

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

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of all the tea in China

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Welcome

EDITORIAL

Has there every been a wetter, colder May?

As we emerge chilly, windblown and bedraggled from the past few weeks, let us hope that the optimism expressed in so many of our articles this month is rewarded with the beginnings of something like a real summer this June. A summer in which the planting of seeds, both literal (p.12, p.38) and metaphorical (p.22), the counting of blessings (p.16) and the celebration of friendship (p.4, p.28) lift our spirits and inspire hope of a brighter future.

One of the inspiring things for me about the growing popularity of the University of the Third Age (p.8) is the reminder that it's never too late to learn something new, that no-one is too old to grow or to change. Lifelong learning is becoming the new norm. We cover the full age range in this issue, from children learning their first words (p.7) to seniors getting to grips with architecture and philosophy (p.8). Two soon-to-be-ordained trainee ministers recount some of their early learning experiences (p.20, p.35) while our old friend Revd Donald Sampson shares insights which inspire him to remain in the service of the most vulnerable well into his retirement (p.18), not counting his days but making every day count. Wise words.

Finally, because this parish magazine is never parochial, we have tales from abroad including this month, from India, the source of so much harrowing news in recent weeks. Thelma Mitchell's account of meeting Mother Teresa

(p.40) and of travelling in that country are yet one more reminder, if we needed it, of how many blessings we have to count, despite everything.



David Ash

Reasons to Celebrate

DESPITE THE UNCERTAINTIES of the British weather, summer is a time of celebrations.

Whether backyard barbecues or massive music festivals, the prospect of being outdoors eating, drinking and making merry with family and friends is a morale booster. This summer, we are more likely to embrace every opportunity for celebrations as we emerge from the deprivations of the past eighteen months and, with rising confidence, are more willing to be in the presence of large numbers of people again. The virtual house arrest which millions experienced during the pandemic appears to be ending, in the UK at least. Like prisoners counting down the last days before their release, we are laying plans to make the most of our restored freedoms.

In our parish life, we are able to resume the celebrations of weddings and baptisms, which have been suspended for over a year. Couples' and families' plans for these

important rite-of-passage ceremonies have been thwarted, cancelled or postponed so many times that some gave up all together or postponed until 2022. We look forward to welcoming families back into church for these important high points of their lives.

What we celebrate and how we celebrate has undergone a revolution in recent decades. No doubt influenced by the media, other cultures and increased foreign travel, expectations of celebrations are high. We have a lucrative industry to meet the demands for deluxe parties and festivities. Once the preserve of the wealthy and privileged, lavish celebrations are now commonplace. It is routine to hear of people spending many thousands on their celebrations.

The dominance of celebrity culture (those who are celebrated for being famous) fuels the demand for glitzy and ostentatious lifestyles and seemingly endless celebrations. They can afford it. These impossibly glamorous, mega rich, "divine" creatures appear to live in an extravaganza of lavish parties, award ceremonies, publicity events and a swirl of constant glossy magazine and social media gossip. So prevalent is their influence that millions



The Revd Larry Wright is the Rector of Kings Norton Team Parish



PHOTO BY ASKAR ABAYEV

try to emulate their lifestyles. Is following and imitating those with super-lavish lifestyles, combined with social media promotion, becoming a new form of "religion"?

While celebrations in our personal lives have undergone a revolution of expectations, public celebrations have fared differently. How often do we take part in large-scale communal or national celebrations? The recent death of Prince Philip was a cause for celebrating his long life of service to his Queen and the Commonwealth. Despite national restrictions, his funeral reminded us of our

↑ **Lavish celebrations are now commonplace**

British and Commonwealth identity and of the institutions, like the monarchy, which help to bind us together.

The funeral was tinged with sadness as well as thanksgiving, but other royal milestones, like the Queen's many jubilees (1977, 2002 and 2012), were opportunities for national celebrations in the UK. The 1977 Jubilee was a time of widespread street parties up and down the country yet, as the years passed, the number of street-party-type celebrations diminished considerably. Why? Perhaps attitudes towards our national



PHOTO FROM THE FAMILY ALBUM OF ANGELA SMITH

institutions had changed, or is it that getting together in our neighbourhoods and streets for shared celebrations lost its attraction and the meaning which it had in 1970s?

Research on changing attitudes in Western societies marks the steady decline in what was once called community spirit. The willingness of local people to participate in supporting local activities fostering togetherness and solidarity. This has been matched by a decline in volunteering for local organisations and causes. Since the 1970s, we have become less neighbourly. It's harder to celebrate with people who may be neighbours but also strangers.

One aspect of parish life is the way in which we mark celebrations throughout the year, linked to the natural seasons and Christian beliefs.

↑ A “Peace Tea” in London, held for children to mark the end of the First World War and the Spanish Flu pandemic. This photo was taken in 1919.

Easter and Christmas are the most celebrated, but we also offer a focus for togetherness at Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday and Toy Sunday, for example. These celebrations continue to attract those who are not regular church goers but who value them as part of our heritage and as opportunities to show communal togetherness.

The countless stories of neighbours rallying to support the isolated and the vulnerable during the past 18 months are themselves a reason to celebrate. As we emerge from the effects of the pandemic there will be a need to renew our sense of neighbourliness and the value we place on our local communities.

Summer greetings!

How lockdown has affected children's speech - and what parents can do to help

The pandemic means many children will have spent the best part of a year interacting much less than normal with teachers, friends and family. One of the big questions is how this will have changed the way they have learned to speak.

Have lockdown and other COVID-19 measures affected how children acquire the speech and language skills so vital to their academic and social development? And if children's speech has been held back, what can parents do about it?

A recent survey of schools and parents, conducted by the Education Endowment Foundation, has found that children who started school in autumn 2020 needed more support than in previous years.

The findings suggest that the greatest area of concern was communication and language development, in which 96% (55 out of 57) of schools said they were either "very concerned" or "quite concerned". Close behind were personal, social and emotional development (91%) and literacy (89%), skills which

are heavily reliant on the development of strong speech, language and communication abilities.

Impact of lockdowns

Parents have done an amazing job through the pandemic to keep their children safe and healthy. Having few activities available to them and restrictions on seeing extended family has been a challenge for many.

But this has reduced children's exposure to new vocabulary, to words we might use when we visit the farm, say, or go to see grandma. This is important as we know that vocabulary levels at age two predict children's performance at school entry, which itself is predictive of later outcomes.

(Continued on page 15)



Dr Yvonne Wren is a Senior Research Fellow and director at the Bristol Speech and Language Therapy Research Unit, University of Bristol

Kings Norton U3A

An Upsurge of Interest

As the lockdown eases, The Kings Norton & District branch of the *University of the 3rd Age*, the national lifelong learning organisation for senior people, is experiencing growing interest in membership. Vicki Hone tells us about this upsurge and a new national initiative.

As we progress out of the Covid crisis, the Kings Norton & District branch of the U3A is promoting the unique benefits of membership for local senior people, especially those who have experienced increased isolation and restricted opportunities to develop and sustain interesting activities.

Founded in 1982, the U3A is a national organisation which enables people who have retired from full time work to explore new ideas, skills and interests in a sociable environment. It is beginning a major national publicity campaign on Wednesday 2nd June to publicise its activities and the benefits of membership, using its slogan of "Learn, laugh, live". Membership is remarkably

inexpensive: for our group it's currently £14 a year and entitles members to join any of our interest groups.

The U3A provides an unmatched opportunity for senior people to rebuild their lives to new heights after this last disastrous year, in which so many have become increasingly lonely and frustrated. It's easy, it's fun, it's low-cost and there's no pressure. We are expecting an upsurge in momentum because we are aware that many senior people need a gentle reintroduction to the process of social interaction and need support in finding fulfilling interests. The U3A ideally placed to provide all of this.



Vicki Hone is the Vice Chair of Kings Norton & District U3A

In June, the Kings Norton U3A team is offering a series of online Zoom "coffee mornings" at which people interested in learning about the benefits of membership can watch a presentation and talk to committee members. The coffee mornings will take place from 11.00 a.m. on Saturday 5th June and then at the same time on Saturday 12th, 19th and 26th June. Those interested should email **knu3anatday@gmail.com** in advance to register. They will then be sent details on how to access the event.

Our branch has around 40 normally vibrant interest groups. Of course, for many of them opportunities have been significantly curtailed during the past year. Some have managed to sustain their activities online, but those whose interests involve visits to such establishments as theatres, museums, gardens and stately homes have not been able to operate. However, since the latest lockdown began to ease and opportunities to gather together have been reestablished, a

▼KINGS
NORTON U3A IS
OFFERING A
SERIES OF
ONLINE ZOOM
COFFEE
MORNINGS
THIS MONTH

PHOTO BY YAN KRUKOV





PHOTO BY ANDREA PIACQUADIO

transformation is taking place. The pent-up enthusiasm of members has been released and there has also been an increase in membership enquiries.

A prime example of this situation is our Travel group, which enables members to develop and share the costs of visits, normally of five days (Monday to Friday), to areas of mutual interest around the country. Now that such activities can be organised and booked with confidence, there has been a substantial growth in interest from current members. Capacity for the three events planned so far for this year, which is normally around 20 people, has had to be extended: even so, the groups are now almost full. The visit programme this year includes Llandudno (7 June onwards), Torquay (July 10

onwards) and Northumberland (3 October onwards).

"It's been very pleasing to see so many members realising that our Travel group gives them a ready-made series of opportunities to visit places which, because of the impact of Covid, they may have become apprehensive about visiting on their own," says Carole, our Travel group facilitator: "A number of people who are coming with us this year are new to the group, including some who have joined the U3A specifically to experience our relaxed, sociable trips."

Founded four years ago, the Kings Norton & District U3A has flourished, with membership now running at around 250. We have developed a remarkable and very broad range of Interest Groups from

Architecture to Bird Watching, from Climate Control to Keyboard Playing. There are groups dedicated to Chess and Bridge, French and German Conversation and Literature, through two Book Clubs and a Play Reading Group, as well as groups covering such specialist topics as Art and Music Appreciation, Exploring World Faiths, History and Philosophy. In terms of creativity, there are groups covering Creative Crafts, Photography, Creative Writing, Flower Arranging, Art and Painting, Sewing & Textiles and Knitting & Crochet.

For more active members who want to get out and about, as well as the Travel Group there are two Walking Groups, groups covering Museum and Garden Visits, and a Theatre and Cinema Group. A Lunch Group and a

Real Ale Group also provide social life.

Membership seems likely to grow. Now that Covid is coming under control, this is a renewed time of opportunity for the U3A concept. We are determined to make sure that all senior people across Kings Norton and its adjoining districts understand what membership can help them to achieve after the frustrations they have been experiencing because of Covid. If any reader of this magazine is not a member, and is looking to learn new things and, in doing so, to find new friends, I'd really urge them to access our coffee morning events by emailing us at

knu3anatday@gmail.com



PHOTO BY ANDREA PIACQUADIO

Adam the Gardener contemplates the start of Summer

Eve and I have just moved to the Kenilworth area and at the rear of the bungalow we look out at a grassy bank with cowslips and at the top a shrubby bed has been rather haphazardly planted with some climbers and other decorative shrubs.

Two of these companions of the high fence have really caught my eye and have given some relief from procrastinating as I gloomily survey the next pile of cardboard boxes.

Our first, the pink beauty *Clematis montana*, is a deciduous climber reaching up to about 11 metres and quite capable of transforming a nondescript holly tree in to a thing of frothy

pink magnificence in May. I have seen them climbing up telegraph poles and spreading out along the wires for many metres. The four inch, four- or five-petalled flowers are delicately fragrant and run all the way from white to a dusky pink. This, then, is our plant of the month and every garden should have at least one. An alternative with the advantage of being evergreen is *Clematis armandii*, a vigorous variety and more difficult to find, but well worth the effort.

I have forgotten that Clematis can occasionally be stricken with a wilting disease but do not lose hope as the plant can often revive underground and re-emerge several years later. Personally, I have never come across this botanical curiosity and particularly the montana series in all its vigour. Fine varieties abound and can be had for a reasonable price. No pruning is required unless you want to curb your montana's passion for



CLEMATIS MONTANA

exploration.

A bit further along our fence there is a shrub with red-purple dissected leaves looking very healthy and making a change from the prevailing green foliage which I now know will bear large panicles of pink flowers in June. Our tree of the month, my gardening friends, is the *Sambucus* or Elder and, in this case, the somewhat sophisticated *Sambucus nigra*, possibly bearing the name "Black Beauty". Common in our hedgerows and particularly around old farm buildings is the common elder and of course it is the source of flower heads, sweetly scented and perfect for making elderflower cordial or even elderflower champagne, which is a perfect accompaniment for the pudding at your gourmet meal.

Some of you may have encountered the Italian liqueur Sambuca and indeed the best ones contain an extract of elderflowers, sometimes added to your espresso as a "digestivo" to help you digest your ample meal. Incidentally, I would restrict myself to consuming the flowers of Elder only as the birds consume the black berries



ELDERFLOWERS READY FOR PICKING

but you should avoid them as the seeds are poisonous and they do not taste good anyway. The national collection of Elders consists of 150 varieties! There is a golden-leaved variety which you will either like or loathe. The Elder is surrounded by folklore and either repels witches or encourages them to shelter under its branches. Evil will befall he who cuts down an Elder unless whilst doing so he sings a song to the Elder Mother (so it is said).

June is a month for enjoying your garden and, of course, is the time when the roses are at their best. There is always some weeding to be done and, for the propagators, there is an opportunity to sow some seed with the next year in sight. Top of the list here are the biennials. Plant them out where they are to flower, perhaps a little deeper than usual, and the ground will protect them from the worst of the frost. This list of "best treated as biennials" has been compiled by Graham Rice and all have an RHS award of Garden Merit. I recommend looking at the article on the RHS



site if you can for more details.

Aquilegia "Florida Series". A large yellow and white bicolor.

Cynoglossum amabile. Plant this one amongst your tulips.

Primula "Rainbow scarlet shades"

Nigella damascena "Miss Jekyll" "Alba"

Lunaria annua. Var. *albiflora variegata*

Echium vulgare "Blue bedder" (Vipers Bugloss)

Digitalis purpurea f. albiflora. Elegant one-sided

look but pure white.

Delphinium "Centurion Sky Blue" (Watch out for slugs)

Papaver nudicaule "Summer Breeze orange"

Eryngium giganteum. A complete contrast to most garden flowers!

My own contribution just because I like them – *Bellis Perennis*.



(Continued from page 7)

Impact of mask wearing

Widespread mask wearing during the pandemic has also made us realise how much we rely on lipreading. Not being able to see lips move during speech, combined with the dampening effect that wearing a mask has on the sound produced, has made it difficult for us to understand what other people are saying. This is particularly a problem for the many children who experience glue ear, which can lead to temporary hearing loss, in early and middle childhood.

In school and pre-school, children may struggle to differentiate between similar sounds, such as “p” and “t”, when their teacher is wearing a mask. That can impact on a child’s speech development or their phonological awareness, which is the ability to break down words into speech sounds to assist with early reading and spelling acquisition.

Masks also obscure facial expression, which contributes to how we understand the meaning behind the words we hear. When this is taken away, not only is the potential for misunderstanding (and mislearning) increased but there can also be an impact on children’s development of social and emotional skills.

Access to therapy

While lockdown has affected opportunities to promote speech and language development for all children, those who were already most at risk are likely to have been disproportionately affected. Many of these will be children who require speech and language therapy.

A report by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists found that 62% of children who needed speech and language therapy (from a survey of over 400 parents) received none during the first lockdown. Where possible, services were provided remotely. However, the same survey found that 19% of children did not like having speech and language therapy on video, while 12% could not cooperate with it.

Children born with cleft palate are one of several groups at high risk of problems with speech development. To investigate the impact of the first lockdown, researchers at the University of Bristol asked parents of children affected by this condition about how effective remote speech and language therapy provision had been.

Of 212 responses, 26% reported it was very effective while the remainder said it was somewhat effective (67%) or not at all effective (8%). Some parents reported that they felt the video appointments were “better than nothing”.

What can be done to help?

There are several key things that parents can do to support their child in learning to speak. From day one, talk to your baby about whatever they show an interest in. Use simple sentences and make your voice sound interesting by using lots of intonation and facial expression. Babies and toddlers like and need lots of repetition so if your child is looking at a bus then say lots about the bus, describing what it looks like, talking about how it moves and saying the word “bus” over and over again. *(Continued on page 25).*

Counting My Blessings

From a daily walk to a good night's sleep, Angela Brady reflects on the many reasons she has found to be grateful.

Fresh air and open spaces have been vital for many through the pandemic: walking, jogging, running or just strolling, a change of activity instead of being cooped up in doors in front of a screen with easy nibbles to hand.

I had taken to walking well before Christmas and, in January, I started marking my trips on my calendar. I set myself a mini-challenge to walk a mile each day and realised that, in four months, I could have logged 100 miles. Well, I did it, in spite of bad weather and other interruptions. On the last day of April 102 miles were recorded, with the knowledge that I had gone further on finer days. Not bad for someone approaching 80 years.

Each time I return home, take off my coat, put on my slippers and boil the kettle for my mug of tea, I say a "Thank you" to God for my small achievement. I believe God stirs us in many good ways and I see my walking as one of his gifts.

→ A good walk can do wonders for your mental wellbeing. It improves self-perception and self-esteem, mood and sleep quality, and it reduces stress, anxiety and fatigue.



PHOTO BY PAVEL DANILYUK

Daily there are moments when the inner spirit wells up with joy or gratitude and we murmur "Thank you for that". Here are some of those moments which I recall:

Stepping under a warm shower, being wrapped in a warm bath towel, morning sunshine streaming through

the windows, standing alone in an avenue of trees, bluebells emerging, a carpet of crocuses, sitting outside drinking coffee with a friend, waking from a good night's sleep, the smell of bacon in the pan, the feel of a new book, "Hello, Grandma" from young voices, a friend talking over the phone, a tooth repaired, a good TV drama, a stranger's smile, sitting in a church space waiting for worship, Sunday lunch delivered, a heron on the rooftop, an ice cream cornet in the park, taking a tray of golden brown sausage rolls from the oven, slipping between clean sheets, a browse in the charity shop.

I could go on. Some of these thoughts will resonate with you, others may bring to mind your own recollections.

*"Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done."*

Words from an old hymn which remind us not to take things for granted.

As the promises of spring blossom into the warmth and light of summer, so our "Thank you" should resound through the rhythms of our days for the numerous blessings God stirs into our lives.

"Each time I return home, take off my coat, put on my slippers and boil the kettle for my mug of tea, I say a "Thank you" to God for my small achievement."



PHOTO BY EDU CARVALHO

Make Every Day Count

The Revd Donald Sampson, known and loved by many in Kings Norton, has been closely involved in the work of St Mary's Hospice for the past 20 years. The pandemic has inevitably brought changes and challenges.

I was appointed as a Free Church chaplain to St Mary's Hospice, Selly Oak, in May 2001. More recently, I have been designated as a spiritual care volunteer working with another ordained person and two lay volunteers.

It was Cecily Saunders who founded the modern hospice movement, opening Saint Christopher's Hospice, Sydenham, to receive its first patients in 1967 after nine years of planning. She was very concerned that it should be ecumenical and extend hospitality to all terminally ill people for care within a Christian environment, thereby helping them to truly live during their final days.

I am writing this at a time when, due to Covid, our work is limited to phone calls and the Day Hospice is closed.



The Revd Donald Sampson is a retired Methodist minister who was formerly on the staff of Kings Norton Team Parish

Over the past 20 years, St Mary's has become multifaith and multi-ethnic in a very attractive and highly supportive manner to all patients. Up to the beginning of the pandemic, my main duties, on a Thursday, within our chaplaincy team were to speak slowly to each person who was an in-patient. I am reminded of the time I knelt with a Muslim daughter, holding her hand and that of a weakening mother, leading us in prayer.

Before the pandemic, on three days per week the 25 beds within the Hospice were complementary to the Day Hospice, which only received about 20 day patients. Each was offered transport. There was a chance for volunteers and nurses to sit and talk to people, some of whom live alone. A short, relevant input regarding some aspect of concern was often given before a tasty lunch for those who can eat it.

The work I have mentioned is but a part of the Hospice's support network given each day to 400 individuals, many of whom are seen in their own homes.

Happily, the Hospice is well-staffed for round-the-clock care. This being said, I find it important to give appropriate support to all staff: nurses experience much satisfaction in their work but also have times of grief.

Once per quarter, we have a "Time to Remember" occasion which, at present, is held online. Before March 2020, it was normally attended by about 80 people for quiet reflection. It fell to me to read, slowly, the names of the 25 to 30 people who had recently passed on. The whole occasion is highly worshipful for those who choose to use it that way. Time for refreshments afterwards was greatly

cherished and facilitated pastoral conversation.

The cost of this work is £9 million a year. Over half the funds come from voluntary donations. This requires a resourceful team working in the fundraising department.

Our work is soon to be merged with that of John Taylor Hospice located in Erdington, Birmingham. It is hoped that this will be to our mutual advantage and enrichment.

Such duties lead me to live by the mantra of Nelson Mandela, "Don't count your days, make every day count."



PHOTO COURTESY OF ST MARY'S HOSPICE

A Trainee Minister takes her leave

Dear Friends,

It is time that I say a fond farewell. It has been a real privilege to spend my time in ministerial training in the Kings Norton parish.

Whilst the pandemic has meant that my placement with you did not have the look or feel of a normal placement, I am deeply grateful for the dedication of the ministry team in ensuring that I was exposed to as wide a range of ministry

experience as possible under such unusual circumstances.

There is so much I could tell you about the discoveries, the light-bulb moments, the revelations of these last two years, but I would need the whole magazine to do it justice! Instead, I offer two moments that left an important imprint for serving in future ministry. Firstly, being in ministry is about being very still and very quiet. In waiting for God to make His presence

▼ **MOLLY
BARRON AT
ST NICOLAS'
CHURCH IN
MAY 2017.**





◀TAMMY TEAROE IS AMERICAN, LIVES IN KINGS NORTON AND IS TRAINING FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

known we catch glimpses of His Spirit in the person sitting across from us. One moment that will stay with me was sitting in dear Molly Barron’s lounge and hearing her speak of her diagnosis of cancer, and of the joy she had in knowing that God would soon take her home to be with Him. In the still and quiet, she began to sing, and as she beamed with that infectious Molly grin, we bowed our heads in prayer. As the moment passed, the room fell still and silent, but the Spirit did not depart.

Secondly, being in ministry is about celebrating with wild abandon. If you have ever been present for one of Reverend Eliakim’s baptisms, you will know what I am talking about. And if you haven’t, you really must attend the next one! I have been in churches my whole life and I have seen innumerable baptisms, but none match the joy and celebration I experienced in St

Nicolas' Church over the font. There can be no mistaking that, for Revd. Eliakim, the watery rite is an encounter with the Spirit of the Divine and he shares it with unabashed shouts of praise and thanksgiving. I dare you not to get caught up in the revelry! The church positively comes alive with joy, which tells its own story of the greatest love humankind will ever know.

I am completely aware that the journey that I am on is one of great privilege and that with great privilege comes great responsibility. May I be so bold as to ask that you pray that I keep walking in humility and faithfulness?

As I move on, I continue to hold the churches of St Nicolas, Immanuel, and Hawksley in prayer. Happily, I will still be living in the parish so I hope there will be opportunities to bump into one another.

▼THE REVD ELIAKIM IKECHUKWU WITH MOLLY BARRON IN APRIL 2019



Planting Seeds of Hope

In Druids Heath

Last year, a resident of Druids Heath and I began to share ideas on how the trauma caused to many by the Covid pandemic might be healed. Esther and I agreed that there was collective trauma on the estate, with many individuals finding their personal circumstances deeply challenging. We both believe in the power of creativity to foster well-being and personal flourishing.

With Esther, representing the Druids Heath and Monyhull Residents Forum, I began to meet with partner organisations to share ways forward. Early in the process, Esther identified the healing potential of the natural environment. She suggested that residents be encouraged to "plant a seed" and, as they nurtured its growth, be encouraged to have hope in new life for themselves. Her words sparked an idea in our Selly Oak Neighbourhood Network Scheme (NNS) partner who connected us with Fruit and Nut Village (springtolife.org/fruit-

and-nut-village) and Planting Seeds of Hope Druids Heath was birthed.

Esther and I have spent some time with Fruit and Nut Village, visiting their orchards and forest garden sites in Stirchley and Walkers Heath Park and noticing the remarkable symbolism that horticulture offers to community development. We and other partners believed that a community ecology project in Druids Heath would improve well-being through gardening and also the friendships and connections that could be made through residents working together to make the Estate more beautiful.

After being awarded funding by Selly Oak NNS and a lot of careful planning, the Planting Seeds of Hope project was launched on Thursday 13 May, Ascension Day!

Outside Kath's Café, a stall was set up by Rob Tilling and Felipe Molino of Fruit and Nut Village,



THE REVD
CATHERINE
MATLOCK IS
A PIONEER
CURATE
WORKING IN
DRUIDS
HEATH



offering plants and horticultural wisdom to passers-by. I was struck by how the sight of plants drew people into conversation and we learned that one of Kath's regulars is a gardener by training and a member of the Royal Horticultural Society. We met others who are working through mental health issues and for whom gardening will be a great way of being in nature and connecting with others.

This pilot phase of the Planting Seeds of Hope project aims to connect with residents in four tower blocks near to Kath's Café: Hillcroft, Middlefield, Parker and Harrison, as well as some flats for older people in Manningford Court and nearby houses. Going door-to-door, we are giving away free growing kits containing mustard seeds, pea shoots, a

↑ At Kath's Café. From left to right: Rob Tilling, Dave, Felipe Molino, Andrew Fuller, Esther Brown.

planting tray and compost so that people can begin gardening on their window sills or balconies. They also receive a flyer giving further information about how to get involved in community gardening on the estate through Fruit and Nut Village.

We hope to attract residents of all ages and would especially love some older residents to get involved and teach younger people gardening skills. The inspiration for such horticultural relationship comes from the story of Esther's son, Teon, who became passionate about gardening, particularly growing vegetables, through learning from his beloved, great grandad, Hansel.

We will publicise stories like that of Teon and Hansel through our dedicated Facebook page @Planting Seeds of Hope Druids Heath. Another partner, Digikick (www.digikick.co.uk) is available to offer IT training to anyone who isn't familiar with using social media.

In our first two days of the project launch we have met some wonderful people whose

eyes lit up when we offered them the chance to grow salad in their own flats. I was greeted especially warmly by Muslim neighbours, celebrating Eid, who not only accepted a planting kit, but offered us Eid goodie bags filled with sweets and biscuits. What a privilege to be talking about seeds of hope with faith-filled Druids Heath residents providing such warmth and kindness. Maybe this is the Spirit's sign of the hospitality and unity possible between faiths on an estate in South Birmingham at

↓ Seeds of hope for sale



the same time as some parts of our world ache with the trauma of division and violence.

There was also a special encounter with a sixteen-year-old resident who is working as an apprentice with his uncle's landscape gardening company and hopes to support this experience with a college course. He smiled when I asked if he was interested in gardening and his story then unfolded. He'd love to offer his skills and time, at the same time learning from our horticultural specialists at Fruit and Nut Village.

Planting Seeds of Hope is starting small but has huge potential to engage Druids Heath residents in community gardening activities that could offer new connections and new skills, whilst experiencing the healing power of nature. We plan to connect our gardening project with other forms of creativity in future, through the help of Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies (www.bcat.info). BCAT is keen to find ways of offering their arts, music, dance and drama workshops outdoors.

There is potential in Druids Heath for a magical combination of the flourishing of the people and the place. As residents work in partnership with Fruit & Nut Village in the Planting Seeds of Hope project, we pray for life-giving opportunities to blossom and trauma to heal.

Funerals April 2021

| | | | |
|--------|--------------------------|-----|----------|
| 6 Apr | Jean Reilly | 78 | SN.Bu.BE |
| 8 Apr | Rita Jean Plant | 90 | SN.Bu.CY |
| 9 Apr | Jean West | 85 | Cr.LH |
| 16 Apr | Howard Walton Billingham | 95 | SN.Bu.BE |
| 20 Apr | Irene Violet Lawrence | 101 | SN.Cr.RH |
| 21 Apr | Wendy Hampshire | 80 | Cr.RH |
| 22 Apr | Barbara Nancy Townsend | 93 | Cr.RD |
| 22 Apr | Christine Steward | 72 | SN.Bu.CY |
| 28 Apr | John Norton Peplow | 92 | In.CY |

SN : Service at St Nicolas' Church, **Bu** : Burial, **CY** : Churchyard,
Cemeteries & Crematoria

BE : Brandwood End, **LH** : Lodge Hill, **RD** : Redditch, **RH** : Robin Hood

(Continued from page 15).

The same principles apply as children get older. Talk to them about the things which interest them. Respond to what your child says and does, so that they start to link words and sentences with meaning. Now that restrictions are easing, look for opportunities to develop your child's vocabulary by visiting places such as libraries, city farms, parks and gardens and meeting up with friends and family.

For more ideas and support, organisations such as I CAN, the children's communication charity, of which I am a trustee), have developed resources for parents to help pre-schoolers

and primary-aged children with their speaking and listening. The Talking Point website is another source of information for both parents and professionals who may be worried about a child's speech and language development.

Most children will respond quickly. But for those who continue to struggle, talking to a health visitor or teacher and a speech and language therapist will help determine whether more support is needed.

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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 1.00 pm, Monday to Friday.

**81 The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B38 8RU • parishoffice@kingsnorton.org.uk
0121 458 3289 • www.facebook.com/kingsnortonteam**

THE MINISTRY TEAM

Team Rector..... The Revd Larry Wright
Assistant Rector..... The Revd Eliakim Ikechukwu
Parish Lay Minister Pauline Weaver
Curate (Pioneer) The Revd Catherine Matlock
Honorary Assistant Priest The Revd Jayne Crooks
Methodist Minister..... The Revd Nick Jones
Lay Readers David Ash, Fay Fearon, Ruth Howman, Parisa Pordelkhaki
Lay Preacher Steve Wright
Music Minister..... Sylvia Fox
Pastoral Care Team Coordinator Chris Gadd

THE CHURCH WARDENS

St. Nicolas' Church..... Peter Hay & Julie Hill
Hawkesley Church Jim Clarke
Immanuel Church Sue Hartley

OTHER CONTACTS

Parish Administrator & P.C.C. Secretary..... Judy Ash
Acting Finance Officer Simon Hill
Verger and Groundskeeper Shane Williams
Safeguarding Coordinator Annette Dickers
Regular Giving The Revd Jayne Crooks
Flower Arranging (0121 486 2837)..... Alison Blumer

We are a Church of England Team Parish serving all in Kings Norton through St Nicolas' Parish Church, Hawkesley, in partnership with the Methodist Church, and Immanuel District Churches.



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

During the Covid-19 crisis, we have had to suspend all our usual activities including many church services. That does not mean, however, that church has ceased to be active. Some of our services have moved online.



When possible, there is a 10.00 am service on Sundays at St Nicolas' Church with a limited number of places. If you want to attend, you must book before noon on Friday by calling the Parish Office on 0121 458 3289.

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Join in an Anglican service at home on Sundays</i> | <i>bit.ly/2KYtrE3</i> |
| <i>Our 9.30 am family service on Sundays</i> | <i>bit.ly/2K8KzTS</i> |
| <i>Our 10.00 am service from St Nicolas' on Sundays</i> | <i>bit.ly/3ocP1TI</i> |
| <i>Our 10.30 am service from Immanuel on Sundays</i> | <i>bit.ly/3oby8Jc</i> |
| <i>Occasional midweek morning & evening prayer</i> | <i>bit.ly/3pMgOLi</i> |

For the latest changes and updates, see the weekly newsletter, which is available on the Parish Website at www.kingsnorton.org.uk

Friends : The Family We Choose

I unexpectedly lost a good friend this week. Not the sort of friend you see all the time and chat to regularly but the someone whom I had known for a long time and would catch up with when I could.

It was that sort of friendship which you fall back into with ease, as though you had only seen each other yesterday. Sadly, sometimes we get to look back and to realise that we haven't seen each other enough, picked up the phone enough. Now, I have lost that opportunity.

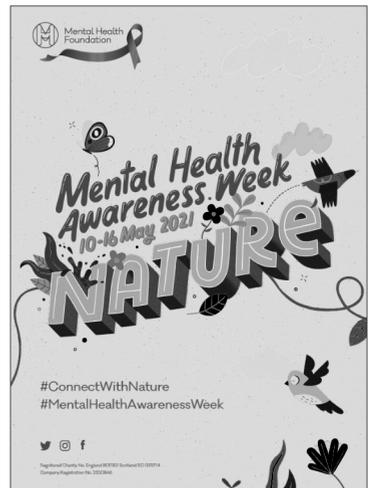
Friends are invaluable, sometimes described as the family we choose. You can't always tell, though, who will be a friend or who won't. It's hard to know what makes a good friend: shared experiences, humour, interests and mutual friends all have a part to play. Some people come into our lives as friends for a period of time and then we move on, others journey with us for much longer. I once heard

friendship described as a train journey: some people travel with us, some move to different carriages, some get on and off, some leave the train for ever.

During Covid, friends and family have been vitally important in determining how we feel. It may have been virtual cuppas, phone calls, Zoom quizzes or shared walks, but all have helped us to feel connected and supported at a time when we have felt isolated and disconnected.



PAULINE IS THE LAY MINISTER AT ST NICOLAS' CHURCH, KINGS NORTON



As I write this, we are coming to the end of **Mental Health Awareness Week** and, for possibly the first time, mental health is starting to be talked about as a priority. The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the issues of mental ill health, but we still have a long way to go before it is discussed without stigma. We don't talk about mental and physical health in the same way, which means that mental health is still a taboo subject for many people. We aren't very good at talking honestly about how we feel. Most of us will have avoided the subject when asked how we are, replying "Fine" instead of actually admitting to how we feel. That's something we don't tend to do if we have pulled a muscle or have had a cold.

It is often men who have the biggest issue with this and it has been encouraging recently to see more men talking about their mental health on social media, in particular about suicide.

Suicide results in the death of over 6,500 people every year in this country. Middle-aged men are the most at risk and there have been alarming increases in the numbers of young people taking their own lives. Despite this, suicide is rarely discussed.



PHOTO BY ELEVATE

We need to talk about how we feel and a chat with a friend can make all the difference. A phone call or a message to a friend to see how they are doing can be, quite literally, a life saver. So, as restrictions begin to be lifted and life returns to some sort of normality, make sure you find time to check in with your friends, to catch up, have a natter, reminisce, laugh and just spend time together.

▲ NOW, MORE THAN EVER, FRIENDSHIP IS SOMETHING TO BE TREASURED.

Samuel Ball Esq, Inspector of Teas



A Kings Norton link with the great days of British trade.

Now that the Baptistry in St Nicolas' Church is relatively free of builder's paraphernalia, a particularly interesting memorial plaque under its window can be seen again.

It is dedicated to Samuel Ball of Sion Hill, Wolverley, who died in March 1874 at the age of 93 and is buried in our churchyard. He was the father of Caroline Gem (1801-1878), wife of The Revd Samuel Harvey Gem (1806-1887), whose family owned Brandwood House at Brandwood End, one of the more imposing homes in the parish at the time.

Rather exotically, the plaque describes Samuel as "formerly of the Honourable East India Company Civil Service and sometime one of the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society".

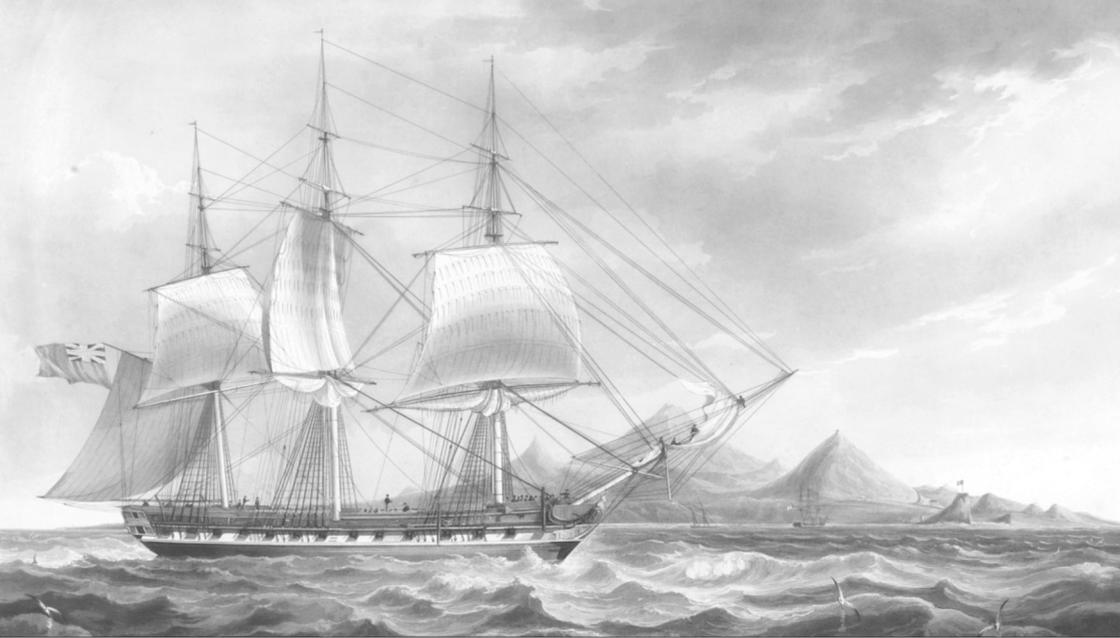
As a historian with a particular interest in British history, and a



MICHAEL
WRITES
REGULARLY
ON LOCAL
HISTORY

great admirer of those of our predecessors who made Britain for some 300 years the greatest and most admired trading nation in the world, I find phrases such as "The East India Company" and "The Royal Asiatic Society" very evocative. Intrigued by the idea that a man with links to Kings Norton should have played a role in those organisations, I decided to look a little further into the life of Mr Ball. It became even more fascinating because it emerged that he was also the author of a book about a product that was one of the most significant factors in the development of this country's trading dominance: China tea.

His pioneering book was published in 1848. In those days titles were rather less concise than they are now; it was called "An account of the cultivation and manufacture of tea in China: derived from personal



observations during an official residence in that country from 1804 to 1826; and illustrated by the best Authorities; Chinese as well as Europeans; with remarks on the Experiments no making for the introduction of the culture of the Tea Tree in other parts of the world". The book defined its author as "Samuel Ball Esq, Late Inspector of Teas to the Hon United East India Company in China". It was published by Longmans of London in 1848. It was a significant book for its time, with three plates and numerous engravings.

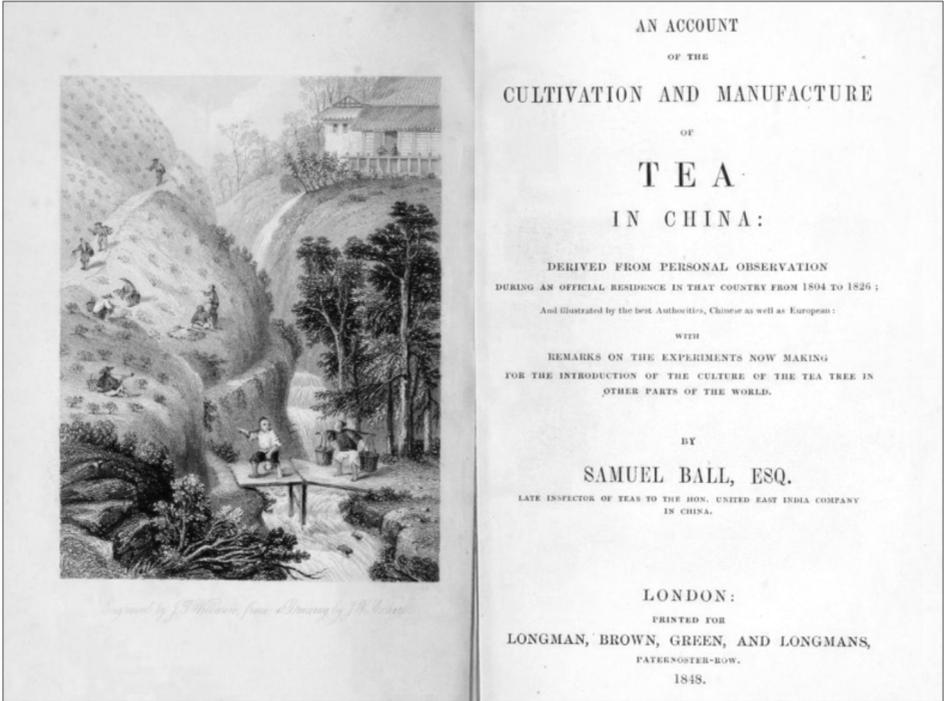
Samuel was probably the country's leading authority on the subject at a time when tea was a very significant and, in western countries, a much rarer product than it is now. Professionally, he had the major responsibility of ensuring that

▲THE
H.C.S.WARREN
HASTINGS OFF
THE COAST OF
ASCENSION
ISLAND IN 1823.

H.C.S. STOOD
FOR
*HONOURABLE
COMPANY SHIP,*
A REFERENCE
TO THE EAST
INDIA
COMPANY.

the China tea traded by the EIC was of optimum quality: for example, at one stage he alerted the company that some of the "brick" tea (tea supplied pressed into block form for ease of transport) that was being offered to the company by producers was in fact of inferior quality, being produced hundreds of miles away from the Bohea or Black Tea areas of China, which produced a superior quality.

This was a vital issue at the time. We take tea for granted now: it's a ubiquitous drink for everyone. It's hard to imagine that in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries it was a truly exclusive product. Its appeal was enhanced in European minds by the fact that it had come from China, to anyone in Britain an unimaginably remote part of the world, only brought



here through the bravery of men in ships such as the tea clipper *Cutty Sark*, ploughing thousands of miles through hostile seas.

Tea was for many decades so expensive that only the very highest levels of society could afford it. That's why, if you watch antique shows, you regularly see exotic tea caddies dating back to the Georgian era, equipped with locks to deter servants from stealing the contents!

Samuel would have been aware that the history of tea spreads across multiple cultures over the span of thousands of years. It originated in southwest China

▲ THE
FRONTISPIECE
OF SAMUEL
BALL'S TOME.

as a medicinal drink. It first became known to western civilisation through Portuguese priests bringing it back home during the early 16th century. Drinking tea became highly fashionable in Britain during the 17th century. As it developed its empire, Britain actually introduced tea production to India, to help break down the Chinese monopoly.

The British East India Company (EIC) was, for nearly 300 years, a focal point of our nation's worldwide trade. Founded in 1600, it was formed to trade in the Indian Ocean region, initially with the East Indies (the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia), and later with China.

| | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------|----------------|----------|-----|----|--|-------------------|
| 73 | Lion Hill | Samuel Ball | Head | Mar | 70 | One of the East India Company's Civil Servants in China, Income derived from Dividends of Investment and Foreign Funds | Mayfair London |
| | | Amey Con | Wife | Mar | 45 | London & Home Inspector | Regent's Park |
| | | Caroline H | Daughter | Mar | 49 | | St Pancras London |
| | | Samuel Amey Jr | Son | Mar | 14 | Schooler | Mayfair London |

AN EXTRACT FROM THE 1851 CENSUS SHOWING SAMUEL BALL, AGED 70, AND HIS HOUSEHOLD. "OCCUPATION : LATE OF EAST INDIA COMPANY'S CIVIL SERVICE IN CHINA. INCOME DERIVED FROM DIVIDENDS OF INVESTMENT AND FOREIGN FUNDS." © PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE.

From relatively small beginnings, the company rose to account for half of the world's trade during the mid-1700s and early 1800s, dominating trade in basic commodities, not only tea, but cotton, sugar, salt, spices, tea and opium. Other countries had their own versions, but the British EIC was more successful than the rest put together.

The company built up a very substantial international administrative organisation called its Civil Service and its success brought a new dimension to its activities that had never been anticipated by its founders. It came to play a crucial role in the evolution the British Empire in India where, because of its established

▼ BRANDWOOD HOUSE, WHERE SAMUEL WOULD NO DOUBT HAVE STAYED WITH THE GEMS DURING HIS VISITS TO KINGS NORTON. THOUGHT TO DATE FROM 1638. NOW DEMOLISHED.

administration, it was charged by the British government with bringing under control significant areas of the subcontinent. The company eventually came to rule large areas of India, employing military force through its own armies, to support its administrative power. The Company's rule in India effectively began in 1757, after the Battle of Plassey subdued hostile domestic kings and princes, and lasted until 1858 when, following the Indian Mutiny, the British Crown took direct control of India in the form of the new British Raj.

By then, the EIC had been suffering recurring problems with its finances. The government intervened on



PHOTO COURTESY OF KINGS HEATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

several occasions to prop it up, but it was dissolved in 1874, ironically the year in which Samuel Ball passed away.

As it says on his memorial plaque, Samuel was also a member of the Council of The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. This organisation, founded by Royal Charter, was created by the late Georgian government as part of a continuing effort to help the advancement of the relatively unsophisticated nations (in the Western perception!) that were part of the Empire. The RAS was specifically charged with “furthering the investigation of subjects connected with and for the encouragement of science,

literature and the arts in relation to Asia.” From its incorporation the society, which still exists today, has been a key forum and a continuing focus for scholarship relating to Asian culture and society.

For Samuel not only to become a member of this organisation, but also to serve on its Council at a formative stage of its development, is a tribute to his abilities and the significance of his professional role with the EIC in the hey-day of British world influence.

A facsimile of Samuel Ball’s book may be read online at:

bit.ly/3omTjtc

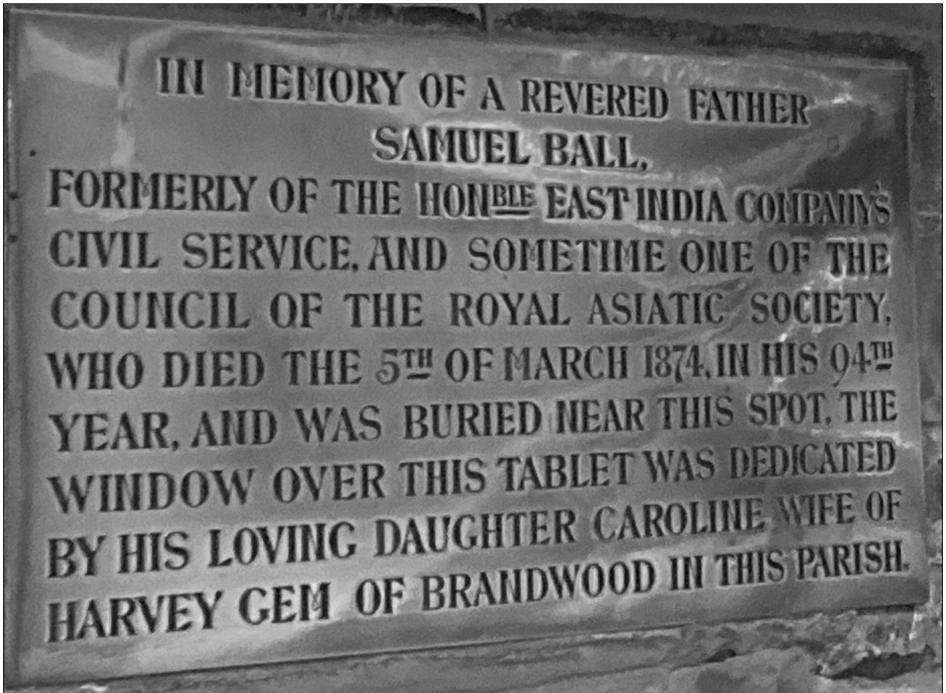


PHOTO BY MICHAEL KENNEDY

Baking through Lockdown

Claire Whitmore is training for ordained ministry in the Church of England. As part of her studies at the Queen's Foundation in Edgbaston, she will be on placement in Kings Norton parish during June and July.

Here, she introduces herself, husband Dave, Ziggy the Cat and her reasons for venturing north of Watford in response to God's call.

I sat and wept in Coventry Cathedral. I wept as I looked at the huge tapestry of Christ in Glory hanging behind the altar, and as I felt Christ look back at me. In Jesus' loving gaze, I felt the barriers and obstacles I had thrown up as reasons not to follow God's call melt away. In their place I found a stronger, clearer sense that God wanted me, my whole self, to take a step of faith.

Nearly four years later, following God's call has led me on a great adventure. I've left my job, my home and my friends in South London and God has brought me to Birmingham. For almost two

years my husband Dave and I have been living on campus at the Queen's Foundation while I train for ordination in the Church of England. This stage of my training will last three years, so I have one more to go before I start curacy in 2022, God willing. Dave works for Christian Aid as a data analyst, at the moment completely from home, although the original plan was for weekly trips to the London office.

At Queen's I've studied doctrine from the perspectives of theologians from around the world and across history, I've learned many different ways to





▲ "THE HUGE TAPESTRY OF CHRIST IN GLORY HANGING BEHIND THE ALTAR" IN COVENTRY CATHEDRAL.

approach and engage with the Bible, devotionally and academically, and I've been taught how to prayerfully craft sermons and services with the intended congregation in mind. I'm just beginning to start work on a dissertation, for which I'm hoping to research how reading the Bible can help us in anti-racism work. My "link church" has been St Laurence Church, Northfield, where I've been fortunate to be involved with moving services and ministry online and through the post, taken part in Bible study and discussion groups, and helped with baptism and wedding preparation.

Dave and I have spent our time in Birmingham exploring urban walking routes and waterways, developed a taste for Damascena falafel and adopted our cat, Ziggy. Like many people I baked my way through lockdown. I now make all the bread we eat at home as well as

doughnuts, pretzels and, of course, cake. I've also knitted four shawls, a blanket (yet to be stitched together), a cardigan and innumerable baby hats in the last year!

I'm looking forward to putting some of my academic learning and training into practice on placement in King's Norton in June and early July. You'll see me taking part in services on Sunday mornings, but I'll also be around in the week, helping with funeral ministry, with some of the work with children and young people and all sorts of other things. I'm also going to be spending time with Catherine in Druid's Heath, getting involved with some of the exciting projects happening there.

Please do say hello and introduce yourself if you see me around. I'd love to get to know you and hear your story too.

BARBARA WILKINSON

Our Church

Kings Norton, ca.1955

A beautiful sight met our eyes
As we reached the top of the hill.
We gazed down upon a valley
At a scene so green and still.

The steeple of a stately church
Towered above the trees so high,
A bold and distinctive structure
That looked black against the sky.



A magnificent building in all its glory
Overlooking the village green.
We were struck by such great beauty
Of that simple, homely scene.

Now we live in that small village
And from our window we can see
The steeple of that lovely church
That is so dear to me.

Curate on the Move



The following announcement appeared in the church newsletter on Sunday 23rd May 2021.

As our pioneer curate on Druids Heath for the last 3 years, Catherine has fostered relationships with residents and agencies through sustained presence and prayer. Hope-filled ministries and projects are emerging. Curates' posts are of three years duration and, much as Catherine desired to remain in Druids Heath, Diocesan resources are not available.

Through discerning the Spirit's calling for her future, Catherine has accepted a post in Lichfield Diocese where she will develop pioneer ministry, located in Stoke-on-Trent. **Her last Sunday with us will be 18th July.** More details to follow, but please pray for her and the folk of Druids Heath at this time of change.

The Revd Larry Wright

THE HUNGRY GARDENER

Midsummer Garden Party



Claire is a keen kitchen gardener, ably assisted by her 5-year-old son Charles.

It's been a strange spring with plants and trees seeming to be a few weeks behind where they should be for this time of year.

There are always some silver linings. Our magnolia tree had a very long flowering period (interestingly, the petals are edible). It may now be all change as we approach midsummer on the 21st June. With the blessing of warm nights throughout May, there's every hope that things are catching up now.

Midsummer is the point in the year when everything seems to be flowering. Explore the nature reserves, along the canal. There are flowers everywhere. It's like they've all been invited to a party and are putting on their best. The edibles have jumped on the bandwagon too. If you are growing lettuces you may notice them shoot towards the

sky. For the hungry gardener, it's an opportunity to save seed from flowers and to savour some edible bounties.

On the allotment (Charles' "Faraway Garden") we are enjoying the first of the spuds. Charles loves to help me dig for the potatoes and find the buried treasure. My signature dish is potato salad with homemade mayo lovingly put together with our homegrown spuds.

We grow hard-neck garlic that produce flowers, also known as scapes. So delicious! This gives the garlic a chance to develop the bulbs. If I let the flowers grow we would have very small garlic bulbs. These scapes are delicious in all sorts of ways. I chop them and use them in place of garlic when lightly frying vegetables. They are delicious stir-fried or roasted. If you have some, experiment away!

Soon, we'll have globe artichokes. I love these steamed and then I eat the base of each petal dipped in french salad dressing. Delicious!

In our back garden, the peas and broad beans are well and truly in season. I grow two varieties of peas which I've saved for about ten years. One was from a seed swap and the other is from Garden Organic's Heritage Seed Library and is called Purple Pod. I wouldn't be without either. Purple Pod's flowers are stunning. The green peas are super sweet and tender. Charles likes to eat them straight from the pod. He's got good taste!

I also grow a broad bean called Beryl, also originally from the Heritage Seed Library, which has beautiful, perfectly white flowers and small broad beans which are very tender.

Late May or early June is a good time to plant out tender

plants. I will be planting out pumpkins, courgettes, pattipans, cucumbers, tomatoes, sweetcorn, sunflowers and cape gooseberries. The peppers, chillies (I am so happy I managed to get them to germinate this year), aubergines, plum tomatoes and luffas have just moved into the greenhouse. These will thrive equally well on a sunny windowsill.

This is the month when I take a rest from seed sowing. There's enough to do! It's a good month to sit back and enjoy the view of all the blooms in the garden. Some of the best blooms are to be found amongst the edibles.



PHOTO BY MARKUS SPISKE



WHEN T.M. MET M.T.

We're moving house this week as I write this. Heavens to Betsy, what a shop of horrors! There's the attempt to get all the ducks in a row: our buyers, our sellers, agents, surveyors, solicitors, removals company ... the list has gone on, stress levels are off the scale but at last we have the end in sight.

We have learned a big lesson, which we really knew in our heart of hearts. Never, ever store things up to the rafters in your garage, meaning to sort through them some time! That bird has come home to roost in a big way, but now we have a pristine, cleared garage. We've decluttered our lives somewhat in the meantime, though I confess to the occasional rescue of a book before it went to Winterbourne or some kitchen equipment before it went off to the charity shop. And maybe one or two other things. My maxim to others has always been that if it isn't sorted and done in the first six months, it never will be. If only I had taken my own advice.

And who knew quite how many family, friends and companies required notification of a change the address? Some of the latter need a final online registration. They send a code to your mobile for confirmation online, some so long and complex that I doubt Bletchley Park could have cracked them!

Bright spots include the welcome finds of things forgotten but loved, the cries of "That's where that went to!" as a treasured item is unearthed under some garden tools. One of these is a photo taken with another visitor in 1989 (looking impossibly young) in Calcutta where we met Mother Teresa at the orphanage (p.44).

As a mature student, I was on my way, with other Lancaster University undergraduates, to complete a three-month study course in world religions at Dharmaram College, Bangalore (now Bengaluru). It is situated in pleasant parkland near Lalbagh Botanical Gardens and is on



**THELMA MITCHELL IS A
VOLUNTARY CHAPLAIN AT
BOURNVILLE COLLEGE**

the bus route to Mahatma Gandhi Road with its lovely shopping experiences. You are seated and offered refreshments while you choose a sari or pashmina or length of silk or brocade, all wrapped beautifully and delivered to where you are staying. Then off to Nilgiris for home-made cake and a lime soda to recover from the exertions.

Oh, and the college is opposite the Bangalore Dairy which makes the best peda, an Indian sweet of semolina flavoured with cardamon and cooked to a fudge-like consistency in condensed milk. There would be queues of local workers almost constantly waiting to buy boxes. I managed to catch a severe dose of dengue fever while I was there, recovering by eating bananas and peda, and drinking fresh, sweet, lime juice, made daily for me by one of the brothers at the monastic guest house where we were staying.

Classes were held seven days a week in the mornings and often in the evenings, so some work was done! We had been expected to have travelled around India before we arrived, visiting famous and less well-known religious sites. We often stayed overnight on trains or in

“Never, ever store things up to the rafters in your garage, meaning to sort through them some time!”

hostels and met many interesting people. I tend to suffer from severe culture shock so the first two weeks passed in a haze. After that, though, I picked up the rhythm and pace of India, enjoying so many new sights and ways of life. India had one of the oldest telephone system at the time, installed by the British. A phone call home would be blighted by booming interference and we fell on any letters which arrived. Now, of course, India has state of the art communication systems and is a world centre of IT development.

We had three dissertations to complete of our own choice during the course related to India and to religion. My first was on Jain Temple art and architecture. I completed a final 10,000-word dissertation on Indian religion and music, a first for LU apparently. In between, I wrote about Mother Teresa, her life and work.

Mother Teresa was born in what is now North Macedonia and was Albanian-Indian by nationality. Initially a Sister of the Loreto Order, she learned Bengali and taught at the convent school in Darjeeling, in the lower Himalayas, moving later to the Loreto convent school near Calcutta.



She enjoyed teaching but became increasingly concerned by the surrounding poverty of Calcutta, which came to a crisis during the severe famine across Bengal in 1943 which brought untold misery and death in its wake. She was given permission to found a new order in 1948, the Missionaries of Charity, with their distinctive dress of a white sari with blue borders. Their mission was to help the poorest of the poor, "the hungry, the crippled, the blind, the lepers, all those people who feel who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society, people who have become a burden to society and are shunned by everyone."

After basic medical training, with help from the officials of Calcutta she opened the Order's first

hospice in a disused Hindu temple, creating a safe, comfortable place in which to die with dignity and with respect for people of all faiths. After a tough first year, with no money nor much help, she was tempted to return to the comfort of the convent. However, the work began to attract both funding and recruits. Later, hospices, orphanages and leprosy houses were opened by the Order across the world, and offshoots created.

One of my memories is of a sister telling me that, originally, Mother Teresa wanted the Order to live on the diet of the starving. It was pointed out to her that her sisters had to be healthy to help others. Their diet is now largely vegetarian, with rice- based carbohydrate and nut-based protein.

One persistent criticism has been that she did not challenge the system, nor ask why people were so poor that they died alone on the streets, uncomforted. Like the foodbanks, maybe some people have to be there to put the plasters on, to meet the immediate need, while it is the role of others to contest those with power. The year before I arrived in India, Mother Teresa came to London and called out an uncomfortable Margaret Thatcher on homelessness in the UK.

When I met her, she had recently returned from a long journey and was not very well. A week later she suffered a second heart attack. Her death on 5th September 1997 was largely overshadowed by that of Diana, Princess of Wales earlier that week. She was canonized in the Roman

Catholic church as St. Teresa of Calcutta on 4th September 2016.

You win every battle but the last battle in India. I remember disputing over pennies with rickshaw drivers because the last one had overcharged. Nonetheless, I fell in love with the country and was grateful to return a number of times, taking my own students with me and introducing them to its glories, as well as its horrific inequalities. Suddenly, India is at the forefront of the news for the wrong reasons. We are very aware of the rapid development of a variant of Covid-19 in the country, the unpreparedness of their government for it and the rapidly escalating daily deaths, as well as the intense suffering inflicted because of shortages of basics which we take for granted, like oxygen.

I pray for strength and courage for our sisters and brothers in India, especially in the most marginalised communities, for the medicines and equipment which are needed and for support for all carers and health workers.

Since I started this article we have actually moved house. The words "Never again!" are uppermost in our minds. Amidst boxes everywhere, with fantastic help from the family and support of friends, especially at St. Nicolas', we've begun the creation of a new home and, we pray, a place of welcome.

Somewhat out of context but a comfort anyway, the Lord says in Deuteronomy 28, verse 3; "You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country." Amen to that!

Maybe I'll be glad to return to the theme of plagues, pandemics and post-Covid plans next month! I close by paraphrasing Joshua 1, verse 9; "The Lord our God goes with us, he will never leave us or forsake us."

Eating Out Overseas

Over the years I have spent at sea, I have had the good fortune to visit many countries. During visits to various ports I would often have a meal ashore in a local restaurant. I encountered many different types of food. Most were enjoyable but, on the odd occasion, I would come across something that was not at all appealing.

A popular venue with seafarers in Rotterdam was the "Monty Bar", where food was available. The whole place was festooned with items from ships which had been gathered over the ages, which created a nice atmosphere. One speciality on the main menu was *nasi goreng* (Indonesian fried rice). It comprised a large plate of rice with many ingredients and came with small wooden skewers holding pieces of satay chicken and a dollop of satay sauce. The whole platter was served with a fried egg on top. The dish originated when the



Dutch held colonies in the East Indies.

Now to the USA. I always enjoyed eating out in the States. After eating many delicious meals there, I am not too surprised that many Americans are rather corpulent. The portions always seem to be very generous. However, there was one exception. I had flown to New Orleans prior to joining a ship and spent the night in a hotel. In the morning, I decided to go for a walk and entered a diner to have some breakfast. I ordered fried eggs, bacon and hash browns. The waitress asked, "Do you want grits with that?" Having often heard grits mentioned in films, I decided to try some out of curiosity. Well, breakfast was served with a white, sloppy heap on the side of the plate. It was quite tasteless. Grits appeared to be some form of cereal. Never again!

These days, Australia has a most diverse range of food, due to the presence of many immigrants who have arrived over the years. At one stage, though, in the late 1950s to the early 60s, the choice of food was rather limited. Barbecues and roasts were the norm. Seafood was very cheap and crayfish or lobster were readily available, usually served with chips, salad and tomato sauce.

Japan is very interesting food-wise, unlike some other parts of the Far East. (I will not dwell on the food which I have been offered in some parts of China or Korea, where they serve dog meat, for example). I spent over a month in Kobe, where there was a wide choice of places to eat out. I enjoyed visiting a Japanese pancake house, for example, where the food was cooked in front of the diners seated around a counter.

Japanese seafood dishes such as sushi are very healthy. If I was going ashore for a few beers, I would generally end up in a Japanese soba restaurant, where you could get a large bowl of noodles served in a type of stew. It was quite warming, which was welcome in winter, and cheap too.

I made friends with a couple of Japanese men there, one of whom spoke English. They once pointed out a speciality restaurant which served fugu (河豚), a fish which is very expensive because the chef has to have three or more years of rigorous training and a government license before being allowed to serve it. Certain parts of this puffer fish are more toxic than cyanide, yet the Japanese eat more than 10,000 tons of it each year!



This month, Eddie Matthews takes us on a culinary world tour.

More About The Bathtub

Dear Editor

Your article about the opening in 1937 of 'The Bathtub', or West Heath Lido, brought back strong memories for me. I was there as a six-year-old, and recall the excitement and spectacle, though at that age Gracie Fields didn't mean much to me!

I'm fairly certain that one of the reasons for the venue's short life, or perhaps an issue following its closure, was that its spectacular, immense swimming pool posed a major problem. I'm sure local people were told that as World War Two developed, whenever the moonlight shone on the pool it provided a perfect sighting point for German bombers seeking to inflict damage on the Austin works at Longbridge. The factory had, as most readers will be aware, been turned over from car manufacture to the production of a wide range of military equipment, including aeroplanes.

Though I'm sure that recollection is correct, I can't remember quite what was done. Was the pool covered, drained or even filled in? Do any of your other readers know the answer?

Keith Ackrill



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Hawkesley Church NEWS

We hope to start two groups at **Hawkesley Church**. *Knit & Natter* on a weekly basis, commencing Wednesday June 30th between 10.00 am and midday. Please contact 0121 624 0552 if interested. Also *Coffee & Chat* for seniors, commencing Tuesday July 6th on a fortnightly basis, between 10.00 am and 11.15 am. If interested please contact 0121 628 1247.

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