

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

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St Nicolas' Place discovers
fresh purpose

A Pioneer's Farewell

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on three years in Druids Heath

The Kings Norton By-Election

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Welcome

EDITORIAL

Our front cover this month and the smaller photograph opposite celebrate a milestone, of a sort. For the past few years, both the exterior and the interior appearance of St Nicolas' Church have been disfigured by scaffolding, a necessary measure to protect the building from further damage during repairs which have been both costly and lengthy. The extraordinary generosity of hundreds of people in response to our roof appeal has finally brought us to the point where we can declare "Job done!". Pauline Weaver provides more detail on page 7. We are not out of the woods yet: there is still the spire to consider, with its ageing masonry. But this is nevertheless a significant step for a much-loved building at the heart of our community.

That heart has been further strengthened in recent months by two organisations which have found a home in another Kings Norton landmark during the pandemic. Larry Wright (p.4) reports on the ways in which their staff and volunteers at St Nicolas' Place are providing local people with much-needed food for body, mind and spirit.

The life of the spirit is, of course, a topic close to the hearts of many of our readers. Among our contributions this month are reflections on how that life can be bruised, restricted, refreshed and renewed and even on what may await it beyond death.

Finally, the parish says goodbye this month to Catherine, our curate for the past three years, who moves to the Potteries this summer. We will say a formal farewell to her during the 10 a.m. service at

St Nicolas' on 18th July. If you'd like to be there, please don't forget to book a place with the Parish Office.



David Ash

Love in Action

St Nicolas' Place on The Green is finding renewed purpose as a focus for community service.

There is a new buzz of activity in and around St Nicolas' Place. In mid-April, two well established community organisations partnered with the parish church to occupy the remaining space in the building. Their staff and clients have brought a new energy. The organizations are, Northfield Community Partnership (NCP) and Birmingham Social Emotional Mental Health Pathfinder (BSEMP), usually referred to simply as Pathfinder.

NCP offers a wide range of community-based services across South Birmingham and has a reputation for innovative responses to the needs of individuals and families in the area. They have been particularly active during the pandemic, addressing food poverty and isolation.

Pathfinder provides specialist family support (including mental health, education, special educational needs,

substance misuse treatment, employment support, debt advice and mentoring) to children and their families through trusted and sustained relationships in Birmingham schools.

I recently spent time with both organizations to hear about their work and get to know staff. What struck me was the emphasis placed on compassion and service, terms resonant with Christian values but here expressed in a secular setting.

In the Pathfinder main office (the North Hall) they have set out their working area to look as friendly and welcoming as possible for visitors. Potted plants, decorative lighting and soft furnishings are all placed to good effect. On one shelf is a decorative display of wooden cubes which spell L.O.V.E. When asked about it, the manager, Rob, replied straight away, "Because all we do is about love." Considering the challenges faced by the many families and individuals who look to Pathfinder and NCP for help, being welcomed with such unselfconscious love by staff must go a long way to build the necessary trust and confidence clients and staff must develop to make progress in their lives.

Compassion for and service of others are fundamental to our



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



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

humanity. Without them, people experience dread and despair in a world which seems cruel and uncaring towards them and their situation. We all experience times of hardship and adversity and, at such times, we look to those we trust for help, advice, comfort and sympathy.

But what happens when we don't have those trusting relationships, or when our situation is such that we feel ashamed or overwhelmed and unable to reach out? To suffer in isolation is an awful experience, yet we know that many do. Current research shows that more people are

**↑ Bob Jones,
Foodbank &
Volunteer
Coordinator
for the
Northfield
Community
Partnership
Foodbank at St
Nicolas' Place,
with volunteer
Kate Kersel.**

experiencing loneliness and vulnerability, experiences not helped by the pandemic.

Christians, like many people of faith, are called to be compassionate and to put love into practical action. People without a faith also demonstrate the human qualities of sympathy, charity and loving concern. While both approaches provide the same results for those in need, the distinction between faith-based and secular care and service is the motivation and the ultimate purpose for our actions. People of faith serve their neighbour in need because we have a fundamental belief in a loving



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

God who calls us to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly. Loving one's neighbour as oneself is a central teaching of Jesus and is therefore universal and eternal.

Those who offer care and service from a secular or humanist perspective do so on the basis of what is generally agreed to be the best for people in any one age, culture and political context. These are changeable and what may be urgent priorities for care in one generation may change completely in another. One only has to look at what passed for 'social care' a hundred years ago in the UK to see how far we have come to reform the way people are treated in adversity by the state and by welfare organisations.

One of the key challenges facing any progressive society is the way in which it cares for its most vulnerable citizens

while not taking over their lives. Freedom to choose how we live is something we all want to exercise even when we make poor choices to our detriment.

I sense a profound shift in recent years from government top-down "we know what's best for you" type policies to providing local interventions which work with families to make better choices for their lives.

Jesus said, "The poor will always be with us." Therefore there will always be a need for faith-based and secular organisations to serve the neediest and most vulnerable among us. Both approaches have differing motivations and goals but each, in their way, is serving the greater cause of nurturing human dignity for all. To do so with a good helping of L.O.V.E. enriches all involved.

Going, Going, Gone!

It has finally gone! As our front cover this month illustrates, several years after it was first erected, the scaffolding protecting the baptistry of St Nicolas' Church from further damage has finally been dismantled. We can once again see the outside of the building unadorned by its recent decoration and inside we can once more see the font, the memorials and the stained glass window in all its glory.

As is the case with many repair and restoration jobs on historic buildings, now that the work is complete you can't tell that anything has been done, which is just as it should be. You can't see the new beam, you can't even see where the wooden cladding has been replaced on the ceiling. Our contractors spent time matching the colour of the wood stain before it was French polished to blend in with the existing panelling.

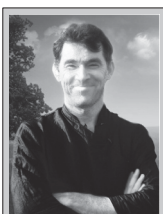
Of course, as is inevitably the case with historic buildings such as St Nicolas', that isn't the end of the work. There is much more still to do. Rest assured that, when we have more to report, you will be able to read it here.



PHOTO BY PAULINE WEAVER

Life Review

The thousands of cases of near-death experiences (NDEs) on record provide strong circumstantial evidence to support the conclusion that our consciousness survives death. Here's what happens when a psychologist with an interest in our perception of time explores the phenomenon.



Dr Steve Taylor is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Leeds Beckett University. He writes for Psychology Today and Scientific American, amongst others.

At the age of 16, when Tony Kofi was an apprentice builder living in Nottingham, he fell from the third storey of a building. Time seemed to slow down massively, and he saw a complex series of images flash before his eyes.

As he described it, "In my mind's eye I saw many, many things: children that I hadn't even had yet, friends that I had never seen but are now my friends. The thing that really stuck in my mind was playing an instrument". Then Tony landed on his head and lost consciousness.

When he came to at the hospital, he felt like a different person and didn't want to return to his previous life. Over the following weeks, the images kept flashing back into his mind. He felt that he was "being shown something"

and that the images represented his future.

Later, Tony saw a picture of a saxophone and recognised it as the instrument he'd seen himself playing. He used his compensation money from the accident to buy one. Now, Tony Kofi is one of the UK's most successful jazz musicians, having won the BBC Jazz awards twice, in 2005 and 2008.

Though Tony's belief that he saw into his future is uncommon, it's by no means uncommon for people to report witnessing multiple scenes from their past during split-second emergency situations. After all, this is where the phrase "my life flashed before my eyes" comes from. But what explains this phenomenon? Psychologists have proposed

a number of explanations, but I'd argue the key to understanding Tony's experience lies in a different interpretation of time itself.

The experience of life flashing before one's eyes has been reported for well over a century. In 1892, a Swiss geologist named Albert Heim fell from a precipice while mountain climbing. In his account of the fall, he wrote that it was "as if on a distant stage, my whole past life [was] playing itself out in numerous scenes".

More recently, in July 2005, a young woman called Gill Hicks was sitting near one of the bombs that exploded on the London Underground. In

the minutes after the accident, she hovered on the brink of death where, as she describes it: "my life was flashing before my eyes, flickering through every scene, every happy and sad moment, everything I have ever done, said, experienced".

In some cases, people don't see a review of their whole lives, but a series of past experiences and events that have special significance to them.

Perhaps surprisingly, given how common it is, the "life review experience" has been studied very little. A handful of theories have been put forward, but they're understandably tentative and

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PHOTO BY SHANE ROUNCE



rather vague. For example, a group of Israeli researchers suggested in 2017 that our life events may exist as a continuum in our minds, and may come to the forefront in extreme conditions of psychological and physiological stress.

Another theory is that, when we're close to death, our memories suddenly "unload" themselves, like the contents of a skip being dumped. This could be related to "cortical disinhibition", a breaking down of the normal regulatory processes of

the brain, in highly stressful or dangerous situations, causing a "cascade" of mental impressions.

But the life review is usually reported as a serene and ordered experience, completely unlike the kind of chaotic cascade of experiences associated with cortical disinhibition. And none of these theories explain how it's possible for such a vast amount of information – in many cases, all the events of a person's life – to manifest



PHOTO BY JOHN TYSON

themselves in a period of a few seconds, and often far less.

An alternative explanation is to think of time in a “spatial” sense. Our commonsense view of time is as an arrow that moves from the past through the present towards the future, in which we only have direct access to the present. But modern physics has cast doubt on this simple linear view of time. Indeed, since Einstein’s theory of relativity, some physicists have adopted a “spatial” view of time. They argue we live in a static “block universe” in which time is spread out in a kind of panorama where the past, the present and the future co-exist simultaneously.

The modern physicist Carlo Rovelli, author of the best-selling “The Order of Time”, also holds the view that linear time doesn’t exist as a universal fact. This idea reflects the view of the philosopher Immanuel Kant, who argued that time is not an objectively real phenomenon, but a construct of the human mind.

This could explain why some people are able to review the events of their whole lives in an instant. A good deal of previous research, including my own, has suggested that our normal perception of time is simply a product of our normal state of consciousness.

In many altered states of consciousness, time slows down so dramatically that seconds seem to stretch out into minutes. This is a common feature of emergency

situations, as well as states of deep meditation, experiences on psychedelic drugs and when athletes are “in the zone”.

But what about Tony Kofi’s apparent visions of his future? Did he really glimpse scenes from his future life? Did he see himself playing the saxophone because somehow his future as a musician was already established?

There are obviously some mundane interpretations of Tony’s experience. Perhaps, for instance, he became a saxophone player simply because he saw himself playing it in his vision. But I don’t think it’s impossible that Tony did glimpse future events.

If time really does exist in a spatial sense, and if it’s true that time is a construct of the human mind, then perhaps in some way future events may already be present, just as past events are still present.

Admittedly, this is very difficult to make sense of. But why should everything make sense to us? As I have suggested in a recent book, there must be some aspects of reality that are beyond our comprehension. After all, we’re just animals, with a limited awareness of reality. And perhaps more than any other phenomenon, this is especially true of time.

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Adam the Gardener encounters a mysterious “snake”

Walking past a new development of houses, I saw that each front garden had a tarmacked area to receive one vehicle. I was intrigued to see a hefty piece of wire sticking out of the ground by each one. On enquiring, I was told that these were for the units to charge up electric cars. The future is with us!

There is a move to resurface front gardens to accommodate several cars and get them off the busy road. The traditional flower beds are disappearing and this is an opportunity to use containers filled with flowering plants or more formal perennials. Here are a few tips I have picked up down the years.

Containers. Terracotta or plastic? I think terracotta pots looks better but can be costly and are best emptied at the end of the year and stored in a place free from frost. Plastic has one distinct advantage as one lift of the pot, holding it by the rim, will inform you that the compost is heavy or light. If it's heavy leave it alone. If it's light give it a good watering.

Compost. Multi-purpose peat-free compost is advised and Kings Heath Park garden centre has nice big bags at a good price. It is the one they use. Other suppliers are available.

Feeding. Peat-free composts can be deficient in some nutrients and I recommend adding one capful of liquid *Miracle-Gro* to each can when watering. That's not a lot but often fertilisers work best when well diluted and this

method waters and feeds at the same time.

Saucers under your pots are good for preventing the staining of your nice block pavement. As it is no longer recommended to put drainage material in the bottom of the pot, poke three small holes in the saucer and your plants will not suffer from standing in stagnant water. They hate it.

Surfinia Petunias are *the* container plant. They are small and need to be grown



ECHTUM CANDIDANS



on in small pots in a sheltered place before planting out. After that they will grow and flower mightily.

And now, I present you with our **plant of the month**:

Echium, a native plant with blue, pink or white flowers sometime known as Viper's Bugloss. I am not sure why, but it is said that the seeds look like the heads of tiny snakes. *Echium* "Blue Bedder" (photo on next page) is an improved form of the indigenous plant and is easily grown from seed. Sow early and it will behave like a hardy annual. Sow it mid-summer and it will be a biennial with perennial tendencies.

For the adventurous, there are giant *Echiums* growing to about four metres high and attracting bees from miles around to their abundant nectar. The Canary Islands

are the home of *Echium pininana* and it seems to grow well on the west coast of the UK wherever the Gulf Stream drifts in. You may prefer to try *Echium candicans* "Pride of Madeira" (opposite) which only grows to a metre or so and bears spikes of heavenly blue flowers springing from a perennial root stock.

Never let it be said that Adam sticks to the common and perhaps a bit boring plants. On that note, our **tree of the month** bears whopping big fruit free from pests and diseases. (Well almost).

In the 1830's, young Mary Ann Brailsford of Southwell planted a pip which grew into a fine apple tree bearing large fruit perfect for cooking. It is possible that Mary never tasted this apple as she soon married and moved away from the area. A local butcher, Matthew Bramley, bought the house and tree and allowed cuttings to be taken provided that they bore his name. The house and garden with the original tree is now owned by Nottingham Trent University.

Southwell Minster has a commemorative window honouring the Bramley Seedling and there is an annual food and drink festival in the town including, I guess, lots of apple pies!

The Bramley Seedling is still available from



fruit tree specialists and, although it has a tendency to sprawl, it is large and vigorous. The Bramley is triploid which, in effect, means that it must have two other, different varieties of apple tree planted nearby to ensure fertilisation. The bees will do the rest.

95% of all cooking apples sold in the UK are Bramleys. Wow! The county of Armagh in Northern Ireland has its own distinctive Bramley and it is protected under a regional

designation, like a fine Bordeaux.

June is traditionally the month of the rose and I do hope yours will put on a great display even though this year they may be rather late in flowering.

Enjoy your roses and the rest of your gardening



WEDDINGS : A HISTORIC CHANGE

Last year, on August 15th, a wedding took place in St Nicolas' Church, Kings Norton that is now part of its history. You may well think that this has something to do with the lockdown and the coronavirus, but you would be wrong.

Yes, it was the only wedding that took place last year, but that is not why it is of historical significance in the life of this parish.

Jump forward to May 20th this year and another significant event took place in the life of the parish. It went by largely unnoticed and yet this event and the wedding last year are connected. Intrigued? Read on.

For as long as most of us can remember and even longer than that, a couple marrying in church have had to sign a wedding register. It has provided a lovely photo opportunity and, in a sense, has made the couple feel that this is really it: the deed has been signed, they are now legally married. A copy of the entry in the marriage register has been presented to them as proof of their marriage.

We guard these marriage certificates carefully, alongside birth certificates and death certificates.

But, last autumn, Parliament passed a new Marriage Act, and this law came into being on May 4th 2021. It affects churches in that they can no longer hold marriage registers, other than for their own records, nor present couples with a marriage certificate.

As Wedding Administrator for this parish I had the solemn task of striking through the blank pages in our open registers and sealing them with a sticker that declared they are now closed. On May 20th, I had an appointment at the Birmingham Register Office to hand over our marriage register and book of marriage certificates. The last entry was the wedding I conducted on August 15th last year.

From now on, no duplicate certificates can be issued by churches and a couple being married in church will be issued with a single A4 sheet of paper that gives details of their wedding. This document has to be presented for registration at the Register Office within 21 days of the date of the marriage, so that a certificate can be issued by that office, to be posted to the couple.

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Marriage solemnized at _____ in the Parish of _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No.	When married	Name and surname	Age	Condition	Rank or profession	Residence at the time of marriage	Other particulars
121							

Married to the _____ according to the rites and ceremonies of the _____ or after _____ by me.

This marriage was solemnized and registered in the presence of us, _____ of us, _____

A Pioneer's Farewell

To Druids Heath

It's been three years. A Pioneer Curate arriving in Kings Norton Parish in June 2018 with the ministry of a blank page. Connecting with new people, new places, new churches, new ecclesial practices. All felt so very new and uncertain and pioneer ministry was for me, as for everyone else in the parish, rather a mystery.

I was mentored initially by a "Fresh Expressions Enabler" in the diocese, gently challenged to take risks, to discover what God was doing and to join in. Supported and encouraged by a wise and liberating training incumbent with a heart for community and social justice. Guided by human and spiritual advisers to pray, pray, pray. Prayer and pioneering have an inseparable relationship.

Conversations, connections and curiosity led me more and more to the exploration of Druids Heath, the 'forgotten estate', communities disregarded by council and church yet rich with

gifts and aspirations. I was urged to find people and places of peace (Luke 10:1-9), the informal hub of heartfelt hospitality, Kath's Café, discovered and dwelt in. Welcomed warmly by the café's owner, a third space where the Pioneer Curate could find a base and encounter the life-giving energy needed to develop initiatives, inspired by, and alongside, local people.

Prayer groups, craft and music workshops, carols at Christmas, community engagement sessions, challenges to council regeneration plans, the birth of a community choir and then...a pandemic. Didn't expect that interruption!

Presence turned into eccentric food deliveries, DeliverRev, door step conversations, regular visits to a café uninhabited by people, Zoom, Zoom and more Zoom. And, amazingly, some relationships with residents deepened, collective trauma drawing us closer. Black Lives Matter, attempts to build



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

community-led partnerships with the council and other stakeholders and the everyday challenges faced by outer estates in Covid brought social justice to the fore. And more and more prayer, Friday prayers in Druids Heath, Stations of the Cross around tower blocks, prayer on email, on What's App, Zoom prayer, contemplative prayer, prayerful communion in the Secret Garden of Walkers Heath...Spirit guide us, hold us, protect us, encourage us.

Encouragement blossomed into ecology, a gardening project, Planting Seeds of Hope, a way of enabling Druids Heath residents to plant seeds on their balconies and window sills with the hope of gathering in group gardening activities once restrictions cease. The pioneer ministry focus on well-being, wholeness and connectedness being reborn through horticulture and the metamorphosis of the choir into a community-led singing group. Kath's Café opens again and face to face fellowship is restored.

Druids Heath pioneer ministry in a proverbial nut-shell. And

what's important about pioneers is that they are the first to explore a new place with a new purpose, but they are most certainly not the last. They lead the way, they invite opportunities, they mine for human and spiritual treasure and, once unearthed, these seeds of potential and hope have to be watered and nurtured by others. And, guess what, those others might include you.

A visit to Kath's Café to enjoy brunch, an encounter with a resident with a story to tell and talents to share, prayer with someone struggling to find hope, raising your voice with the singing group, planting some seeds in your home and joining others to enable Druids Heath to

blossom through orchards and forest gardens. It's all there. It just needs you.

As the pioneer finishes her curacy and follows the Spirit's leading to Stoke-on-Trent, the divine call to action is whispered in your ear. Listen carefully. Can you hear it? How will you respond?



Anthropocene



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

Whilst the lockdown hasn't given me empty hours to fill with learning a new language, cooking skills or a musical instrument, it has given a little extra space to do more reading and exploration of documentary programmes. Recent reading, watching and listening have all helped to underpin the idea that we (as in the human race) are an integral part of the natural world and not something to be regarded as better or separate in any way.

The idea of "man's supremacy" (and I chose my phrase carefully) only really developed in that historical period which is grandly title the Age of the Enlightenment. Prior to 18th century northern hemispherical history, humans had, by and large, worked with nature. Any schemes which attempted to dominate or subdue nature (land reclamations, for example) were usually sufficiently small to dent the natural order rather than to wound it mortally. Hunting was primarily for food and subsistence only, taking sufficient for immediate and local need.

Suddenly, in the 18th century northern hemisphere came the blossoming of scientific experiment and knowledge. Soon, it was supposed that humans had all the answers, that God mattered little, and that total domination of the world was both attainable and desirable.

A quotation from a recently-viewed television programme ("Tales of Winter: The Art of Snow and Ice" – BBC 4 04/05/2021) where the artistic representation of winter was explored, gives an example of the changed thinking developing in the 18th century. The paintings showed "a general lack of concern in these enlightened times for the threat from the weather. Protected in their modern houses in the terraces of Edinburgh's new town, it seemed science and rational thought could solve all the problems that beset their superstitious ancestors. Winter was merely a natural consequence of the rotation of the earth and held no fear for men of learning".

Unfortunately, it has taken us over 200 years to work out that we need a balance of the "science and rational thought" with the

close observations of, and respect for, the natural world of the aforementioned superstitious ancestors. At the 11th hour, we seem finally to have grasped that we must combine the two concepts, and yet, we are still talking of “mending the planet”. The planet is actually quite good at self-healing, as we saw in the global lockdown in the second quarter of 2020, if only we would step aside from our pyramidal view of the world, with humans at the apex, and work with the natural world, rather than enforcing our ways upon it. A colleague who works for a charity recently summed this up in the phrase, “a misguided attempt at claiming dominion over nature”.

Two splendid examples of working with nature, or even letting nature take the lead, are the estate at Knepp in West Sussex and Steart Marshes near Bridgwater in Somerset. The first is well explained in a book called “Wilding” by Isabella Tree and I may well return to Knepp and its story in a future article. Steart Marshes is a *Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust* (WWT) reserve, created in the early years of this century.

A small peninsula of land along the wider Severn estuary had, over previous centuries, been reclaimed for agriculture. This had had mixed success, as there was frequent saltwater flooding.

(continued on page 23)

▼PHOTO ON THIS PAGE: AN EGRET IN MARSHLAND.

▼PHOTO ON PAGE 23: OLD ENGLISH LONGHORN CATTLE ARE USED AT KNEPP AS PROXIES FOR THEIR EXTINCT ANCESTOR, THE AUROCH.

PHOTO BY RACHEL G



Fractured Relationships

On Sunday 6th June, the Revd Catherine Matlock, who, as you have just read, leaves Kings Norton this summer for Stoke-on-Trent, spoke to the morning congregation about shame and reconciliation. Her sermon was based on a reading from St Mark's Gospel chapter 3.

Does anyone else feel uncomfortable as they hear today's Gospel reading? The text gives the impression of enormous tension, of discordant noise and activity. A large crowd of people with demanding needs and critical voices, disguising their fear and shame. In the first few chapters of Mark's fast-paced Gospel, Jesus has been healing and casting out demons, recently recruiting disciples to do the same. In today's account, there's a lot of reactive lashing out.

The crowd swells, desperate to see and experience miracles; Jesus' relatives attempt to shut him up to preserve family honour; the religious leaders grapple to regain control over what threatens the socio-

political status quo, playing their trump card against Jesus : demonic possession. A rather illogical accusation in the circumstances!

Into the midst of chaos, Jesus speaks parables. No angry retaliation from this Rabbi but stories intended to challenge with questions and mystery, inviting the listener to look into their hidden motivations and inner attitudes, rather than to offer black and white solutions.

Jesus, the reconciling Rabbi, uses parables to transform shame and separation, encouraging hearers to identify and address division in their relationships with others, with God and within themselves. Division that dilutes, destabilizes, diminishes, destroys. A kingdom or a house divided against itself cannot stand.

The mysterious parables of our own lives often reveal separation and shame, stories longing for reconciliation and renewal.

For me, there's been a parabolic quality to the last ten days. The Friday before last, I

"Then Jesus went home; and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.' And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.'

And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered."

Mark 3 : 19-27

found myself eating lunch with The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, reflecting with him and others on the dynamics that exist between shame and reconciliation. He is taking a sabbatical to write a book on the topic.

Reconciliation is about restoring relationship, about acceptance, healing and transformation. Reconciliation is often painful and time consuming, requiring vulnerability, honesty and humility and the courage to remain committed to the

messiness of being hurting yet hopeful human beings.

Shame, according to a psychotherapist, Patricia de Young, is "a sense of unworthiness to be in connection...loss of a sense of empathic possibility." Shame is part of the human condition but, unrecognised and unhealed, can cause fracture in our relationships, in our relationship with God, with others and with ourselves. Shame can get in the way of reconciliation.

Individuals react to or defend against shame in a variety of ways that fit generally into four main strategies, depending upon our temperament.

According to the psychologist, Donald Nathanson, some of us may withdraw, hiding within ourselves, sometimes resulting in depression. Or we might attack ourselves with self-criticism and self-humiliation, leading in some cases to physical self-harm. Others will avoid feelings of shame through perfectionism and addiction whilst some are more likely to attack others with blaming, bullying or violence.

A day after the unusual lunch gathering, I heard that a very close friend had committed suicide. He was a clinical psychologist, a Christian home group leader, one of the most generous, loving, hospitable, wise people I know. My friend was always the first to help others, to listen to their stories, but I think he struggled to share his own. Shame over past events and present circumstances caused depression and despair, a sense of unworthiness to be in connection with himself and with others.

We human beings long for wholeness yet shame can cause us to hide from, defend, deny or resist the empathic connections we need to heal

and to reconcile, to accept ourselves and others with all our weaknesses and failures.

St Paul writes, "Let us not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Christians are called to the ministry of reconciliation, to the healing of division and fragmented relationship, not only with others but within ourselves. Let us transform the shame that blocks reconciliation through the willingness to share our stories, the mysterious parables of our own lives. And let us listen with open hearts and minds to the stories of others, especially those most unheard in our communities.

In a world that continues to reel from the trauma of the pandemic, signs of shame are all around us, in the blaming, the violence, the perfectionism and mental health crises of these times. In being empathically present and compassionately curious about each other's stories, we are accepting Christ's invitation to reconciliation.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matthew 5:9)



PHOTO COURTESY OF KNEPP WILDLAND

(Continued from page 19)

At turn of the current century, talks began with various agencies, including WWT and the Environment Agency. The project which evolved began with an intentional breach being made in the existing flood defences, and new flood banks being created further inland. New salt marshes and fresh water grazing marshes quickly established themselves and it appears to be a complete win-win situation.

Salt marsh absorbs wave energy, thus providing natural protection from erosion, and the freshwater grazing marshes store water after heavy rain, protecting local agricultural and inhabited land from flooding. Both habitats provide vital refuge for wetland wildlife, birds and fish, and also act as a huge carbon-sink. And all this is because it is a scheme where nature and humankind are actually working in tandem, and not one of human dominance.

Currently, the world is in the geological age called the Anthropocene, one in which human activity has become the dominant influence on climate and environment. Our best chance is to head as quickly as possible for a successor to this geological age and preferably one that has the element of co-existence about it once again.

What can we do?

Support organisations and charities actively working in these ways;

Vote for political parties which have a track record of environmental action as well as rhetoric;

Manage our own balconies, pots, garden, smallholding, farm, woodland or nature reserve in ways of natural co-existence;

Keep well informed & **pray**.

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

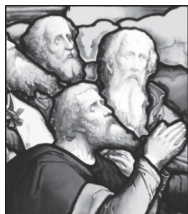
THE CHURCH WARDENS

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 Dickens
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

A Full Retirement

Our June issue included the story of the life of Samuel Ball, buried in our churchyard and an important contributor to the success of the British East India Company as its agent and adviser on tea imports from China.

Further research has shown that, after leading a very active life as an international businessman, upon retirement Samuel continued to lead an energetic life. Our Editor has unearthed, in an edition of *Berrow's Worcester Journal* dated 6th March 1875, a newspaper notice announcing the sale of Samuel's effects (opposite), a few months after he died in 1874. It suggests that he had turned his hand to becoming a successful farmer.

The auction of his effects took place at his family home, Sion Hill House in Wolverley, near Kidderminster in March 1875, and the bill of sale makes a fascinating reading. Key items included a "first-class barouche", a prestigious form of four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage with a collapsible hood over the rear half, a seat in front for the driver and seats facing each other for the passengers.

Samuel's array of livestock was also impressive. There was a Brougham mare, top quality breeding stock; he also had six "very superior" dairy cows, nine pigs and a collection of prize-winning exhibition-standard poultry. The auctioneers were also selling a wide range of other effects, including 300 iron hurdles, garden tools and dairy equipment. It appears that

Samuel was also a home brewer, because there was a range of brewing "requisites" and some "well-seasoned" casks. To emphasise his versatility, he had also built a large collection of "greenhouse and stove" plants, including some very fine camelias and orange trees.

There's no evidence of whether he tried to develop his own tea plantation, though he must have been tempted!

Worcester, by the way, which was Kings Norton's county town until 9th November 1911, when Birmingham absorbed the Urban District of Kings Norton and Northfield, was one of the earliest locations in Britain to have a printing press. It was first established in 1548 and set up by John Oswin, who printed several books on it between 1548 and 1553. The first established records of a Worcester newspaper date from 1690, when Stephen Bryan founded the *Worcester Post-Man*, which has been published ever since, although its name changed to the *Worcester Journal* and then, in 1753, to the name it bears today, *Berrow's Worcester Journal*. It can thus lay claim to being the oldest newspaper in the world in continuous and current production.

Funerals May 2021

6 May	Beverly Irene Ann Russell	74	SN.Bu.KN
10 May	Marjorie Tucker	73	SN.Bu.HW

SN : Service at St Nicolas' Church, Bu : Burial, CY : Churchyard,
Cemeteries & Crematoria
HW : Handsworth, KN : Kings Norton

SION HILL HOUSE, WOLVERLEY. FARMING STOCK, PLANTS, GARDEN EFFECTS, &c.

MESSRS. OATES, PERRENS, & WOOLDRIDGE
Are favoured with instructions from the Representatives
of the late SAMUEL BALL, Esq., deceased,

T O S E L L B Y A U C T I O N ,

At Sion Hill House, Wolverley, near Kidderminster, on
Friday and Saturday, March 19th and 20th 1875,

A Quantity FARMING IMPLEMENTS, 300
IRON HURDLES, first-class BAROUCHE, capital
BROUGHAM MARE, six years old ; Herd of six very
superior DAIRY COWS, Rick of OLD HAY, SOW and
NINE PIGS, quantity of MANURE, BREWING and
DAIRY REQUISITES, well-seasoned CASKS, quantity
of GARDEN TOOLS ; a large collection of GREEN-
HOUSE and STOVE PLANTS, including some very fine
Camelias and Orange Trees ; a collection of valuable
PRIZE and EXHIBITION POULTRY, and other Effects.

Catalogues may be had at the Lion and Black Horse
Hotels, Kidderminster, or of the AUCTIONEERS, Stour-
bridge.

The Sale to commence each Morning at eleven o'clock.

Time to Speak of Many Things

Sometimes, you don't know what you're missing until you encounter it again after long deprivation. As our freedom of movement is slowly restored, we're likely to be delighted by what we rediscover.

Sometimes, after many years of writing for the parish magazine an idea for what to write about will pop into my head while reading. On other occasions there is more scratching of the head as I wait for an idea to form. This month was just that: scratching of head and doodling randomly hoping my subconscious would kick in.

While I was doing this, I thought of that wonderful piece of nonsense by Lewis Carroll "The Walrus and the Carpenter". "'The time has come,' the Walrus said, 'to speak of many things: of shoes and ships and sealing-wax, of cabbages and kings.'" Cue lightbulb moment, because I was struck that, in some ways, this has summed up the last few weeks.

For the first time in many months, I have ventured out of Birmingham. Travelling by train again seemed very odd with masks and sanitiser everywhere, uncertain of the rules. But mostly it was wonderful to look out of the window and to see fields, some with animals in them, hills, rivers, churches and castles. Things you don't really know you have missed.

One thing I knew I had definitely missed was the sea. So it was a huge delight to be able to walk along the beach and taste the salt on my lips, and to take time to watch the gulls and the boats.

I was also able to meet up with some friends in a pub near a steam railway where we had met many years ago in a little village in Wales. The pub had lots of railway memorabilia and we were able to reminisce about the antics we used to get up to and some that we have planned for the future. We were able to look at some pictures of us back in the day working on



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

steam locomotives: Castles and Kings, for those of you who are into that sort of thing (I had to get a king in somehow!).

Back home to, perhaps, not cabbages but certainly to courgettes and cucumbers and tomatoes and trying to deal with a forest of weeds that have sprung up with all the rain we have had. I particularly hate dealing with brambles and that sticky weed, I have no idea what it's called, but it sticks to everything and grows everywhere.

Then, of course, dealing with the after effects of "no mow

May" which, while creating a beautiful meadow, is quite tricky to try and tame again. It's time for the right shoes before getting the strimmer out.

Finally, there was the arrival of an ember card, in an envelope sealed with gold wax and embossed with a tree, inviting me to pray for the ordination of my friend, Tammy.

So, you see, Lewis Carroll was right. It was time to speak of many things, including shoes, ships, sealing-wax, cabbages and kings!

▼THE DELIGHT
OF A SOLITARY
WALK ALONG
A DESERTED
BEACH



PHOTO BY ALASDAIR ELMES

The Kings Norton By-Election

A key test of national wartime opinion

It's isn't very often that Kings Norton has been the focus of national attention, certainly within living memory. It happened when we won the *BBC2 Restoration* competition in 2004, but as far as I can trace there's only been one other example.

It happened at a time when the attention of the nation as a whole had only one primary focus: the challenges, privations and the sheer horror of the Second World War. It was a time, in May 1941, when German bombers were attacking our major cities and its key factories, many of which, notably in Birmingham, were focusing on manufacturing armaments and other products which were key to the wartime effort. Bombings were so frequent that never a day passed in the city or its surrounding area without the fear of a possible aerial attack.

It was in this context that for a few weeks Kings Norton played a role on the national stage. The reason was that it was the first parliamentary constituency to

have a by-election since the start of the war.

Some readers might be surprised to hear that Kings Norton was once a parliamentary constituency: you have to be at least 60 to have been around when it was. It became one in 1918, as local boundaries were revised after the First World War, and continued to be so until a further revision in 1955, when it was split between the new constituencies of Birmingham Selly Oak and Birmingham Northfield.

As the threat of war escalated in 1939, a national government had been created to lead the country through the crisis. It was a government which brought the leading parties together: the Conservatives initially under the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and then under Winston Churchill; the Labour Party and the Liberal party.

Normal political activities were suspended throughout the war, as they would inevitably have



MICHAEL
WRITES
REGULARLY
ON LOCAL
HISTORY

been a distraction from the smooth running of the coalition government. As part of the process, it was agreed that there would be no general elections. There was also an electoral 'truce' agreed by the major parties that, in the interests of the nation as a whole, they would not oppose each other in any constituency in which, for whatever reason, a by-election had to take place; so the party that held the seat would simply make sure that a replacement MP was installed without any by-election at all. However, this was not binding on minor parties, particularly 'single interest' parties.

Kings Norton became the first parliamentary seat to need a new MP in tragic circumstances. From 1935 its MP had been one of the great heroes in the history of Kings Norton, Ronald Cartland. Ronald, a Birmingham man who like his sister the novelist Barbara Cartland, was born and brought up in Edgbaston, had become a dynamic and far-sighted young MP, only 28 years old on his election. Though a Conservative, he was motivated by the growing problem of poverty and high unemployment that he had observed in the Midlands and elsewhere, and he was a constant thorn in the side of Neville Chamberlain's



▲ MAJOR JOHN RONALD HAMILTON CARTLAND M.P. REPRESENTED KINGS NORTON FROM 1935 UNTIL HE WAS KILLED IN ACTION IN 1940. HE WAS THE BROTHER OF NOVELIST BARBARA CARTLAND.

Conservative Government (his own party!), demanding provisions to address those issues.

He was also one of the limited number of serving MPs who had visited Germany as Hitler's Nazi party took hold, and he had seen evidence directly of its aggressive aspirations in terms of 'racial purity' and European domination. So, while Neville Chamberlain continued with his policy of appeasing Hitler to ward off the disaster of a second world war, Ronald was one of those MPs who argued



that the country should acknowledge the inevitability of war and prepare accordingly. Indeed, in a famous speech to the House of Commons shortly before war was declared, in August 1939, Ronald said “We are in a situation that within a month we may be going to fight – and we may be going to die”.

Unfortunately, that speech was prophetic: war was declared in September and, only seven months later, while protecting the troops in the retreat to Dunkirk in June 1940, Ronald was killed while serving as a major in the Royal Artillery, the first British MP to lose his life in the war. His loss was not confirmed until May 1941, as there were always doubts

▲ PART OF THE DAMAGE TO NEW STREET CAUSED BY THE 250-BOMBER AIR RAID, ONLY 3 WEEKS BEFORE THE BY-ELECTION

about whether casualties had been captured by the enemy.

In line with the prevailing policy, as soon as his death had been confirmed, Ronald should have been replaced by another MP selected by the Conservative party, without the need for any by-election. But unfortunately, as they still had a right to do, two minority ‘single issue’ parties chose to demand one. They were the ‘Reprisals’ party, represented by Mr A.W.L. Smith, which demanded a more aggressive policy of action against Germany and its interests; and, at the other end of the spectrum, the ‘Pacifist’ party, represented by Mr Stuart Morris, which argued that war was wrong and that Britain should cease fighting. The

Conservative candidate was Mr John Peto, an army officer.

The by-election attracted national attention because, since the war had started, there had been no formal test of public opinion: no newspaper polls or demonstrations (both of which were actively discouraged as being unpatriotic), no meaningful political debate. So nobody really knew what the attitude of the public was towards the war. As a coalition, by definition, the government had the support of the country as a whole. But did it still have that support? Nobody knew whether the attitude of the British people had changed as German bombers had been blitzing our cities for some nine frightening months.

By May 1941 Birmingham had endured regular and often severe aerial bombardment, on its way to becoming the third most bombed British city in the war after London and Liverpool. Alongside a continuing flow of minor raids, there had been several major attacks spread over several days during 1940, with damage caused to much-loved buildings such as the old Market Hall, the University, the Museum & Art Gallery, and the Council House, and St Philip's Cathedral. Major local industries such as Lucas, GEC and BSA had been badly hit. Indeed, only three weeks before the by-election, a 250-bomber raid

caused severe damage to New Street, High Street and Dale End, destroying the much-loved Prince of Wales Theatre and severely damaging St Martin's Church.

With all this mayhem, shared across major conurbations across the country, had the nation lost heart? Had people changed their minds about the war? With the Blitz and what was generally regarded as the humiliation of Dunkirk, very little had gone right for Britain in the first period of the war: did people now want to pull out, or had it made them even more determined? The Kings Norton result would be a vital indicator: the opinion of the Kings Norton electors had become a crucial yardstick of opinion, in effect an opinion poll.

The by-election took place on 8 May 1941 and the result was conclusive. The Conservative John Peto sailed comfortably home with more than 21,000 votes, taking nearly 87 per cent of the total. Both the Reprisals and the Pacifist party candidates lost their deposits, getting significantly less than ten per cent of the vote.

The people of Kings Norton had shown the way forward: at no time during the rest of the war did calls for reprisals or for the cessation of hostilities ever attract any significant public opinion.

THE HUNGRY GARDENER

Summer Gluts



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

The wild fruits in the nature reserves and along the canal may be a few weeks behind. However, there are lots of fruits forming on the plants so there's hope of bumper harvests of raspberries and, later, blackberries, which are so expensive to buy in the shops.

In our back garden, I've been experimenting since mid-spring in a section of flower bed: a completely edible, floral border which is a mix of herbs (thyme, oregano, chives) edible flowers (calendula or pot marigold, feverfew, chamomile, violet, sunflower) and some perennial vegetables (globe artichoke, turkish rocket, welsh onion, rat tail radish for the pods).

I was inspired by the idea of an edible landscape in the garden where everything is edible, growing in a polyculture which can deter pests, copying nature's patterns. I now find myself wondering what it will look

like in the next month. I am brimming with ideas of other things to try and add to the edible flower mix such as radish and salad rocket. I'm sure this project will continue to evolve with new ideas as I draw inspiration from the companion planting in the veg beds for this polyculture bed. Charles has been enjoying it too, although he is rather keen on picking the flowers to give to me!

This month will hopefully see the start of the bounty from the summer crops, fingers and toes crossed for the summer gluts. I'm looking forward to abundant squashes, cucumbers and, later in August, the first of the tomatoes. We were blessed in June with the weather as the nights really started warming up, giving us the perfect conditions for planting out the summer tender plants.

I do have to admit, as I write this in mid-June, that the sweetcorn and summer squash still need to be planted out in the allotment, so I am a bit behind but hoping they will have time to catch up.

I find myself reflecting at this time on which sowing schedule worked. What I would have sown outside? Did I sow my tomatoes at the right time or would I rejig my schedule a bit next year? The wonderful thing about growing plants and food is that there is so much to learn and it never stops. However, it's at your and your children's pace. We are all learning together.

The homegrown harvests we've been enjoying lately are perennial broccoli, onion scapes, broad bean tops and salad potatoes. Homemade potato salad a-plenty!

There are jobs to be done. However, if the weather is glorious, do savour and enjoy your family time in the garden or in the local nature reserves. Seeds that can be sown now are kale, cabbage, french or dwarf beans and salads.

The kale and cabbage sown now will be ready through the winter and seeds can be sown in the garden with the warm summer climate. Salads can be grown on a windowsill. You can use a sunny windowsill to germinate and, once germinated, move to a shadier one so they don't bolt and set flower. If they do set flower, consume, start again and carry on learning from your experiences.



PHOTO BY CLAIRE LINDOW

THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH

*The wood pigeons were not happy!
The congregation began to gather
for worship in the churchyard of St.
Nicholas' Church, Kenilworth. The
birds, cranky at being disturbed,
clacked and clattered and
complained at us. Eventually, in
disgust, they flew off with a great
flapping of wings.*

The churchyard was in full spring country bloom round the ancient gravestones for Pentecost Sunday. Forget-me-nots, campion, cow parsley, daisies in abundance, thistles and even a few primroses were peeping through the long grass. Across the churchyard acid-yellow laburnum flowers bent low, and bright red rhododendrons shone in the weak sunshine. Nature's vase! Bird song filled the air. The red sandstone backdrop of the ancient parish church glowed in front of us. It was an instance of what the Japanese call *aware* (ah-wah-reh), those brief moments of transcendental beauty, such as the cherry blossom season in Japan.

At least 100 people passed by on the public footpath through the grounds. Some stopped briefly to see what was going on. By being



THELMA MITCHELL IS A
VOLUNTARY CHAPLAIN AT
BOURNVILLE COLLEGE

outside, even occasionally, we are showing everyone that we are still here. A mere pandemic is not going to defeat us.

A few weeks ago, at St. Nicolas', a large number of people gathered outdoors to celebrate Good Friday, returning on Easter Sunday, both pleasingly sunny days. It was a joy and a privilege on both occasions. There have been more services outside since. Worship in the open air: perhaps that's where it is meant to be, at least occasionally and in good

weather. At times we need to take the Gospel to the people, not wait for them to come to us.

Many years ago, we lived on the Fylde. Inskip was a rural village situated mid-way between Blackpool and Preston, its economy mainly agricultural. From the churchyard of Inskip Baptist, the tall, sculptural masts of HMS Inskip, which had been a Fleet Air Arm airfield and became a military high frequency radio transmitting station, rose into the sky and occasionally interrupted the microphone system. The minister at the time had been raised amongst the tent missions of Northern Ireland. In the summer he loved to gather his congregation to take services at local camp sites, whether they wanted it or not!

Every August, a Keswick-style tent convention was held in its grounds. This was largely to support and encourage rural churches in Lancashire, though many came from much further afield. Their congregations and leaders would have little opportunity to leave their farms, even for a few days. It was often their only holiday, and home-made food was served all afternoon to sustain them. There were afternoon and

“By being outside, even occasionally, we are showing everyone that we are still here. A mere pandemic is not going to defeat us.”

evening sessions (mornings were needed for milking and other essential farm jobs) with a lot of singing and two sermons, each of at least an hour's duration. They were not for the faint-hearted! One memory I have is of a speaker talking for 90 minutes about 'burntofferin's' – all one word – though to what end I know not. In the evenings, the lights of the masts of HMS Inskip glowed eerily in the background to hearty renditions of *Blessed Assurance* and *All for Jesus*.

One evening, a storm blew up. The marquee flapped and shook, its canvas roof gaping and dipping, in danger of taking off and blowing away. Thunder crashed and lightening flashed.



Over the speaker's bald head (always male speakers, of course) the large naked lightbulb swayed. The safety pin holding it in place in those pre-health and safety days worked itself undone. As the red-hot bulb began to fall, the organist leapt up and grabbed it a nano-second before contact. Sadly, I don't remember a word of any of the sermons ... apart from burntofferin's.

Let's snatch and support more occasions to worship outside whenever possible. The enforced closing of churches in March 2020 has disappointed and even angered many people, perhaps surprisingly widely amongst those who would not normally come to church. They were vocal, perhaps realising what was missing in the community when, suddenly, we were not open. As the pandemic lingers and variants spread, many feel safer worshipping in the open air and children love it.

And here we are, with no escape, back at the topic of the pandemic. There is talk of a lost Covid generation, of our young folks left behind and forgotten amidst the euphoria of vaccine distribution. The poem of encouragement on the opposite page, by the Scottish writer and

poet, Donna Ashworth, captures how stressed and unsure many are feeling. It is reprinted here with her kind permission.

For all of us, young and old, fit and infirm, wearying of what feels like a never-ending state of affairs, here are some words of hope and reassurance from Psalm 62:5-8.

*Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from Him. Truly
He is my rock and my fortress. I
shall not be shaken. My
salvation and my honour
depend on God; He is my
mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in
Him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to Him,
for God is our refuge.*

Continue to stay safe, stay well, stay praying, stay hopeful.

PHOTO BY DAVID ASH



Tell the teenagers

That this will not go on forever, that very, very soon their life will begin again and it will begin in glorious technicolour.

Tell the teenagers

That they are not being left behind, that all the other young people are waiting too, this stress is collective.

Tell the teenagers

That night is darkest before dawn, so if they feel extra hopeless right now, that's because it's coming to an end, soon.

Tell the teenagers

That's it's possible to feel utter despair and misery, then, for no apparent reason to wake up one day and to suddenly feel joy again, we don't know why. Don't believe anything is permanent. It's not.

Tell the teenagers

That we may not understand how this is affecting them but we can imagine, and we can worry. We don't know what to do for the best but we are here.

Tell the teenagers

That one day they will look back on this and realise that it made them a far better human somehow. They will seize the moment, face the fears and take every opportunity with open arms. And when tough times come they will remember that they survived.

Tell the teenagers

To find a little purpose every day and hang on to it, like a life raft. Anything, no matter how small, can keep you afloat.

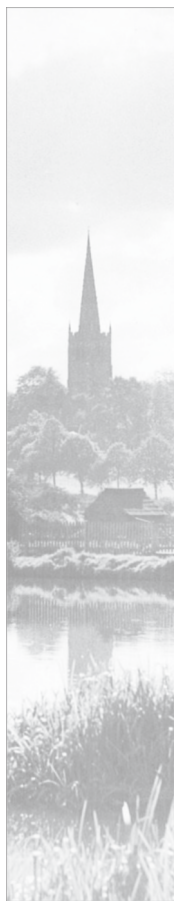
Tell the teenagers

That what they are enduring right now is not fair, it's not easy and it is hard. But great things are coming, if they just hang on and wait.

Wait ... Just a little longer.

The 4th Excursion Meeting of the Worcestershire Naturalists' Club

Berrow's Worcester Journal, whose history is explained on page 24, is a rich source of information about past life in this part of England. On 4th September 1869, it printed a detailed description of a nature ramble which began and ended at Kings Norton. It is reproduced here with the original spelling and punctuation for your enjoyment and edification.



The fourth excursion meeting of the present season was appointed for Tuesday last at Northfield, near Kings-Norton, and was numerously attended. The enervating fervid weather of the preceding week had given place to a temperature better fitted for out-door exploration, and the observant naturalists advancing to a work combining duty with enjoyment, took the language of Tennyson as their motto for the day

*"And forth into the fields I went,
While Nature's living motion lent
The pulse of hope to discontent."*

Motion is in fact the life and soul of science, and starting from the Shrub-hill station, the iron horse quickly conveyed the adventurous band to King's-Norton, where they formed a junction with another division of naturalists from Birmingham. Here the party was met by Thomas S. Stock, Esq., of the Priory, Northfield, who, as cicerone and host of the day, at

once proceeded on the appointed route, and led them first to the Rolling Works of Mr. Ellis, who had directed his manager to show the various operations carried on, which were interesting to contemplate. Here copper and platinum are rolled by machinery into large plates, duly flattened for the purposes required for further manufacture into various articles, and it was something curious to heave some small plates of platinum which is the heaviest of all metals, and so valuable that a little pile of them were said to be worth £2,000. After the examination of the works, an exploratory party chartered a boat on the contiguous Wychall Reservoir, which is a fine expanse of water, and fishing for waterplants went on for some time with success. Several specimens of *Potamogeton* were observed in fine fruit, as well as dense masses of the Water Millfoil. Portions of the reservoir were beautified with floating masses of the red-flowered *Polygoum*

amphibium, over which the beautiful blue-spotted dragon-fly (*Libellula maculata*) was sporting in airy divarications, and the Bladder Carex (*C. vesicaria*), was very conspicuous. From hence by pleasant shady lanes, once the high road of commerce, when merchandise was chiefly conveyed by pack-horses, though now abandoned to ferns and brambles, the party passed on to Northfield, where Mr. Stock pointed out an ancient moat, still filled with water, that surrounds the rectory garden, though whether formerly a defence to a manor house once here, or some religious foundation, is not certainly known. Not far away is another very large moat that surrounds the site on which Hawkesly House once stood, which in the Civil Wars of Charles the First's time Prince Rupert burned down, when he found himself unable to hold it against a superior force of Parliamentarians. Thus it is that Worcestershire has, from the destruction of war or the dilapidations of time, more relics of weed-covered moats than of the mansions of olden days.

There follows a long-winded account of the party's exploration of Northfield, including "a most sumptuous luncheon" at The Priory and a lecture on Fairy Rings. The article ends with an account of the club's final descent into "Kings-Norton".

It was quite dusk when the naturalists reached the village and

church of Kings-Norton, though its lofty tower and beautiful crocketed spire had been looming in view for a considerable time. The Rev. J. M. L. Aston, the vicar, was in waiting to show the church to the visitors, and had kindly caused it to be partially lighted up; but as the structure could only be imperfectly seen in the gloom, he considerably distributed copies of his *Lecture on the Antiquities of Kings-Norton*, for the careful perusal of the excursionists at home. The party now rather tired and exhausted, made their way to the Saracen's Head Inn, a timbered house of some antiquity, perhaps in former days inhabited by a more important personage than a tapster, for here, according to the circular, tea was to be provided, and all were anxious to partake of the non-inebriating cup. But, alas, here was the only disappointment of the day, for the honorable secretary, with a mind abstracted from the petty appliances belonging to cups and saucers, and high in the regions of Metamorphosis, on which subject he had promised a paper, had utterly forgotten to order coffee or tea even for two-much less for twenty-and mine host could not manage it on the spur of the moment. So the secretary lost his vote of thanks, and amidst murmurs not loud but deep, those who were and those who were not teetotallers did the best they could with soda water, lemonade, and cold without. [...] From Kings-Norton the party returned by the last train home.

Practical Jokes at Sea

I am going to begin this tale on a rather somber note. The weather conditions over the past two months have been depressing for many people. My dear Grandma, whom I loved greatly and who supported my mother and me in Weston-super-Mare when my father was a prisoner of war during the 1940s, was a fervent Methodist. She would pass on quotations from her reading, often from the Bible, and one comes to mind now, even though I heard her read it 75 years ago. "One season will merge with another until it is difficult to tell the difference between them". I wonder what she would have thought about our increasingly unsettled climate?

So how are we to cheer ourselves up? Well, the vaccination programme appears to be improving matters greatly (the pandemic, not the weather!) and I hope a little humour from my time spent onboard ship will generate a few smiles too.

Seamen have to find ways of relieving the tedium of long periods spent at sea, and practical jokes have always been a favourite. I remember one in particular. A junior seafarer was sent all the way down to the engine room to ask for a yard of steam with which to clean the decks. He was sent back to ask whether a metre of steam would do. The Second Mate sent him back with the message that it would. Of course, after a few trips between decks, it eventually dawned on the poor lad that he was being made fun of.

Here's another. My cabin was on the same deck as the other Petty Officer, the Bosun, and two fitters. They tended to have more than a few

drinks on a Saturday night in the crew bar. I was awakened at one in the morning by a crash and a lot of expletives being shouted very loudly. The Bosun has tottered back to his cabin to find that his door had been unscrewed and replaced in such a way that it looked closed. Of course, he fell flat on his face on top of the door with his legs thrashing!

He did, however, get his revenge the following weekend. He came into the galley, where I was working as the cook at the time, and asked for some clingfilm. I gave him a roll but felt quite mystified by what he was up to. The mystery was solved that weekend when, once again, I heard a lot of late night shouting. The Bosun had slipped into his mate's cabin where he had covered the toilet pans with clingfilm and lowered the seats. Ugh!

Peter the Bosun was quite a character, very bluff and loud, of good heart but without too many brains. The quiz night was a popular event on board. It was usually held once a fortnight in the officers' bar and lounge when we were at sea. Four or five tables would be set up and it was well attended. One evening, it was my turn to compile the questions. "Now," I said, "a question for the Bosun's team of sailors. What is a spa-lash?" The Bosun didn't

hesitate. "It's a lashing for the spars of a cargo derrick," he said. "No it's not," says I. "The answer is 'It's the noise the anchor makes as it hits the water'". Of course, having had a few beers, he became rather vocal. "Watch your language, Peter," I said, "There are wives present!" There were hoots of laughter from all sides.

One Monday morning, the saloon steward came into the galley laughing loudly. The Captain and Chief Officer were in the habit of having breakfast at about 8.15 each morning. The officers' dining room had windows which looked out over the stern (the rear end) of the ship. That morning, the Bosun was putting on a show by waving his arms and pointing his fingers as if allocating work for his seamen. All well and good, you might say. Then I went to the back door of the galley and looked out onto the stern to see that his seamen had painted his work boots bright pink and had added flowers. The Captain, who had also noticed, said, "I see the pantomime season has started early this year."

It's said that laughter is the best medicine, so I hope you're feeling a bit better. While we wait for things to improve, perhaps we can give thanks each day to our Maker and hope for better times ahead for us all.



Eddie recalls some seafaring strategies for keeping spirits up at sea.



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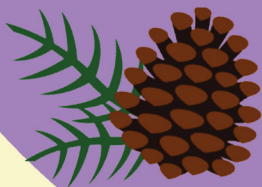
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