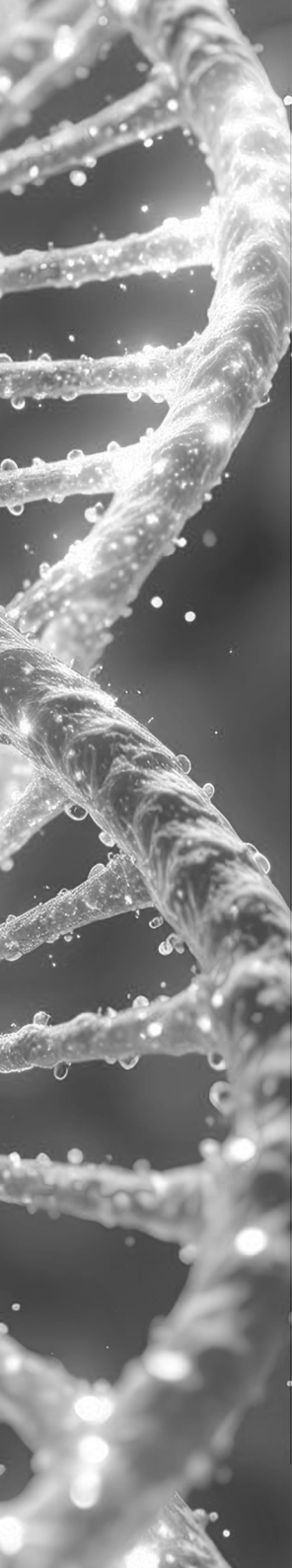
*She wore her yellow sun-bonnet,
She wore her greenest gown;
She turned to the south wind
And curtsied up and down.
She turned to the sunlight
And shook her yellow head,
and whispered to her neighbour
'Winter is dead.'*



THELMA MITCHELL
WAS FORMERLY LEAD
CHAPLAIN AT
BOURNVILLE
COLLEGE.

In the dying days of Winter, the festival of Easter is, for Christians, an occasion of great rejoicing. We celebrate the rising of our Lord and Saviour Jesus from the dead and the promise of new life for everyone. But it follows forty days of Lent, a time to contemplate who we believe Jesus to be.

We all long to know who we are. Some delve into their ancestry to try and make sense of it. The media capitalise on this conundrum. Popular programmes such as 'Who Do You Think You Are?' appeal to this part of our human psyche which tries to understand just who we really are. I am always astounded to see the family resemblance when someone on a television programme produces an old photograph of a great-great grandparent!



A former colleague of mine was very interested in the movement of tribes across Europe from about 300 -700 AD, and in attempts to work out who we are from who our ancestors were. He made it immensely interesting, unlike my primary school teacher. She talked of Picts and Scots and Jutes and Huns. It was all meaningless to me then because there was no sense of the people involved. Her teaching ignored the human element, the impact on landscapes and politics and trade and communities. My colleague deduced that, with my colouring, I was of Saxon descent. The Angles took the Saxons, enslaved as cow herders, to Ireland, then to England. That's ironic, as I am terrified of cows! Generally speaking, those with fairer skin are of middle-European origin. Fair hair and blue eyes imply Danish ancestry, for instance.

The Anglo-Saxons profoundly shaped England's language, laws and culture which persisted even after the Viking and Norman invasions.

But does any of this really tell us where we really come from or where we're heading? We can rest assured that we are all unique, even twins who share so much DNA. St. Augustine of Hippo in the fourth century said that we often search for our identity in our past, to make sense of our present. What Christians can say with certainty is that, as part of God's family, we are loved, we were created for a purpose and that we have a place in his Kingdom.

In the nineteen eighties we were blessed to attend a wonderful performance of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's great musical, 'Jesus Christ, Superstar' in the grounds of Furness Abbey, on the outskirts of Barrow-in-Furness. (A few years later I went to work next door, with a good view across the ruins from a top window.) The production of this rock opera, which was first performed in 1971 on Broadway, was very well organised, with nearby parking and a bus transfer. The action took place mainly on a platform stretched across some of the ruined walls.

The theme of the musical is loosely based on what we call the Passion, the final days of Jesus' life leading up to his Crucifixion. The questions are posed throughout: 'Jesus Christ, who are you and what have you sacrificed? Do you think you're what they say you are?' In the final act, Judas returns in spirit form to question why Jesus, who is awaiting

crucifixion, arrived in the manner and time that he did, and wonders whether it was part of a divine plan.

Might I suggest an exercise for the second part of Lent? Try reading, from beginning to end, the Gospel of Mark as if you have never read it before. Throughout his Gospel Mark asks the question, 'Is Jesus the Messiah?' Does he come to a conclusion, or does he leave it to you, the reader, to decide? Unlike the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, which set out in their opening verses their intended conclusions about Jesus' identity, supported by proof, the Gospel of Mark uses reflections on the life of Jesus to tease out the question, 'Is Jesus the promised Messiah?'

I think Christians would answer in the words of the great hymn 'All Hail the power of Jesus Name'. It was written by Edward Perronet in the 1770's. He was a tireless preacher of the Gospel until his dying moments, and had been influenced by both Charles and John Wesley. The old-fashioned language of the hymn reflects its era; but the words are timeless and universal, reminding us that Jesus IS the Messiah, long promised by the Hebrew prophets, born in poverty and risen in glory, Lord of all.

*All Hail the power of Jesus' name
Let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem
and crown Him, crown Him, crown him Lord of all.*

*Crown Him, ye martyrs of your God,
who from His altar call;
praise him whose way of pain ye trod
and crown Him, crown Him, crown him Lord of all.*

*Let every tribe and every tongue
to Him their hearts enthral,
Lift high the universal song
and crown Him, crown Him, crown him Lord of all.*

As swathes of golden daffodils in full bloom lift our hearts and spirits, may you have a glorious Easter in the joy of the Resurrection.

Teenagers & Social Media

The UK government has launched a consultation on introducing an Australian-style ban on social media for under-16s. The proposal is framed as a bold response to rising concerns about young people's mental health, online abuse and exposure to harmful content.

At first glance, a ban sounds straightforward: keep children away from platforms that can cause harm. But as someone who has spent years researching young people's digital lives, relationships and wellbeing, I believe that a blanket ban risks misunderstanding both the problem and the solution.

My research with teenagers consistently shows that the harms young people experience online are not separate from the harms they



PHOTO BY STEINAR ENGELAND

face offline. Bullying, racism, sexism, coercion, exclusion and body image pressures all pre-date social media. Digital platforms can amplify these problems, but they do not create them from scratch.

In focus groups I conducted with teenagers and research I carried out with young people during the pandemic, participants described online life as an extension of school corridors, peer groups and local communities. This is what scholars increasingly call a 'post-digital' reality. Young people do not experience online and offline as separate worlds, but as a single, interconnected continuum. If harms are socially rooted, then technical restrictions alone are unlikely to solve

them. A ban treats social media as the problem, rather than asking deeper questions about why certain behaviours – harassment, shaming, misogyny, exploitation – occur in the first place.

We also need to ask why digital spaces have become the default arenas for meeting so many needs in the first place. Over years of funding cuts to youth services, reduced community spaces and intensified academic pressures, online platforms have filled a gap. They did not simply colonise young people's lives. They were invited into a vacuum created by adult policy decisions. A ban addresses the symptom of these developments while leaving the wider contexts untouched.

There is also a practical problem. Age-based bans are difficult to enforce. Young people are resourceful digital citizens. Many will find workarounds, migrate to unregulated platforms or simply lie about their age. This risks driving online activity underground, away from any oversight of parents, teachers and support services. Instead of engaging with young people where they already are, a ban could make it harder to identify those who are struggling and need help.



PHOTO BY VITALY GARIEV

A recent joint statement signed by more than 40 children's charities, digital safety experts and bereaved families warns of the danger that blanket prohibitions may isolate vulnerable young people from peer support networks and crisis resources.

What young people say they need

Many young people are critical of social media. In my research on online harms and influencer culture, young people frequently describe feeling exhausted by comparison culture, constant notifications and the pressure to be 'always on'. They often say they want more time offline and more meaningful face-to-face connection. Teens want more authentic experiences and to be able to talk to adults about social media.

This ambivalence shows that young people are not passive victims of technology but can identify problems and articulate the kind of digital lives they want. They ask for better education, more honest conversations and greater adult understanding. They want to learn how to set boundaries, recognise coercion and algorithmic manipulation, and manage conflict. Above all, they want to be taken seriously as partners in solving the problems they face.

A blanket ban treats young people as a single homogeneous group, ignoring the diversity of their experiences, needs and circumstances. It assumes that what is protective for one young person will be protective for all, rather than recognising that risks and benefits are shaped by identity, relationships, resources and context.

What parents are really worried about

Parents' perspectives add another important layer. In research which colleagues and I have carried out with families, many parents express deep ambivalence about social media. They worry about online harms and often voice a nostalgic desire to return to a pre-internet era of childhood. Yet this nostalgia is rarely about technology alone. It is more often an expression of feeling out of control as parents, in the face of powerful tech companies, complex digital cultures and broader social changes they perceive to be reshaping their children's lives.

Parents describe feeling torn between wanting to protect their children, while recognising that digital communication is central to modern friendship and learning. They fear both the risks of their children being online and the risks of exclusion from being offline. In this context, a ban can feel like an attractive proposition. It promises to restore a sense of order and authority. But it risks misdiagnosing the problem. What parents are asking for is not simply prohibition but more support to navigate these tensions, including clearer regulation of platforms.

The illusion of simple fixes

The appeal of a ban lies in its simplicity. But complex social

problems rarely yield to simple technological solutions. Real progress will be slower and less headline-grabbing. It involves investing in high-quality relationships and sex education that reflects young people's digital realities, and supporting parents in having informed conversations. It means regulating platform design to reduce exploitation and harassment, and holding social media companies more accountable. And it requires rebuilding the offline services and spaces that give young people genuine alternatives.

Social media are not an external danger that young people occasionally visit. They are woven into their everyday social worlds. By cutting young people off from the spaces through which they meet real personal, interpersonal and social needs, a ban risks leaving them unmoored.

A generation growing up in a networked world needs guidance, not exclusion from the spaces where their lives unfold. Policy must start from how young people actually live, not from adult fears about technology. If we want young people to be safer online, the answer is not to ban their digital lives, but to help them navigate them.

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Emily Setty is the Associate Professor in Criminology at the University of Surrey

The Broken Window

You may remember that, in March 2024, St Nicolas' Church suffered a break-in. To gain entrance to the building the thief, later described by the local press as a 'notorious [and] prolific burglar', smashed the Nicodemus Window on the North side of the chancel and climbed in through the hole. He then ransacked the vestry, broke into the safe and stole the church's silver plate. When caught, he was sent to prison for 10 years.

Craig Wilson, a talented local poet, has sent us this sonnet in memory of that event.

The window spoke without a spoken word,
Of patient light through lessons gently shown;
It asked no creed, nor oath to be assured,
But stood for all who walked the dark alone.

Its painted glass was never wealth nor prize,
But gift returned to those in need of sight;
A borrowed flame that taught the heart to rise,
And steadied souls who journeyed through the night.

Yet hands that would not heed what had been shown
Struck down the glass where saintly colours stood;
They stole the silver from its trusted home,
And took for gain what they misunderstood.

Now shards lie mute where meaning once was drawn—
Yet what it taught remains to greet the dawn.

Craig writes:

When I wrote 'The Broken Window', it was simply a response to what had happened; the breaking of a stained glass window and the theft of the church silver. It felt as though something that had quietly served the life of the parish for many years had been treated as though it were only valuable for what could be taken from it.

At the time, I didn't know what scene the window depicted. Only later did I discover that it showed the meeting of Jesus and Nicodemus from St John's Gospel, chapter 3.

Reading that passage afterwards helped me to see the poem differently. In the poem, the window is something that offers light without asking anything in return, standing open to anyone who passes by in darkness. In the Gospel story, light is spoken of in a similar way, not as something forced upon people, but something gently offered, which can be received or turned away from.

The event itself seemed to echo this. The stained glass existed to let light through, not to hold a value of its own. Yet it was broken, while the silver was taken. What had been given freely was damaged; what could be carried away was removed.

What stayed with me most was the thought that, even though the glass was broken and the silver stolen, the meaning the window once showed had not been lost. The light it was made to serve remained, whether the window was whole or not. Since then, the window has been remade, and light now passes through it again, a quiet reminder that what is broken can be restored, and that its purpose endures.

That understanding came to me only after the poem was written. I hadn't set out to reflect the story shown in the glass, yet the connection emerged later, and in doing so deepened the poem for me.



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH



Kings Norton's Imperial Roubles

As many of our readers will know, our Editor David Ash is very well-informed about Russia and its history. So much so that, last year, he gave a fascinating presentation to the parish Men's Group, which embraced several aspects of his knowledge of, and love for that country, its culture and its language.

While he received warm applause for his talk, he didn't expect that someone would show their appreciation by sending him the traditional brown envelope full of cash! The only trouble was that they were banknotes from the era of Imperial Russia, roubles which hadn't been legal currency for a hundred years or so. We've reprinted some of them on the inside back cover (p.39) so that you can enjoy them in colour.

It emerged that the banknotes had come from a member of David's audience that night, who knew that they were historic, and thought that he

would be interested in the story behind the currency, and how those roubles ended up in Kings Norton. This is that story.

There is a key figure in the story: Bert, (*photo opposite*) the father of the man who sent David the notes. It was Bert who, more than a century ago, barely out of his teenage years, found himself in one of Russia's most inhospitable areas: the Arctic wastes around the port of Archangelsk, for centuries the chief seaport of medieval and early modern Russia and known to the British as Archangel. In 1918 and 1919, Bert was a soldier in the Royal Scots regiment in that frozen area, before and shortly after the conclusion of the First World War in Western Europe in November 1918.

The fact that, for some unfortunate British soldiers, fighting continued after the official end of the Great War has been largely forgotten by history in general; but the fact is that a significant number of



MICHAEL
WRITES
ABOUT
LOCAL
HISTORY

British troops were involved, probably very reluctantly, in further action in Russia which extended well into 1919. They were part of a campaign which was considered by the British Government, latterly in the person of the Secretary of State for War, one Winston Churchill, to be vital to the ongoing security of Britain even after the Germans had been defeated.

Bert was born in 1898 in Newport, Shropshire (then Salop), one of four children. After the early death of his father in 1904, his mother brought the family to Wolverhampton. He was a bright boy, winning a scholarship to a local grammar school and becoming an articled clerk to a local chartered accountant in 1916. When he reached the appropriate age in 1917, he had to enlist. Though he had no Scottish blood, he became a member of the Royal Scots 2/10 Battalion. Initially, the Scots were serving in the relative warmth of Ireland but then, probably quite unexpectedly, Bert and his brigade were sent to Northern Russia to serve in some of the most arduous conditions possible.

What was important about Russia? Before the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, Tsarist Russia had been an ally of Britain in the war against Germany, helping to deflect German



military resources to the North. When the Bolshevik party forced its way towards government, infamously assassinating Tsar Nicholas II and his whole family, a violent and protracted civil war began between the Bolsheviks, with what simplistically became known as their Red Army, and their non-Communist opponents, who were seeking to avoid a Communist revolution and to re-establish a stable state. They became known as the White Russians.

The revolution became an additional problem for the British Government; additional, that is, to defeating Germany.



Remember that, in this period, Britain was still one of the most significant international powers, if not the most significant. The advent of a potentially hostile Communist state would create a threat towards Western Europe from the north that had never really existed before. More immediately, during the First World War, Britain and other European powers had been sending armaments and

equipment to Imperial Russia to help them fight off the German threat in the north. Much of it had arrived and was stored in Archangelsk. In mid-1918, the Allies decided that those stores had to be protected from the Germans. Not only that but, once the German threat had ended with their surrender in November 1918, it was considered vital that the Communists should be unable to seize the military

stockpile for use in the civil war.

Though the country at home was sick of battle after four years of warfare on the Western front and millions of casualties, the British Government and its allies felt that it could not afford to allow this risk to remain unchallenged. They also wanted to help White Russia against the Reds. So, on 18 July 1918, a significant force of Allied soldiers from Britain, Canada, Australia, France, Italy and the USA was sent to Archangelsk. Bert's Scots Guards were one of the main British elements.

Bert became part of the group guarding the stores. Other troops were immediately involved in fierce fighting, firstly against the German presence in Northern Russia, then against the Red Army. Initially, the Allies held their own but within months they faced the prospect of defeat as their losses became progressively heavier.

Ironically, as the Armistice was being signed in Western Europe, on 11 November 1918 precisely, Bert and several of his colleagues suffered injury or worse in the Battle of Tulgas, south of Archangelsk on the left bank of the Dvina river.

Bert and the other injured troops were repatriated to Ireland in early 1919 for

recuperation. Prompted by the growing numbers of casualties, by the middle of 1919 the Allies decided to cut their losses and withdraw all their troops. All the Royal Scots had left by September.

Once he was discharged from military duty, Bert resumed his career as an articled clerk in Wolverhampton and became a partner soon after he qualified. In 1936, on the retirement of the founder of the firm, he became a joint partner, and later became a senior partner in the 1950s. He died in 1982. Amongst the mementoes he left were those banknotes, fourteen of them: the legacy of such a momentous period in his life, now in Kings Norton and forming the basis of this story. Beautiful as they are, they date back to a critical and dangerous period in world history: the establishment of the Communist régime in Russia and the growth of a world power as The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Now, as Russia once again, it is posing a similar sort of threat to Western Europe as Winston Churchill had feared it would more than a hundred years ago.

Bert himself never became a Kings Norton man, but one of his two children moved here from Wolverhampton in 1969 to get married in St Nicolas' Church. For many years, he has been a loyal member of the church congregation.

Things new and special

I must apologise in advance because I will not be detailing how to grow the beautiful miniature lotus. When I checked the standard instructions, they involved digging some mud from the bottom of a pond. The introduction of this probably smelly material to your conservatory might not be popular. Some searching revealed that a non-smelly material is available. I'll try it first this year to see if it really works. Watch this space!

This year's special advice is to try beautiful begonias from seed. Buying corms or plug-plants is much simpler but also much more expensive, and somehow not as satisfying to do. Begonia seeds are very small. They are sometimes coated to increase their size.

Despite the extra expense of coated seeds, it may be a worthwhile purchase. Sieve the compost before gently filling the seed tray. Do not pack down the compost but level it with your hands. Your compost will be full of oxygen, which seeds really like. Mix your teeny-weeny seeds with two



teaspoons of dry sand or fine vermiculite. Shake gently and then sprinkle the mixture evenly over the surface. Do not sneeze at this point! Even though you can't see the seeds, they will be distributed evenly.

Water gently with a small watering can or a sprayer. You can then cover them with a transparent loose lid. This must be lifted along one edge to allow some air in. Place in a light area but out of direct sunlight, in a comfortable room temperature. Too much humidity and warmth will result in damping off.

Seed trays are often supplied with a transparent lid. Personally, I have not found it necessary to cover them with plastic. Patience will be rewarded. The seedlings will eventually grow to a size which will allow you to transfer them, gently, to a full-sized seedling tray. Begonias do best in multi- purpose compost in a large pot. The double begonia ‘Mocha’ is a beautiful variety with purple foliage and will continue to bloom until October. All small seeds can be treated like this for success.

Do have a look around for new flower varieties, either as seed or as young plants. These are frequently F1 hybrids and are vigorous, accompanied by lots of flowers. For the adventurous wishing to try unusual varieties of almost any plant, try PlantWorld Seeds.com

Cosmos is easily grown from seed and there are some really nice new varieties. Another advantage of cosmos is that it can be sown directly into the flower bed: no seed trays necessary. Do not over-fertilize or you will have magnificent leafy plants with few flowers.

Two thoughts for 2026:

- 1) Dead-head regularly. You will have more flowers for longer.
- 2) Single varieties of flowers carry more pollen and nectar for the bees than the doubles.



Funerals Dec 2025-Jan 2026

1 Dec	Richard George Coward	52	In.CY
10 Dec	Randal Anthony Maddock Brew	82	In.CY
15 Jan	Muriel June Booth	96	In.CY
16 Jan	Leigh William Matthews	53	SN.Cr.LH
17 Jan	Brenda O'Donnell	93	In.CY
23 Jan	Elen Theresa Ryan	62	In.CY
30 Jan	Sylvia Lanchester	83	SN

SN : Service at St Nicolas’ Church, Bu : Burial, In : Interment of Ashes
LH : Lodge Hill

Looking Back 9

March 1951



▲ ALF
ROGERS.
FROM A
CHOIR PHOTO
TAKEN IN
1944.

In our April 2025 edition we printed the first in a series of articles entitled 'Looking Back : By An Old Chorister', originally published in these pages in the 1950s.

In the ninth of these monthly reminiscences, Alf Rogers moves on from his long account of the early days of the Monyhull Colony, founded in Kings Norton in 1908, and explores the surrounding area, including the short canal tunnel which runs under Monyhull Hall Road near the junction with Broad Lane and Brandwood Park Road.

Just below the main entrance gates of Monyhull Hall are a few small houses, which, together with a similar row at the Maypole, were built about thirty years ago to accommodate a few of the male staff and their families. Up to about twenty years ago there were no dwellings on the opposite side of Monyhull Hall Road from Lindsworth Cottage onwards, and with tall trees and hedgerows fringing this part of the road, together with the meadowland reaching to the valley below, it presented a truly rural aspect.

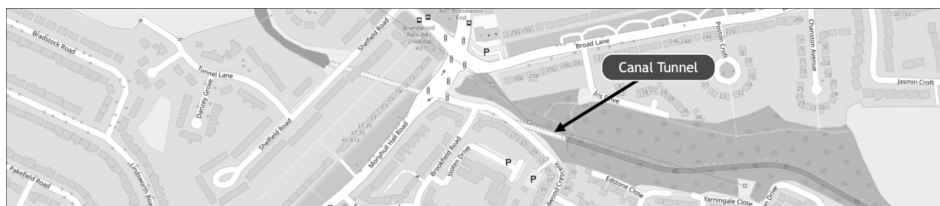
Broad Lane has changed considerably too. At one time it was a very pretty lane with a roadway quite the reverse to which its name implies, and had an avenue of tall trees together with open fields on either side. An old house stood by the corner occupied by the shops to-day, and a farm, for many years tenanted by the Culler family, stood on the side on which Poston Croft is now built. As the Cutlers were friends of my family, I used to visit this farm quite often as a boy, and I can remember fishing in the pool just above the

farm at the side of the lane nearly opposite the south entrance gates to Brandwood End Cemetery. Except for the two villas beyond here and the little cottages near to the Alcester Road, no other buildings existed until Mr. Jones built the first bungalow in 1918.

I must not forget to mention the canal tunnel which runs under the junction of the three roadways for about a quarter of a mile. A pathway leads from Broad Lane down to the one end of this tunnel, and it used to be a common sight to see boatmen leading their horses across the roads and down the path, while the boat was propelled through the tunnel by hand. This canal was rather a busy one in those days and besides the barge traffic, rowing boats hired from the Happy Valley at Yardley Wood, crowded the canal during Bank Holidays and weekends.

At the top of the Boat Lane, which runs up from the opposite end of the tunnel to Brandwood Road, is a very old cottage, which has been occupied by the Sharpe family for many years. I can remember them converting the front room of their cottage into a little shop for the sale of sweets, minerals, etc. This was well patronised by the fishermen, also cyclists and hikers, because this was the only shop between Alcester Lanes End and my shop in Parsons Hill at that time, and it was not until 1930, after the modern houses had been erected on this route, that the 18A bus service came into being, and to reach Kings Heath from our village, one had to either go by train, cycle or walk.

During Bank Holiday periods, townspeople used to enjoy a ride out by tram to Alcester Lanes End and then walk to Kings Norton by this route, where they would perhaps have a picnic lunch on the Green, saunter round the village, walk on to Cotteridge and return home by tram. These outings were very popular until the tramway was extended on the Bristol Road to the Lickey Hills, after which the circular trips to Kings Norton gradually faded out.



HOLY WEEK & EASTER AT ST NICOLAS KINGS NORTON

Palm Sunday Sunday 29th March

9.00am Holy Communion

10.30am Holy Communion

6pm Celtic Worship

Holy Monday 30 March

7.30pm Compline

Holy Tuesday 31 March

7.30pm Compline

Holy Wednesday 1 April

7.30pm Compline

Maundy Thursday 2 April

7.30pm Holy Communion

with foot washing

Good Friday 3 April

10.30am All age worship

12.30pm Stations of the cross

2pm Tenebrae

Easter Eve

7.30pm First Communion of Easter

Easter Sunday

9am Holy Communion

10.30am Holy Communion

6pm Taize



Lent at St Nicolas

Acts of Hope

A six-week course starting Weds 25th February at 11.00 am in the Old Grammar School or Thurs 26th February at 6.00 pm on Zoom. A look at the theme of hope through the Book of Acts. Come to one session or come to them all. Booking not required. Zoom link available from Parish Office.

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These Russian banknotes accompany Michael Kennedy's article on pages 30-33. Above: a 1905 3-rouble note. Right: a 1909 5-rouble note. Below: an 1898 1-rouble note. The print on these banknotes pre-dates the 1918 spelling reform which was introduced just after the Bolshevik Revolution. Among the symbols visible here are the two-headed imperial eagle, whose heads face East and West to signify Russia's dominion over both Europe and Asia. It has been part of Russian iconography since the 15th century. Vladimir Putin reintroduced it as the official state coat of arms in 2000.



The St Nicolas' Men's Group



'John Freeth and his Circle or Birmingham Men of the Last Century'
1792 by Johannes Eckstein. Birmingham Museums Trust

Date	Time	Venue	Event / Topic
Sat 14 Mar	10.30 am	13 Fleet Street	The Coffin Works (train at 9.27 from Kings Norton)
Tue 21 Apr	7.00 pm	Druids Heath	Jayne Murray : A Social History of Druids Heath
Mon 18 May	7.30 pm	St Nicolas'	Zoe Stewart : Walking the Camino de Santiago *
Mon 22 Jun	7.00 pm	Chez Badger	Summer Garden Party : Bring & Share *
Sat 18 Jul	9.00 am	TBA	Local walk and brunch at The Navigation
August	No meeting		
Tue 15 Sep	7.30 pm	St Nicolas'	Dr Tom Kippax : Life as an A&E Consultant
Thu 22 Oct	7.30 pm	St Nicolas'	Barry Ross : Learning about deafness the hard way
Tue 24 Nov	7.00 pm	Restaurant TBA	Curry night

You are warmly invited to join the parish Men's Group. We meet monthly, usually at St Nicolas' Church. The day, time and content of each meeting vary to include as many people as possible. You are welcome at all or any of our events. Those marked with an asterisk are open to all, regardless of age or gender. If you would like to attend one of our meetings, please notify the Parish Office.