

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

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Welcome

EDITORIAL

"In the language of flowers," Wikipedia tells us, "the snowdrop is synonymous with hope." What better symbol to choose, then, to herald the imminent arrival of Spring? There is an ancient association between the snowdrop, which the French call the "Candlemas violet", and that Christian festival, held on 2nd February, when, 40 days after celebrating the birth of Christ, we commemorate his Presentation in the Temple and Simeon's recognition of him as the Light of the World. The first flower of the year emerges as if in defiance of bleak winter with a promise of hope, renewal and light, as the days lengthen.

Hope and defiance emerge as twin themes in this edition. You will detect echoes of them in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's joyful determination to confront evil (p.4), in the unexpected benefits which Covid has brought to pupils and teachers (p.8), in the determination of older motorists to keep on driving (p.24), and even in such details as Claire's recommendation (p.31) of the *Ecosia* web browser, which uses your internet searches to fight climate change. While Thelma exhorts us to "hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess" (p.32), Eddie holds on to great expectations (p.36) and our gardeners encourage us to nurture new life.

Though I have no way of knowing, I am fairly confident that some of our readers must be male and a few may be gregarious. If that description fits you, you may be especially interested in the 2022 programme for the parish's new Men's Group on p.27. If it doesn't, but you know a man who would enjoy what's on offer, why not splash out and buy him his own copy of this month's edition?

Happy reading!



David Ash

Meeting Desmond Tutu

Larry Wright looks back at the life and influence of one of the greatest Christian leaders of recent history.

The death of Archbishop Tutu on the 26th of December (St Stephen's Day) cast a shadow over the ending of the old year. Another one of a dwindling number of global spiritual figures is lost to us. May he rest in peace and rise in glory! Who will carry the light of faith into the complexities and ambiguities of today's global challenges? An imperative for prayer if ever there was one.

As I have read various tributes and obituaries, what had stood out is the consistency of his advocacy for his key themes of justice, peace and reconciliation and the enthusiasm and effectiveness of his communication skills. He spoke with wisdom, humour and depth into some of the most contentious religious and political issues

of the past 50 years and did so with a natural and homely appeal. His wisdom emerged from his struggles, his love of Anglican theology and his culture. He could be surprisingly disarming as, when interviewed in the heat of the anti-apartheid struggle, he was asked by a probing journalist, "Why should the President of South Africa intent on retaining an apartheid regime speak with you who wish his and its downfall?" Archbishop Tutu paused and replied, "You see, President Botha and I are both Christians, parents and grandparents. I will begin any conversation talking about our children and grandchildren and the future we hope for them."

His sense of fun was legendary as was his ability to laugh at himself. He radiated a childlike warmth which could be disquieting and disarming. He would joke about his skin colour, his heavy accent and his faults. A sense of humour was necessary during his early years as a priest when the Anglican Church in Africa was still dominated by English colonial culture and most Bishops were white. His evident gifts propelled him into leadership as the South African Church became more Africanised and developed leaders of stature and competence. It's worth noting



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

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM



PHOTO BY REMY STEINEGGER

that the white Bishops of the time were promoting the move to indigenous leadership as a witness to the transition of global Anglicanism from an Empire mentality to one of Commonwealth.

One aspect of his life and spirituality which doesn't feature in the obituaries is his attraction to the spirituality of St Francis of Assisi.

Archbishop Tutu associated himself with the Anglican Franciscan movement throughout his ministry. At a conference in the late 1980s of the European Province of Third Order Franciscans, he was the key speaker and I was

↑ **Desmond M. Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of South Africa at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, February 1, 2009.**

one of the 300+ delegates. To be in his presence was a mixed and memorable experience.

I'm not a person easily drawn to radical or revolutionary ideas and, though part of the anti-apartheid movement in the UK, I feared that the use of violence by elements of the movement in South Africa would undermine the moral high ground achieved for the cause by the non-violent, gradualist approach of leaders such as Tutu. By the time of this conference, South Africa was in violent turmoil as the regime clung to power while the tide of history was rapidly turning against them. This

month we celebrate the 32nd anniversary of the release of Nelson Mandela on the 11th February 1990, which marked the final days of apartheid.

Of the main speeches Tutu gave at the conference I remember nothing. It is his charisma, openness, joy and hopefulness which has stayed with me. I recall asking myself "How can this man express such hope in the future, such love of his enemies and belief in a better world while in the midst of the bloody violence and oppression he witnesses every day in his beloved country?" His virtue challenged my prejudice and his joy undermined my cynicism. If he could keep the flame of Christlike love of enemies alive in South Africa, why couldn't I see, as he did, that the people clinging onto power and apartheid were also children of God and equally victims of its toxic, corrupt ideology?

Thus, the seeds were planted in my own heart of the need to avoid dividing the world into categories of good and evil, them and us, friend or foe. With our current political, ideological and religious divisions in the world, Tutu's appeals for inclusiveness and tolerance of difference are as powerful as ever.

On 1st February 2004 he preached at St Alban's

Cathedral on the feast of the Presentation of Christ at the Temple. The following extract summarises his profound commitment to seeing everyone as if through the eyes of God.

"To be partakers of the divine nature means we become more and more God-like, treating all with an even-handedness, even those we regard as evil. For you know, even the most evil, the Shipmans, the Saddam Husseins, Bin Ladens - we may not like it - but they remain God's children. This God, who lets God's sun shine on good and bad alike; who makes God's rain fall on all, for all, and we, who want to be God-like, are asked to forgive, even as God has forgiven us in Christ, forgive even that which we consider to be unforgivable. To be like this God, who gives up on no-one, who loves us, not because we are loveable but that we become loveable only because God loves us, God loves us with a love that will not let us go, a love that loved us before we were created, a love that loves us now, a love that will love us forever, world without end. A love that says of each single one of us: "I love you, you are precious and special to me, I love you as if you were the only human being on earth, I love you and there is nothing you can do to make me love you more because I already love you perfectly."

More Wisdom from Tutu

During his address at the Nelson Mandela Foundation on 23 November 2004, Archbishop Tutu said: "My father always used to say, 'Don't raise your voice. Improve your argument.' Good sense does not always lie with the loudest shouters, nor can we say that a large, unruly crowd is always the best arbiter of what is right."

In *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*, he wrote: "When we see others as the enemy, we risk becoming what we hate. When we oppress others, we end up oppressing ourselves. All of our humanity is dependent upon recognising the humanity in others."

In *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*, which Desmond Tutu co-wrote with the 14th Dalai Lama, he wrote: "The Dead Sea in the Middle East receives freshwater, but it has no outlet, so it doesn't pass the water out. It receives beautiful water from the rivers, and the water goes dank. I mean, it just goes bad. And that's why it is the Dead Sea. It receives and does not give. In the end, generosity is the best way of becoming more, more, and more joyful,"

Tutu was quoted by Robert McAfee Brown in his 1984 book, *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*, as saying: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."

The internet is a rich source of quotations attributed to Archbishop Tutu. Among them are these:

We may be surprised at the people we find in heaven. God has a soft spot for sinners. His standards are quite low.

You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them.

Be nice to the whites, they need you to rediscover their humanity.

We must be ready to learn from one another, not claiming that we alone possess all truth and that somehow we have a corner on God.

Lockdown Schooling

Research from across the world shows reasons to be hopeful

When COVID shuttered schools across the world in 2020, the way teachers delivered their lessons and students did their classwork changed overnight. As one Boston-based secondary school student wrote in a recent case study, "bedrooms turned into school classrooms, living rooms turned into science laboratories and backyards turned into workout gyms."

Two years on, this shift to remote and, subsequently, hybrid learning has presented many challenges. It has caused stress and confusion for teaching staff and pupils alike. But it has brought surprising benefits too.

A recent report drawing together the results of 81 studies of secondary schools from 38 countries has highlighted how complementary these digital learning methods can be to traditional methods of schooling. Pupils have found working at their own pace, and without the social pressures of the classroom, beneficial. Even as we face the prospect of continued disruption in 2022, these are reasons to be hopeful.

Digital skills

During the pandemic, many schools had to make greater use of learning management systems and apps, in order to improve communication between school and home. It might seem obvious, but having to work remotely has encouraged teachers and students to revisit and enhance their digital skills. This has stimulated innovation and creative thinking, and prompted students to develop skills



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in using multiple digital tools and resources effectively for learning, such as those reported in a US study.

Many students have showed an increased ability to study and to problem-solve independently. Teachers in Hong Kong reported that students had developed problem-solving methods that their teachers hadn't taught them.

Of the 2,824 secondary school pupils who responded to a survey in Slovakia, meanwhile, most said they'd found learning at their own pace to be invaluable. Having the ability to re-watch instructional videos helped them gain deeper understanding of their subjects and maintain a connection to their teachers.

In England, Sweden and the US, several students who, pre-pandemic, were reluctant to take part in lessons or go to class at all, reported becoming more involved and engaged with their schoolwork during lockdown, because they felt less social pressure. Instrumental music students in Australia also showed improvement in their social skills,

▼PUPILS HAVE FOUND WORKING AT THEIR OWN PACE, AND WITHOUT THE SOCIAL PRESSURES OF THE CLASSROOM, BENEFICIAL





PHOTO BY AUGUST DE RICHELIEU

including communication, negotiation and active listening.

Students in Austria, the US and Portugal also benefited from interacting with their peers. Remote learning gave them new methods of collaboration, including developing interactive ePortfolios, using discussion boards to share ideas and conduct school work with peers, as well as collaborating on authentic tasks such as co-creating digital posters and videos, and distributing them via social media.

One US study reported that using the chat function in Google Meet during live lessons, combined with editing work and writing comments in Google Docs, was particularly

helpful for students to collaborate and stay in touch with their peers.

Communication and assessment

For some countries, shifting to online assessment, when they had formerly adopted a heavily standardised test-based culture, was quite difficult, as this now demanded alternative assessment methods that could also secure trustworthy results.

While some countries forbade assessment during lockdown, our review uncovered the opposite too: no fewer than 21 online assessment strategies were identified. Thus, having to rely heavily on technology during lockdown did open new and

creative modes of assessment design and delivery.

The two most common strategies used were formative assessment (monitoring learning in order to provide feedback) and online quizzes, identified in 16% of the studies we looked at. While formative assessment has previously been found to boost student learning, the two strategies were employed for different reasons.

Formative assessment, often conducted in real time, was supported by video-conferencing tools. It enabled teachers to see and hear their students, which supported the assessment of literature talk and language assessment, including role plays, online debates and drama performances. Teachers also reported that this real-time interaction supported a sense of social presence, which is important for student wellbeing.

Online quizzes, meanwhile, allowed students to check their understanding at their own pace, which helped, as reported in an Indonesian study of Year 10 students, to stave off boredom. Being auto-corrected, quizzes also helped to decrease teachers' work load. Lastly, this kind of digital assessment was also easily shared between teachers, which supported equality and re-usability.

Parental engagement

Some parents reported enhanced digital skills as a result of the pandemic. But the main takeaway

“The main takeaway has been parents’ increased impetus to engage more in their children’s learning”

has been parents' increased impetus to engage more in their children's learning.

Research in Nigeria found that giving parents greater access to what their children were learning helped to improve the students' commitment to learning online. In Vietnam, having parents on board in this way was found to make the whole process more effective.

Being able to access meetings with teachers virtually has also reduced social barriers for some families. A survey conducted by ParentPing in December 2020, found that both parents and teachers wanted to keep parents' evenings virtual, or at least be given the option to do so.

School, more broadly, can and should become more flexible. Ensuring that it does will encourage inclusion and accessibility. It will support lifelong learning.

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Adam gets a surprise

It's midday, the sun is shining and a blue sky has some wispy high clouds. The cherry blossom outside the window is being visited for pollen by honey bees, oh, and a bumble bee. This is not terribly remarkable except that today is New Years Day! Will this pattern of mild, damp days become a feature of our winters? How long will it continue? What difference will it make to garden habits as they have existed for many years?

[...]

I am now writing three days later and there is a snowstorm swirling about the cherry tree and not a bee in sight. Mild air from the Azores has been replaced by very cold air from the North Atlantic. Whatever happens in the future I know that gardeners will adapt, come what may.

I did say that I would provide a list of proven plants for the conservatory, greenhouse or lean-to greenhouse. Some of these also make good houseplants provided they are close to a window to provide some daylight all the year round. In my opinion, a minimum temperature of 5 -10 degrees C. must be available in winter. Personally I have found that a small 650 watt oil filled radiator with a thermostat just fits the bill.

Firstly a list of **Award of Garden Merit perennials:**

Plumbago auriculata – soft blue flowers in waves a couple of weeks apart.

Trachelospermum asiaticum – climber with jasmine-like scented flowers.

Stephanotis floribunda – another fragrant climber with waxy white flowers.

Passiflora "Snow Queen" - big white flowers and described by one writer as an absolute "must have". This and other passion flowers can look a little forlorn in winter but grow vigorously in the summer.

Pandora jasminoides, tubular white blooms with a magenta throat.

Jasminum azoricum from Madeira – the lemon-scented jasmine.

Hibbertia scandens - a climber with masses of yellow flowers.

Gardenia jasminoides - another must-have.

And lastly to remind us of the orangeries of the great houses *Citrus x microcarpa*, the Calomandrin. Its 3 cm oranges are edible but very sour.



HYMENOCALLIS, THE SPIDER LILY

You can make marmalade from them but don't ask me for a recipe!

Here is another list of **conservatory plants**, perhaps a little more tender than the foregoing:

Mandevilla - pink and a pretty twiner.

Bougainvillea - you will recognise it from your Mediterranean holiday.

Hoya bella - evergreen succulent leaves with a single flush of pink waxy flowers dripping with scented nectar. Leave the door open during the day to give the bees a treat.

Lapageria – the Chilean Bellflower is another evergreen climber with pink bells borne in the late summer and

pollinated by hummingbirds (but not here).

Strelitzia – rather spiky plant bearing striking orange and blue flowers.

Hymenocallis – the Spider Lily (pictured above). Bulbous plant with richly scented white flowers which will either thrive or it won't - with me it's the latter!

I think that's it for now with the conservatory except for two tips. Use unglazed terracotta pots if you can, standing them on plastic saucers, but always throw away excess water one hour after watering. I only know of one plant which thrives with its feet in water and that's the Papyrus. The Papyrus actually makes for an attractive plant stood in a corner and deliberately over-watered!



ROCK ROSE "CANARY BIRD"

We're back in the great outdoors with our **plant of the month**, the unpronounceable *Helianthemum nummularium* or the Rock Rose. The wild form is a tiny shrub, evergreen, with grey-green leaves bearing bright yellow flowers which only last one day but are followed by lots of replacements.

It gets better when you discover that the multi-coloured garden varieties prefer poor soil full of pebbles. I am beginning to warm to this little gem when I discover that it will form a perennial mound and is perfectly hardy. There are lots of named varieties including "Wisley Primrose". I planted mine at the front of a south-facing border in the autumn and, though small, they seem to be OK.

The rock rose is easily grown from seed. You will get a mixture of colours and heights, but it does make life more interesting (and cheaper).

For the **tree of the month** I am going to recommend that you try one and then more of the old fashioned shrub roses. They are big and, well, old-fashioned looking but they need little if any pruning. Read or investigate the internet for more information on these survivals of a bygone age. My favourite? "Canary Bird" (left).

Looking at the catalogues of the suppliers of some of the recommended conservatory plants you may be shocked rigid by the prices. Help is at hand as next month I will tell you how to populate your greenhouse etc for next to nothing!

As I comfort myself with the thought that, when the snow falls, the temperature goes up a bit I wish you a very successful growing year in 2022.



CHURCH SECURITY

After the damage and disruption caused by the burglary at St Nicolas' Church in October 2021, during which one of our historic stained glass windows was smashed, we have been advised to fit security lights and CCTV cameras around the outside of the building.

The total cost of fitting the system and registering it so that it can record incidents is £6,000. That's just £15 for each printed copy of this magazine.

We would like to raise this amount through donations and Covid-compliant fundraising events.

Could you offer to raise money or make a donation?

For more details please contact the Parish Office or speak to a Churchwarden.

Stories to Inspire

In his January editorial, our Editor encouraged readers to look at the website of *Positive News*, whose mission is to bring well-researched articles about encouraging and hopeful stories from around the UK and the world. Another source of positive news to which I often turn is *The Big Issue*. The whole concept of *The Big Issue* is a positive story in itself, for it helps to lift the homeless from a hopeless situation to one where they have accommodation and an income. Its January 10th edition showcased “100 Change-makers for 2022”, a global community of people making changes in the fields of health, social and institutional justice, inclusion, the natural environment and access to education.

Our sportsmen and women often get a poor press, but both Marcus Rashford and Lou Macari are turning that on its head. Lou also played for Manchester United a few decades ago now and he has put his energy into providing accommodation for rough sleepers in Stoke-on-Trent. He has filled a huge warehouse with small pods, like those which are found at some fashionable campsites. It means that his guests have a safe space, a roof over their head and access to food. From that starting point, things can be worked through to reach the root of the problem that caused the homelessness in the first place.

Our own B30 Foodbank and Northfield Community Partnership Foodbank do something similar, by providing food and helping people to navigate the benefits system. The support that you, our readers, give to these foodbanks is a very practical way to do something positive.

Ideas are shared globally and there is, as last, acknowledgement that ideas do not always have to originate in the so-called developed world. There is an innovative scheme seen first in India, which uses melted, recycled plastic to repair potholes in roads. I support a grassroots charity in Bangladesh which is supporting local people to grow mangrove saplings and then plant them in specific areas of the Sundarbans. This is one of

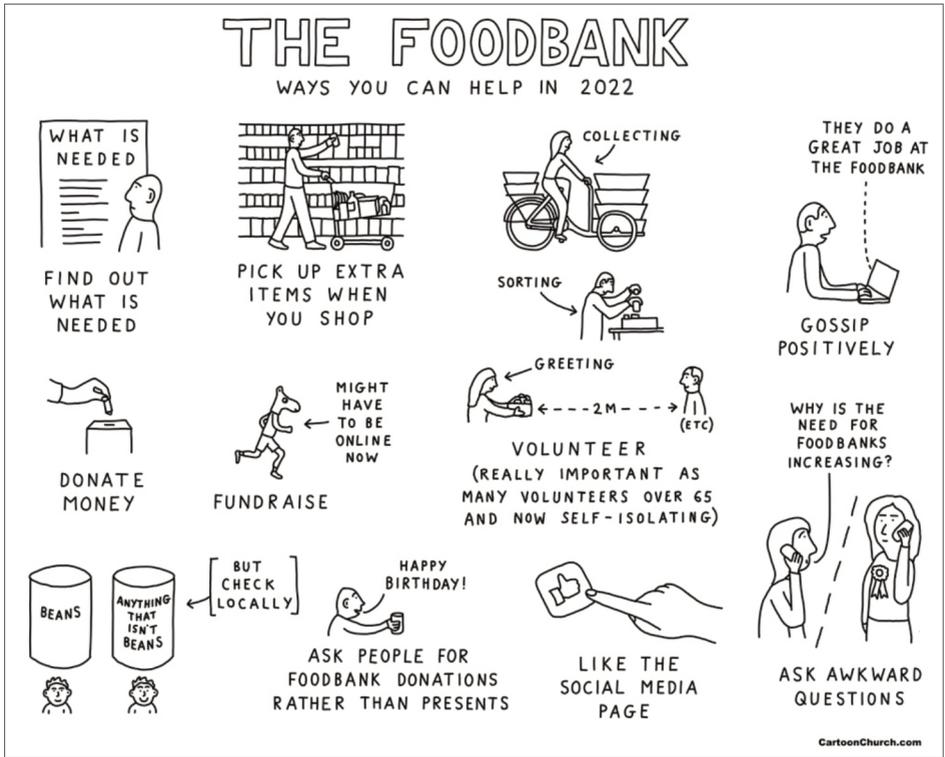


SYLVIA FOX IS THE MUSIC MINISTER AT ST NICOLAS' CHURCH AND A RETIRED PHYSIO-THERAPIST

the biggest areas of mangrove in the world and is an essential ecosystem as well as bring a very effective flood defence system. After a very short time, the forest is growing in size once more, the people are less likely to suffer from flooding and several have an extra income from selling the saplings. Indigenous groups were engaged as participants in their own right during the recent COP 26 climate conference.

There are a great many positive stories to look out for in all fields, but particularly in the area of ecology and climate. Each positive step we each take is part of that positive story too, be it through enhanced recycling, specific purchasing choices, travel options or home heating to mention just four.

It is very easy to become disheartened as we try to rediscover a positive relationship between humans and the natural world; but there is much out there to inspire and challenge us and less to dishearten than we think.



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Triplex Era

Set to Topple

For many, Kings Norton's only landmark of any substance is, of course, the spire of St Nicolas' Church, soaring into the sky for hundreds of years. But there is another, as tall if not even taller, which in a very different way also has great significance, albeit for decades rather than centuries. It's known as Triplex House, a symbol of a thriving, nationally significant era: unfortunately, despite determined lobbying it's unlikely to be with us for much longer.

Though it's twelve storeys high, it's not readily visible from several areas of the parish. That's because it's set in the lowest part of the area, the Rea valley. Since the 1960s it has stood as testimony to the international success of what was one of the most readily recognised names in the British motor industry. For those who don't know, the Triplex company was once the UK's leading supplier of toughened glass for motor vehicle and aviation purposes. For most of

its time, it had two factories, one near Liverpool and the one in Kings Norton, the latter at its peak employing nearly 1,000 local people and creating almost incessant daily streams of large glass transporter vehicles up and down Eckersall Road and Camp Lane, many of them on their way to the giant car factory at Longbridge.

Almost 100 years

Formed in 1912, Triplex bought the Kings Norton site in the late 1920s, almost 100 years ago. It gradually built up not only a very substantial manufacturing site, but also a significant administrative facility, covering amongst other disciplines finance, sales and marketing. Famously, for several years the great radio comedian Kenneth Horne worked there. He arrived in 1928 at the age of 21, and stayed for 27 years, latterly as Sales Director. Possibly his first experience of using a microphone in public was during his time as Chairman of the Triplex Social and Athletic



**MICHAEL
WRITES
REGULARLY
ON LOCAL
HISTORY**



PHOTO BY MICHAEL KENNEDY

Association, when he announced the events at its annual fête. Though the factory has been defunct for some years now, the Social Club still exists and functions as a stand-alone facility, and may continue to do so after all other traces of the company have been obliterated.

Making a statement

Triplex House was created in the early 1960s, when the company decided that it needed

▲ TRIPLEX HOUSE, KINGS NORTON: SYMBOL OF A THRIVING ERA

more space for its administrative functions and also wanted a "statement" office building which would break architectural ground. It commissioned a prominent local architect called James A. Roberts, who had already produced three major schemes as part of Herbert Manzoni's inner ring road development in Birmingham: the Ringway Centre (1958-60), an unrealised proposal for the Bull Ring (1958) and the iconic Rotunda (1960-65) which is of course now Grade II listed.

His Triplex House consists of twelve storeys (with a two-storey podium and ten-storey tower) and is clad in an anodised aluminium curtain "wall". Despite years of disuse, mainly for that reason, it is still remarkably well preserved. In architectural terms the building was planned around a lift, staircase, and lavatory core, with the kitchen and dining rooms taking up the whole of the first floor.

Conference rooms with full-height double glazing occupied the second floor, from which there was also access to a paved roof terrace and a bridge link to the neighbouring factory.

The third to ninth floors were open plan office floors with windows using Triplex's own laminated glass. Executive offices were located on the tenth floor, the eleventh being

completely taken up by support utilities plant.

Architecturally significant

To me and, I suspect, many others, it's not an attractive building, basically a large, functional office block; but in fact it was, and is, architecturally a significant edifice. So much so, in fact, that it is listed in the Birmingham section of the Historic Buildings publication. Its impending demolition has caused a protest from a number of quarters monitoring historic buildings, notably the Twentieth Century (C20) Society, which last year called on the Historic England organisation to block the process.

The Triplex brand was retired by its parent company Pilkington Glass in 1993, and the company formally dissolved in September 2019. The Kings Norton site had by then not been involved in manufacturing glass for many years. Its buildings became unloved and unused. Their fate, including that of the once pioneering Triplex House, was cast in February last year, when Birmingham City Council granted planning permission for the demolition of all the existing buildings on the Kings Norton site and the erection of "eight commercial buildings for research and development of products or processes, industrial processes, general industrial uses and storage and

distribution, all with ancillary office space". The applicant is the St Francis Group Ltd, acting on behalf of Rorton Ltd.

Not historic enough?

Having been alerted to this news, the C20 Society responded by calling on Historic England to "spot list" Triplex House at Grade II. The application was unsuccessful. In its advice report, Historic England noted some favourable points, first that "the choice of a well-known local architect underlines the prominence of James Roberts in Birmingham at the time, and speaks to the company's (Triplex's) desire to produce a building of quality to house its welfare and administration functions at the Kings Norton site."

It also acknowledged that Triplex House was "an important statement for the company" and "the use of glass curtain walling seems a natural choice for the business of glass manufacture". However, fatally, the report concluded that "its use of curtain wall glazing is somewhat late for its date" and ultimately that "it falls below the bar for listing buildings of the period". With that damning appraisal, there appears to be no turning back.

Bold, modern but unloved

It's par for the course for many of Birmingham's major post-war



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buildings. Along with his contemporary John Madin, James Roberts is closely associated with the post-war redesigning of Birmingham. However, most of their buildings have been, or are set to be, substantially altered or demolished, including the BBC's Pebble Mill and Birmingham Post & Mail buildings, demolished in 2005; the Birmingham Central Library (2016); and the NatWest Tower on Colmore Row (2016).

Other post-war buildings under threat in Birmingham include T.P. Bennett & Son's House of Fraser (Rackhams) building on Corporation Street, which is currently on the market as a

"refurbishment or development opportunity".

Catherine Croft, Director of the C20 Society, says "Birmingham had an outstanding collection of brilliant, confident 1960s commercial buildings, but sadly seems intent on demolishing most of them. It's such a pity as they were so confident and characterful and could so easily have been converted to new uses."

If Kings Norton's buildings heritage is important to you, make sure you see Triplex Tower. But hurry! It won't be there for long.

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.

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THE MINISTRY TEAM

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Assistant Rector..... The Revd Eliakim Ikechukwu
Parish Lay Minister Pauline Weaver
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
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Pastoral Care Team Coordinator..... The Revd Jayne Crooks

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Hawkesley Church Jim Clarke
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Safeguarding Coordinator Annette Dickers
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Flower Arranging (0121 486 2837)..... Alison Blumer

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

1st Sunday of the Month

| | |
|----------|---|
| 9.00 am | Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) |
| 10.30 am | Holy Communion (Children's activity : Muddy Church) |
| 12.00 | Baptisms |
| 6.00 pm | Taizé Prayer |

2nd Sunday of the Month

| | |
|----------|--|
| 9.00 am | Sung Matins (Book of Common Prayer) |
| 10.30 am | Morning Praise for All Ages (Child-friendly) |
| 6.00 pm | Holy Communion with Anointing & Prayer for Healing |

3rd Sunday of the Month

| | |
|----------|---|
| 9.00 am | Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) |
| 10.30 am | Holy Communion (Children's activity : Godly Play) |
| 12.00 | Baptisms |
| 6.00 pm | Evening Worship |

4th Sunday of the Month

| | |
|----------|--|
| 9.00 am | Holy Communion with Choir (Book of Common Prayer) |
| 10.30 am | Outdoor Service in St Nicolas' Churchyard (Child-friendly) |
| 6.00 pm | Compline (Night Prayer) |

5th Sunday of the Month

| | |
|----------|----------------|
| 10.30 am | United Service |
|----------|----------------|

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

Driving In Old Age

Being able to drive well into old age provides people with invaluable independence, mobility and freedom. Many find that it improves their mental health and social wellbeing too. The longer we live, however, the frailer we become. Older drivers may sustain more severe injuries from road collisions than younger people. As the proportion of aged drivers increases, so does the risk of driving-related fatalities.



DR CAROL HAWLEY IS PRINCIPAL RESEARCH FELLOW IN THE DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING AT WARWICK MEDICAL SCHOOL

In the UK drivers have to renew their licences when they turn 70. But it is up to them to declare that they are fit to drive. Unlike many other countries, they do not have to do an eye test or pass any other health assessment. This system of self-declaration means that a person can pass their test in their teens and then not have their fitness to drive reassessed unless they are advised to do so, for example, if they have a notifiable medical condition.

In a recent study, we surveyed 3,062 current and ex-drivers in the UK aged between 60 and 100 years (with a mean of 70.4 years) to explore driving habits and attitudes to giving up driving. We found that most people would value their doctor's assessment of their fitness to drive, and whether their medical condition posed any dangers. They also said eye tests and medical examinations should be compulsory.

Self-certification

In Great Britain, the percentage of adults aged 70 and over who hold a driving licence has steadily risen since the 1970s, from 15% in 1975 to 67% in 2019. The number of women in their 70s who have a licence has increased thirteenfold.

Of the people we surveyed, most (87.1%) were currently driving while 12.9% had given up. Of the ex-drivers, almost two-thirds still held a valid driving licence even though they had stopped driving. The licence was seen as both a badge of honour and a useful form of identification.

We found that older women are more likely to restrict their driving than men. This is consistent with previous studies. We also found that women were more likely to believe they had given up driving too early, whereas slightly more men thought they may have left it too late.

Other studies have also found higher rates of women giving up driving, at every age. Research suggests, however, that more recent cohorts of older women will have more driving

▼ SOME OLDER PEOPLE MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RECOGNISE WHEN THEY ARE NO LONGER FIT TO DRIVE AND WHEN IT IS TIME TO STOP



experience than previous cohorts and are likely to continue driving for longer.

Most respondents still at the wheel said they felt confident in their driving and 97% said they intended to continue driving for the foreseeable future. Only 9% had ever considered giving up. However, most said they would if they had a health condition and were advised by a health professional to stop.

Road safety

Most 70-year-olds will make honest declarations when renewing their licence. The problem is that some may be unaware of gradual physical, sensory or cognitive changes which could affect their ability to drive safely. This means that some older people may find it difficult to recognise when they are no longer fit to drive and when it is time to stop.

We asked respondents to rate their agreement with a series of possible measures to increase road safety. Almost all agreed that doctors should be required to inform patients if their medical condition may affect their fitness to drive. A vast majority agreed that senior drivers should pass an eyesight test every five years after having their licence renewed. And just over half of our respondents agreed that drivers aged around 70 should be required to have a medical examination when renewing their licence. Many said that if a DIY kit was available to test their driving fitness, they would use it.

Doctors and optometrists are the most trusted and influential advisers on fitness to drive for older people, but their role in sharing information and advising on giving up isn't clear. We need to help drivers start to plan for giving up at an earlier stage. As our findings show, many older drivers would welcome an independent assessment of their ability.

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Drivers in the UK are legally required to renew their licence at 70 and then at most every 3 years after this. It is free to renew a driving licence at 70 or over. Drivers can renew online in minutes at www.gov.uk and licences are usually issued within 5 days. By using the Government's website, customers can be assured they are dealing directly with DVLA.

Men's 20 Group 22



For visits out we will endeavour to share transport where possible

| Date | Time | Venue | Topic | Refreshments | Note |
|-------------------|--------|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|------------------|
| Wed 16 Feb | 7.30pm | Church | “Fly & Fight”. Memories of the Glider Regiment | Samosas & snacks | |
| Sat 12 Mar | 1.30pm | Birmingham Brewery, Stirchley | Brewery Tour & Talk | Available at venue | Limited places |
| Thu 28 Apr | 7.30pm | Church | Kings Norton Nature Reserve | Finger buffet | |
| Tue 17 May | 7.30pm | Church | My Life with Motorbikes | Samosas & snacks | |
| Sat 18 Jun | 9.30am | Lickey Hills | Breakfast & walk | Breakfast | |
| Tue 19 Jul | 7.30pm | Church | “A Sporting Chance” : Thoughts of a sports chaplain | Finger buffet | Date TBC |
| August | | | No Meeting | | |
| Wed 14 Sep | 7.30pm | Church | “Back to School” : It’s a teacher’s life. | Pizza and snacks | |
| Sat 15 Oct | 9.30am | Gaydon Motor Museum | Tour of Museum | Available at venue | Booking required |
| Wed 30 Nov | 7.30pm | TBC | Mystery Event and plans for 2023 | Yes | |

In The Doldrums

Have you ever been in the doldrums? I think of January as the doldrum month of the year. After the excitement and busyness of December comes January with bad weather, little to look forward to and a long wait until payday! My mum would call these days "treadmill days" when you seem to keep working but don't go anywhere.

The Doldrums are a place as well, a well-known nautical term for an area near the Equator where, in the days of sail, it was easy to come becalmed. Sailors, who would obviously try to avoid the Doldrums, tend to be very superstitious. There is a vivid portrayal of the Doldrums in one of the "Pirates of the Caribbean" films. The crew are stuck there and the picture is one of frustration and madness.

It can be easy to get stuck in the doldrums and to feel that there is no way out but, of course, there always is. Doing small things that we enjoy, keeping in touch with friends and being connected with the

natural world can all help. Being outside lets us see that the world is not still, even if things are dormant. There are signs of life and hope all around us, things as simple as watching birds on a feeder in the garden. Even the simplest of feeders can encourage all manner of feathered visitors, although mine also attracts the squirrels, much to the annoyance of Ginny, who barks frantically when they try and use them.

One of my Christmas gifts this year was a wildlife camera from which I can download images of what is happening in my garden, particularly at night. In recent weeks, capturing the image of a beautiful fox exploring the garden and encountering one myself in daylight have been moments of great joy.

At this time of year, the words from the daily prayers have deep resonance and encouragement, of hope and peace. For those of us fortunate enough to share these prayers together there are often moments of



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THE LAY
MINISTER AT
ST NICOLAS'
CHURCH,
KINGS
NORTON



stillness, freshness and new insights as we pray together.

They also help to keep us grounded in the tradition of centuries of daily "offices", as the Church of England calls these occasions. There are many ways in which you can experience the joy of these prayers. The Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, in particular, the Reverend Robert Willis, has an extremely popular YouTube morning prayer that features different parts of the Cathedral, including the roof and the garden. His cat Tiger also makes frequent appearances.

So we move into February and, with the approach of Spring and lengthening days,

our hearts start to lift. February always has a different feel. It's a more positive month during which we can feel that we are putting the doldrums behind us. We look for the signs of Spring and, with it, of hope, new life and the promise of better things to come. We continue to move forward, our hearts and our step a little lighter.

The website of the US National Ocean Service explains: "The Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone, (ITCZ, pronounced and sometimes referred to as the "itch"), is a belt around the Earth extending approximately five degrees north and south of the equator. Here, the prevailing trade winds of the northern hemisphere blow to the southwest and collide with the southern hemisphere's driving northwest trade winds. Because the air here circulates in an upward direction, there is often little surface wind in the ITCZ. That is why sailors well know that the area can be calm sailing ships for weeks. And that's why they call it the doldrums."

THE HUNGRY GARDENER

And So It Begins



Claire is a keen kitchen gardener, ably assisted by her 6-year-old son Charles.

It's the Chinese New Year, the Spring Festival and the timing aligns perfectly with the start of the growing season. Winter is ending and the soil is warming. It's time to start aubergines, chilis, onions and peas. For me, February is new year for the garden and, as I was born on St Valentine's Day, my birthday marks a good sowing day.

I wonder if you've reflected on what worked well last year and what new things you will try? It's time to put those plans into action. For those with smaller growing spaces, dwarf varieties are good and anything "cut and come again" that lives for a longer time can be really productive for less work. Examples are kales, chard and lettuces.

Last year, my aim was to have home grown food through the hungry gap (March - May). Now many of my plans are reaching fruition. The perennial Daubenton kale is a metre tall and each branch is a cluster of mini kale plants. I can either eat them or plant them to make new plants. The rhubarbs have been budding since early January so I have high hopes for

rhubarb recipes and I welcome any suggestions. There are many ways to enjoy rhubarb as well as the classic crumble. I'm going to try the cordial for flavouring gin! I've grown a purple sprouting broccoli in the greenhouse in the hope that it will be earlier than the perennial nine star broccoli on the allotment. The perennial Babington's leeks are looking very lush, so I will make a baked gratin (cover the leeks with a Bechamel sauce and bake in the oven). The greenhouse is home to some very spicy mustard greens and the rocket has grown magnificently through the winter.

Window sills and warm cupboards are great places to start off growing things and get more lush green in your life. Good for the soul as well the belly! Charles reminded me last week that we will be planting the peas soon, some for the garden but also for pea shoots. This is the first indoor salad we grow. He finds the peas a satisfying seed to sow. It's a nice big shape for little hands. He pokes a hole in the soil and pops the pea in and then smooths the soil over the top. He also helps me

with sprouting seeds in a jam jar with water and a piece of cloth over the top of the jar. Refresh the water daily and keep the jar in a dark warm cupboard. They are ready when they start to grow a tail. Peas and chickpeas work really well, especially added to stir fries.

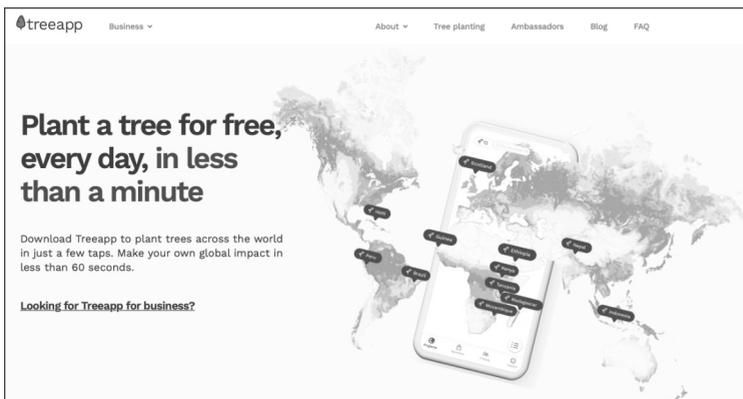
Your seedbox and your kitchen cupboards are your oyster of things to try. I've tried chickpeas, peas, radish seeds and mung beans, however, all sorts of things will work: anything from the cabbage family, pea and beans, lentils. And what about pumpkin seeds? The younger the seed, the more likely it will start to sprout. Sometimes nothing happens so we have a few jars of different things on the go to avoid disappointment.

As it's new year in the garden we are also trying to live a little greener. **Here are a few free things we are trying:**

Packaging makes excellent plant pots if you poke a few holes in it. I was delighted to find inside the Lego Advent Calendar that the tray of the individual compartments was made of cardboard and resembles a seed tray! I poked holes in the bottom with a knitting needle and, when I've got seedlings growing away, I will be able to cut and plant the individual pot in the ground. Toilet rolls are great for seed sowing too.

The web browser **Ecosia** ("the search engine that plants trees") plants a tree for 45 web searches. It's completely free and a really easy change to make. Have a look at www.ecosia.org.

Finally, there's **treeapp** (see below). With this mobile phone application you can plant a tree every day for free. Select a place to plant a tree then watch an advert from a sponsor (no more than 2 minutes) and they'll plant your tree in 180 days. All the sponsors are eco-businesses.



THE MONTH OF LIGHT, LOVE and snowdrops

January brings the snow, makes our feet and fingers glow.

February brings the rain, thaws the frozen lakes again.

March brings breezes, loud and shrill, stirs the dancing daffodil.

This is part of the old rhyme, from "The Garden Year" by Sara Coleridge (1802 – 1852), the daughter of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. She specialized in writing instructive verses for children and we loved to chant it as children, as did generations of children before us.

February is the in-between month, mid-winter in our modern calendar, a month of rain, mud and occasional sunshine, the uncertain month. It was known as "February Fill Dike" to the old country folk, as the ditches filled with the copious rain, overflowing the fields and streams. The word February comes from februa, the Latin for to clean. It was named after the Roman Februalia, a month-long festival of purification and atonement held about this time. We now mark this time as Lent.

At the risk of turning the Parish Magazine into a gardening periodical, I will mention that we have a winter flowering cherry outside our front window which has been flowering since November. Daffodils are forcing green shoots through the cold winter earth and the snowdrops are beginning to show. They are the first flowers to bloom at the end of winter and

the beginning of Spring, epitomising hope. Snowdrops, with their rich, dark green stems and delicate yet strong, white flowerheads are the symbols of spring, signs of the renewal of hope, revealing everything to be hopeful for.

I've written about hope a number of times over the



**THELMA MITCHELL IS LEAD
CHAPLAIN AT BOURNVILLE
COLLEGE**



MOSAIC FROM THE ST BRIGID OF IRELAND CHAPEL, BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, WASHINGTON D.C.

past two years. It is always good to be reminded, as a Christian community, that our faith is grounded in hope. It's a recurring theme throughout the Bible; let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for the Lord who promises is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23)

The first of February, in the centuries prior the Christianising of the British Isles, was the festival of Imbolc, dedicated to the goddess Brid. It marked the beginning of Spring. Later, Irish Christianity began to mark it as St. Brigid's day, whose symbol is light. St

Brigid, in the fifth century, founded several monasteries of nuns, the most famous being in Kildare. She is always pictured carrying a lantern or a candle.

The month of February, on the 6th, marks the accession of Princess Elizabeth to become Queen of England on the death of her father seventy years ago this year. Whether you are a royalist or not, she has been a tower of hope and unity to her subjects and a supreme example of outstanding dedication and loyalty to duty.

Six years later, also on 6th February, occurred the Munich air disaster. A British European Airways flight carrying the Manchester United team, known as "Busby's Babes", along with supporters and journalists, crashed on its third attempt to clear the slush-covered runway of Munich airport. 23 people died, including 8 players, and many more were injured. It took

Sir Matt Busby, who was seriously injured in the crash, 10 years to rebuild the team to glory in the European Cup in 1968. These events are particularly fixed in my mind as 6th February was also my father's birthday, so we thought about them every year.

The 14th of February is also, of course, the festival of St. Valentine, a day to celebrate human love and relationships. It began as a Christian feast day to remember the third century Christian martyr, Bishop Valentine, who ministered to Christians persecuted under the Roman Empire. Tradition has it that he restored sight to the daughter of his jailor and possibly performed weddings which were strictly forbidden for Roman soldiers who were Christians. The date became associated with romantic love in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by association of the lovebirds of early spring. By the eighteenth century, couples had begun showing their love for each other on the 14th with tokens of flowers, sweet things and, soon, cards. They were hand drawn and written until the nineteenth century when mass-produced cards became popular. There are a variety of customs and ways of celebrating St. Valentine's day across the world, although it is banned in some countries, including Pakistan, Indonesia and Iran.

Moving from our need to demonstrate love towards ourselves, I heard on the radio recently a Rabbi say that we need to redefine selfishness. Selfishly having the vaccine to save ourselves, he said, is also how we show we love and care for other human beings. It doesn't just affect your health. It will also affect the health of others, and particularly the health of those people you love most.

We live in the hope of the pandemic becoming an epidemic, like colds and flu. Professor Sarah Hawkes said recently that to say that the pandemic is becoming endemic is very dangerous until the whole world has access to the vaccinations. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa only 14% have been vaccinated and only 8.6% of Africans overall. This is the selfishness of "Why should we care?" We need the positive selfishness both of having the vaccines ourselves and ensuring an equality of treatment worldwide, as the word pandemic implies: "prevalent over the world".

If we do not have the vaccines and ensure equality of access worldwide it will just return and return. The UK, EU and USA received more doses of the vaccines in six weeks than African countries have had all year. The former Prime Minister Gordon Brown called it a "stain on our soul". Oxfam,

Amnesty International and other organisations, have said that Pfizer and Moderna, despite making billions in profit, continue to refuse to share the new generation of vaccine technology.

Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury (photo below) wrote recently, *"2021 was a sombre year, on top of the low-level anxiety, the unexpected personal losses and sheer confusion experienced by everyone caught up in the pandemic. We are more fragile than we had been led to presume. And this means that we are also less different from our ancestors than we normally like to think, and that the more secure and prosperous members of the human race are less different from their fellow human beings than they like to*

think [...] Our ancestors knew they were fragile. For the foreseeable future, we shall have to get used to this fragility."

As we consider our fragility, mourn for all the people and things we have lost in the past two years, we hang on to our hope. The reflective season of Lent will lead us into the joy of Easter and the glory of the Resurrection. Our hope is built on a firm foundation and is never lost. And as we look at the first snowdrops, we see in them these precious symbols of hope in a battered world.

"May the God of hope fill all of us with all joy and peace in Him, so that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

↓ **The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, speaking to young people at St Martin's in the Bullring, Birmingham, in May 2017 during an event organised by the Taizé Community.**

PHOTO BY DAVID ASH



Great Expectations

The film "Great Expectations" was screened on television prior to Christmas, a classic based on Dickens' classic story. It was made in 1946 and featured a young John Mills as the adult Pip, Alec Guinness as Herbet Pocket, Finlay Currie as Abel Magwitch and Valerie Hobson as Estella. The film was directed by David Lean, whose skills you may also have enjoyed in "Oliver Twist" (1948), "In Which We Serve" (1942), "Lawrence of Arabia" (1962) or "Doctor Zhivago" (1965).

As we enter 2022, the title gives me pause for thought. Can we hold "great expectations" of our own for the coming year? Hope for the demise of Covid, perhaps? Some optimism with regard to climate change? Progress in reducing the amount of carbon in the atmosphere? A slowing of global warming?

We must all have harboured great expectations from time to time, and I have certainly known a few during my seafaring days, starting with the year in which I first went to sea. It was 1957, which may sound like a long time ago, but I have a clear memory of one particular occasion. I had just spent six weeks at the sea training school on the Thames in Gravesend and had had an interview with a view to joining P&O passenger ships as a bellboy. I was 17 years old.



A 17-year-old Eddie starts his career at sea with great expectations

After a week spent at home, I received orders to sail on the P&O liner *S.S. Stratheden*, a ship first launched in 1937 (see opposite page), which could carry just over 1,000 passengers. (An anecdote, in passing. An unexpected



WITH THANKS TO WWW.PANDOSNCO.CO.UK

difficulty arose before the *Stratheden's* launch, when it was found that an Aberdeen trawler already bore her name. A representative of P&O called on the trawler owner to enquire whether an arrangement could be made to change the name of his fishing boat, as the company was anxious to use it for the new ship. The trawler owner agreed and eventually renamed his ship *Earnmore*, no doubt in the hope that she would live up to the new name!).

But I digress! The *Stratheden* was moored in Tilbury Docks. On the day we sailed, she

moved into the River Thames to embark passengers at the Tilbury Riverside Landing Stage, which used to handle about 140,000 passengers a year and was only 45 minutes from central London by train. These days, it is known as the London International Cruise Terminal. You can see a recent photo of its historic Grade II art deco building at capitalcruising.co.uk/london.

Just prior to our departure for Australia I went up on deck. The river was flowing rapidly, the dark brown water swirling around the ship. A few seagulls flew in the strong, chilly breeze and there was a salty

▲ THE LAUNCH OF THE STRATHEDEN AT BARROW-IN-FURNESS, CUMBRIA, IN 1937

tang in the air. I felt quite excited! I was about to embark on my first sea voyage. A great expectation indeed!

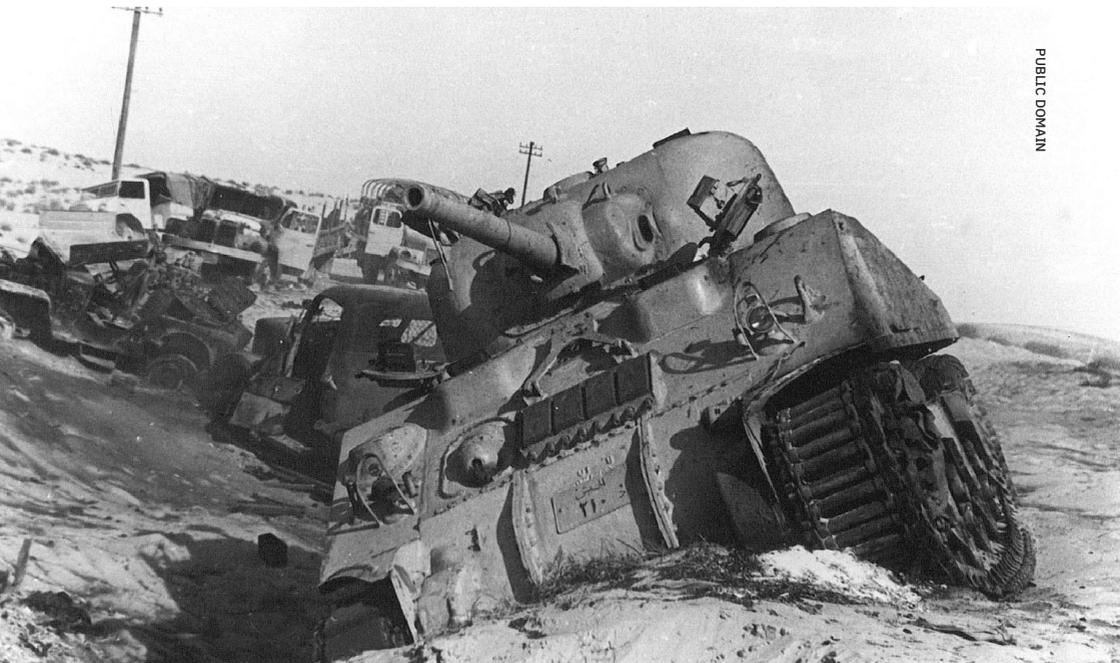
The voyage was an eventful one. An outbreak of Asian 'flu on board meant that I was working quite hard as many of my shipmates fell ill. I was lucky. I kept free of this nasty illness and so I was given several jobs to do such as waiting on tables, operating the First Class passenger lift and, in my role as a bellboy, running here, there and everywhere as a messenger.

The ship transited the Suez Canal, which had just reopened after the Suez Crisis, during which Israel, the UK and France had invaded

Egypt but had been forced to withdraw under political pressure from the USA, the USSR and the United Nations. We could see lots of wreckage on the banks as we moved south towards the Gulf of Suez and the Red Sea. The ship sailed on to Australia, where another of my great expectations was fulfilled, that of visiting a country so far away from Europe.

Throughout my career, even at those times when expectations were not fulfilled as I hoped they might have been, I learned to be optimistic. Even now, I still hold a few for the future, not least that prayers will continue to be answered in the life of our church here in Kings Norton.

▼ DESTROYED
TANKS, SINAI,
1956



Funerals December 2021

| | | | |
|----------|------------------------|-----|----------|
| 6th Dec | Raymond Allen | 75 | In.CY |
| 6th Dec | Joan Kitts | 92 | SN.Bu.CY |
| 9th Dec | Irene Townsend | 87 | Cr.LH |
| 10th Dec | Sandra Griffiths | 62 | Cr.RH |
| 15th Dec | George Alexander James | 90 | Cr.LH |
| 20th Dec | Mohammed Anwar | 77 | SN.Bu.KN |
| 21st Dec | Charles Eugene Priest | 74 | In.CY |
| 21st Dec | Florence Jean Payne | 83 | In.CY |
| 23rd Dec | Gladys Winifred Banks | 100 | Cr.LH |

Bu : Burial, Cr : Cremation, CY : Churchyard, In : Interment of Ashes,
 SN : Service at St Nicolas' Church
 Cemeteries & Crematoria
 KN : Kings Norton, LH : Lodge Hill, RD : Redditch. RH : Robin Hood

A Classical Concert at St Nicolas' Church

Sinfonia Scintille with the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Saturday 12th February at 7.00 pm
 Tickets £10 on the door (no interval)

Krommer : Concerto for 2 Clarinets Op.35

Haydn : Symphony No.83 in G Minor "La Poule"

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Clarinets : James Mackinder & Tom Gant



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