

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

Learning for Life

Education & the parish.

The Eclectic Electric

Have you discovered the UK's oldest working cinema?

I Am Grateful

The Reverend Eliakim Ikechukwu says goodbye.



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Welcome

EDITORIAL

When does your year begin? Your first thought might be "January 1st, of course." But is it that straightforward? If you work for HMRC or have to deal with them, many of your efforts will focus on 6th April, the start of the financial year. If you're a Christian in the West, your next liturgical year will start on Advent Sunday, 3rd December 2023. If you're Chinese, you'll be looking forward to 10th February 2024, when the year of the Rabbit gives way to the year of the Dragon. If you're Jewish, you get four New Years a year. And for the millions of people whose lives revolve around schools in large parts of the world, September marks another pivotal moment, the start of the academic year, what the French refer to simply as "la rentrée", the return.

For children, teachers, parents and those who work with them, this is a month of gearing up for new beginnings and fresh challenges, though often tinged, as the long holiday ends, with nostalgia for the relaxed rhythms and adventures of the summer.

In this month's edition, we look in both directions: backwards in thankfulness for seasons that are ending and forwards to the priorities and opportunities of the new school year. Our Assistant Rector, Eliakim Ikechukwu, reflects on five-and-a-half years spent in Kings Norton as he prepares for his move to Lozells & Newtown this month. Claire celebrates some bumper summer crops and John his success in tracking down five kilos of elusive strawberries. Meanwhile, Larry, Thelma and Tom all offer thoughts on the centrality and the future of

formal education in so many lives and its underpinning of so much that we take for granted in this country.



David Ash

Learning for Life

Someone once said, “If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.” The message is a simple one: if a nation invests in education, it is likely to be more prosperous and more successful than a nation which limits or neglects the education of its citizens. One of the most obvious differences between the wealthier nations of the world and the poorest is the vast chasm between their educational systems.

In the UK, we have much to be thankful for. Until university level, there is free education for all. Each child is required to attend school by law, our schools and other places of learning are valued places in our communities and neighbourhoods and, though other countries score higher in international league tables of achievement, the UK is in the upper levels of such tables.

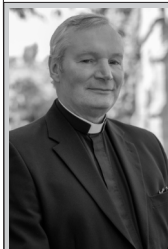
No system is perfect and there are obvious disparities of opportunity and choice to be addressed; but despite these, our schools, colleges and universities remain places of

creativity, achievement and success for the majority.

For most of my thirty years of ministry, I’ve been involved in schools in one way or another and, for the past fourteen years, as a chair of governors at church schools. This has provided a special insight into the nature and challenges of schooling in the 21st century. It is a privilege to be part of a school which has a clear sense of purpose and goals set within a caring, nurturing environment.

Martin Luther King Junior defined education as “knowledge plus character.” Learning and personal qualities are held to be of equal importance. In the schools I know best, this is evidenced in what is often called these days the school’s “ethos”: the tangible and intangible influences and guiding principles which permeate the culture of a school.

Hawkesley Church Primary Academy (HCPA) occasionally features in the pages of this magazine and many members



The Revd Larry Wright is the Rector of Kings Norton Parish



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

of our local communities have memories of being educated there. In recent years, it has “re-branded” itself in a concerted effort to develop its standards of teaching and learning. In October 2021, it was graded by the national Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED) as a “good” school for the first time in its recent history. The first paragraph of the report states, “This is a happy and welcoming school. The Christian ethos underpins the climate within the school. Adults and pupils show a deep level of respect and care for one another. Everyone is highly valued.”

Our church school is determined to build upon this assessment in the years ahead. We are about to have a change in the leadership team there from September. We have

▲ A LESSON
AT
HAWKESLEY
SCHOOL
PRIMARY
ACADEMY IN
OCTOBER
2022

already welcomed Miss Petrina Poleon as the new headteacher. She joined just after Easter this year and now we’ll welcome a new deputy headteacher (Claire Richardson) and a new assistant headteacher (Tracy Chance). Both bring a good deal of experience to their roles and are enthusiastic about joining the school.

Our parish’s involvement in schools is not limited to Hawkesley. Our long-running Thursday morning Tiny Tots sessions are educational in a different way. We also have good links with Kings Norton Primary School. Each year in December, St Nicolas’ Church hosts their annual Christmas concert, which is so popular that it’s standing room only at the back. It involves the whole school as well as many proud

parents, grandparents and carers. We have visits from local nurseries and other schools invite us to take part in their collective worship, which more mature readers will know as “assemblies”. Recently, we were asked to support a school after the death of a child, a sensitive matter which needed careful pastoral input.

Cadbury College is located in Kings Norton and attracts students from across Birmingham and the West Midlands. As a Further Education college, it caters for 16–18-year-olds studying A Levels or their equivalent. A few years ago, we were approached to join a volunteer chaplaincy team made up of ministers from local churches who visit each week to provide a pastoral presence among the students. The Reverend Eliakim Ikechukwu has fulfilled this role until now but, with his move to Newtown and Lozells now imminent, we are pleased to announce that our current ordinand in training, Imogen Watson, has agreed to take on this role for the next academic year.

Lifelong learning is part of our culture with opportunities provided for people of all ages to continue their education. The Open University, The University of the Third Age and distance learning courses have all opened up new avenues for people to explore their areas of

interest at an academic level and to achieve qualifications. For those who prefer less demanding academic courses there are numerous “learning for leisure” opportunities to acquire new skills or take part in activities with expert guidance.

Learning and education, in their many forms, are a central part of what it is to be human. Our ability to gain knowledge and skills sets us apart in Creation. What we do with our learning and skills is a different challenge. We are also moral beings with a conscience. An increase in knowledge and skills needs to be accompanied by a growth in wisdom and insight. We must have a set of values and beliefs to live by if we are to put our knowledge and skills to the best use. For many people, religion provides another set of learning experiences which complement factual learning. Religious belief provides opportunities for spiritual experiences, ethical criteria for the good life and a metaphysical source of wisdom.

As we enter a new academic year, may our places of learning be guided by the highest standards of teaching and nurture for the sake of our children and young people and for the enrichment of our communities and nation.

Jack Sangster

Motorcycle Mogul

From time to time in these articles I highlight people born in Kings Norton who have had a significant impact not only on the Midlands, but on the country as a whole, and even internationally.

Another of these is Jack Sangster, a pioneering British designer and industrialist who was also known for his philanthropy. In his heyday, he was one of the driving forces behind the greatest days of the British motorcycle industry, the man behind internationally successful marques such as BSA, Triumph and Ariel, which helped Britain to be one of the world's largest producers.

Born here on 29 May 1896 as John Young Sangster, Jack first made his reputation as a manufacturer through his famous Ariel factory in Bournbrook, Selly Oak, which would most probably have provided employment for many people from Kings Norton.

He was born with the advantage that he was the second of three sons of a man who had an established and important role in the cycle and motorcycle industry, Charles Thomas Brock Sangster. He was Scotsman who had built a leading Midlands company called Cycle



MICHAEL
WRITES
REGULARLY
ON LOCAL
HISTORY

► JOHN
YOUNG
(JACK)
SANGSTER



Components Ltd, creating the first Ariel motorcycle in 1902.

Jack's father Charles was one of many successful professionals who chose to live in Kings Norton which, around the end of the 19th century, was one of the most desirable residential locations in the southern outskirts of Birmingham, still the country's industrial powerhouse. Kings Norton, still officially in North Worcestershire (it only became part of Birmingham in 1911) was then a combination of a serene rural village and a developing manufacturing centre, helped by the railway and its central situation on the canal network. Road transport barely existed in those days.

Charles was wealthy enough to give his son Jack a private

education at Hurstpierpoint College in Sussex. Jack inherited his father's passion for engineering and had just begun an engineering apprenticeship when the First World War broke out. He served with the City of Birmingham battalion of the 14th Royal Warwickshire regiment. His elder brother Frederick lost his life in the war in 1916.

Immediately after the war, Jack joined his father's company Cycle Components and quickly showed his outstanding abilities as a designer and engineer. Though it was not a car company, he was encouraged to design a small low-cost car that was brought into production. However, Cycle Components did not have the structure or substance to enable significant manufacture and, in 1919, the car's design was sold to the rapidly developing Rover Car Company in Coventry, itself once a cycle manufacturer. Jack transferred to Rover to manage its production and the car was given the name Rover 8.

It became a very successful product at home and in Western European markets, a vital stage in the successful evolution of Rover into one of the leading international carmakers of the 20th century. Jack, however,

wanted to develop his own company and returned to Cycle Components in 1923, becoming Managing Director in 1930. But it seems that the company was encumbered by being too much of a specialist manufacturer of cycle parts at a time when powered vehicles were winning over the British travelling public. In 1932 it went into receivership, possibly a situation which did not disappoint Jack, because he then bought the majority of the company and created a new organisation, which he called Ariel Motors, re-employing most of its team of designers. His vision was to take the motorcycling world by storm by producing innovative, value for money, high performance machines.

To do so, he developed the existing Cycle Components factory in Bournbrook. It was in Dale Road, adjacent to the current Selly Oak Library building. Gradually the factory expanded with further premises in Grange Road. Jack had already built up the Ariel image with its famous range of Black Ariels launched in 1926 and, after re-establishing the company, launched the Ariel Square Four designed by Jack's design chief Edward Turner, followed by the Ariel Red Hunter. During the Black Ariel period, the Ariel horse logo came into being, as did its

slogan "The Modern Motor Cycle".

In 1936, Ariel's growing success enabled Sangster to purchase the financially struggling Triumph Cycles company. Transferring Edward Turner to develop the Triumph motorcycle range, he met with immediate success by creating the Triumph Speed Twin, with a parallel-twin engine designed by Turner. That product was introduced in 1938 and was followed by a series of successful Triumph motorcycles as a dominant force in the industry until the early 1980s.

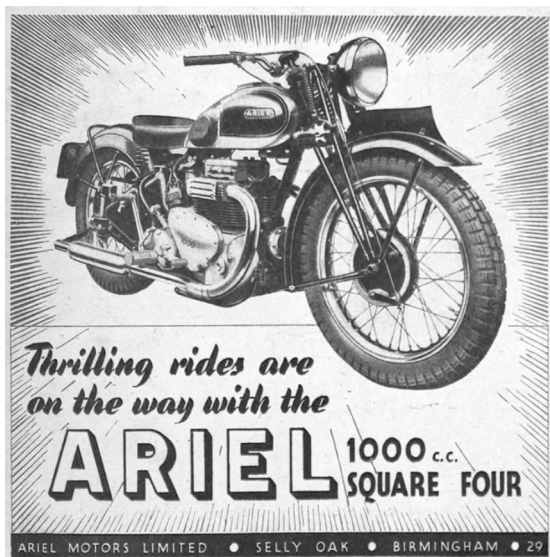
During the Second World War, the Ariel factory was turned over to military production,

Behind the
ARIEL
500 cc. Vertical Twins
is 18 years of Multi Cylinder
design and development

In 1931, Ariel pioneered the Multi Cylinder Engine, by the introduction of the now World Famous 1,000 cc. Square Four. Throughout the succeeding years, Ariel leadership has made modern Multi Cylinder Motor Cycle performance what it is to-day.

500 cc. Red Hunter
Twin Model R.H. (see
illustration) and 500 cc.
Du-Luxe Twin Model
R.G.

ARIEL MOTORS LTD · SELLY OAK · BIRMINGHAM 29



including the Ariel W/NG 350 army motorcycle, based on the Red Hunter but with higher ground clearance.

In 1944, Jack sold Ariel to the BSA (Birmingham Small Arms) company, then one of the world's most versatile industrial organisations with a product range that embraced buses, cycles, cars and motorcycles, military and sporting weapons, machine tools and the production of steel and other metals. In 1951, Jack made his long-term fortune by selling Triumph to BSA for £2.5 million, an exceptional return on his initial £50,000 investment in the 1930s.

At that time, Jack actually joined the BSA board and ultimately became chairman in 1956, after a series of

boardroom battles which ousted the previous chairman, Sir Bernard Docker. Under Jack's control, BSA, Ariel and Triumph achieved sustained success in the world's motorcycle markets until competition, particularly from the Far East, began to take over. BSA closed the Ariel factory in Bournbrook in 1962 and moved production to the BSA factory at Small Heath. The Bournbrook factories, some of which had been taken over by Boxfoldia, the packaging company, were demolished in 2000 to make way for university accommodation.

After he retired in 1961, Jack focused on building up the charitable activities that his wealth had enabled him to develop. His inclination to help others had begun as long before as 1944, when he took two London wartime evacuees, Gordon and Jean Rookledge, into his home.

Personal prestige did not seem important to him, as he declined the offer of a peerage in 1962. He died at his home in London's Belgravia in March 1977. From rural Kings Norton to one of London's most exclusive and stylish residential districts: an impressive journey.

September Looks Forward to next year

It would be easy to think that there is little to be done in the garden at this time of year. September is celebrated in America as the season before the fall and the spectacular colours of the trees are accompanied by pumpkin mania as Hallowe'en is celebrated to excess. I was once in Illinois at the end of October. We visited the Chicago Botanical Gardens to be amazed by great stacks of pumpkins for sale. These would be carved into spooky heads to be displayed in the porch on the night before All Saints' Day. So many different colours of pumpkins to be had with either a smooth or knobbly skin.

So, here we are in England, carefully avoiding the marketing opportunity that is the run up to Hallowe'en and wondering what needs to be done in the garden. You can turn to the internet or to gardening magazines to see lists of gardening tasks or jobs to be done. I don't like these words and I think the phrase "creative activities" sounds much more like a pleasure

than a burden. Here are some creative activities for you in September.

Sow hardy annuals such as Cerinthe, Scabiosa, Cornflowers and Ammi (not ammo). It is a white umbellifer like Hogweed but much prettier and you will be with the trend for more wild-looking flower beds.

Plant out Wallflowers, Pansies, Forget-me-nots (ideal as an underplanting for tulips) plus other spring bedding plants.

Containers can be starting to look a bit forlorn, but you just have time to plant them up with tough plants that will add autumn interest through a mild winter. Cyclamen, Heathers and Heucheras will give a good show particularly where sheltered from the winter winds and frost.

Retrieve any house plants you have put outside for the summer. This



seems to work well with Christmas Cactus.

Look closely at Camellias, Rhododendrons, and Azaleas and you will see that next year's flower buds will be showing. Time to carefully fork over the ground under these shrubs and to water in a can full of Sequesterene solution. This wonder substance has the ability to unlock the iron in your soil particularly in the presence of lime. Then mulch with compost, perhaps from your own heap. If this is not possible, use some of the cheap multi-purpose compost. There is no need to fork this in because the worms will do it for you! The mulch will hold water and prevent it draining away too quickly.

My recommendation for 2024 is to buy some mixed seed of Gaillardia. When they are big enough, plant them out in your perennial bed for a year-long display of striking yellow and red single flowers. Some watering in the first year may be required and dead heading will keep them flowering well into the autumn. Buy your seed from a supplier with a reputation to protect (maybe Suttons). This hardy perennial, which is drought tolerant, will give pleasure for years to come. Alternatively, you can order young plants from J Parkers and others, ready to plant now and you should have some flowers next year. If you give these plants occasional waterings in the first year you will have free-flowering clumps of drought tolerant beauties the year after and again and again!

Here's to a frost-free winter.

People in the UK are
VOLUNTEERING LESS

The number of people taking part in volunteering in the UK is decreasing.

This is bad news, but it is not surprising. The social restrictions imposed as a result of COVID-19 do explain some of this decline. Of course, we went out less, and some regular volunteering was cancelled. The pandemic did also create new opportunities for mutual aid and informal helping out, and for people to become involved in helping deliver local services to their friends and neighbours. But there has been a longer-term fall in volunteer numbers that pre-dates COVID-19.

There are good reasons why people do not volunteer. They may have work commitments, childcare or other caring responsibilities. They may not know how to get involved, or not feel welcome. And the obstacles that prevent people from volunteering are likely to have become more significant over the last few years, in particular due to the cost of living crisis.

The government has monitored volunteer participation in England from 2001. Between 2001 and 2013 the number of people taking part in volunteering each year in England remained fairly consistent – maybe even increasing slightly. Around 40% of people said they volunteered at least once a year and around 28% volunteered at least once a month.

However, after a peak in 2013-14 volunteer numbers have fallen. The latest government survey found that only 16% of people in England took

part in formal volunteering once a month in 2021-22.

Similarly, a report by the Charities Aid Foundation shows that number volunteering has been in steady decline for the past five years – down 1.6 million people since 2018. Another survey, carried out in 2022 by the National Council for Volunteer Organisations, shows declines in various voluntary activities.

Taking part in volunteering is also generally affected by age. Young people aged 16 to 25 may volunteer through school, college, or university or through social clubs, because they have the time and are motivated to get skills and experience to benefit them later on.

There is a drop-off in participation during the transition from youth to adulthood when people move into work and acquire more caring responsibilities and so have less free time for volunteering. There is then generally a gradual increase in volunteering with age as people regain spare time – and a second drop-off as people move into old age and are more likely to be burdened by poor health or cut off from social connections.

The evidence on barriers to volunteering also shows a relationship between volunteering and social advantage. Wealthier, more educated, more socially connected people have more opportunity to volunteer than those living in more challenging social circumstances.

(continued on page 35)

The Men's Group

Summer Catering Challenge

PHOTO BY TETIANA BYKOVETS



It seemed like a good idea at the time and anyway it wasn't going to happen for months, was it?

When the Men's group planning committee, for want of a better word, was summoned to the Bull's Head in late May for a meeting to discuss ideas for next year's programme, little did we know what decision awaited us. Over a welcome pint of Wainwright's we threw in idea after idea as we brainstormed activities that could become possibilities in 2024. And then

out of the blue he suggested it. Larry had had one of his really bright ideas to pep up our upcoming July meeting at church, listed as a "Bring a Friend Night". Why don't we do it in the Rectory Garden? "OK," we said, "Good idea. Weather permitting."

Then another bombshell hit us. He continued, "And why don't we put on an evening of strawberries and cream, nibbles and summer drinks?" We all avoided his gaze, looked down into our drinks and I guess we may have thought he was mad. Larry, we're blokes. Blokes don't do catering, at least these blokes don't. However, no-one, of course, was prepared to venture that opinion. This was the Rector's idea after all. "Yes, great idea!" we said.

"OK. So who's going to do what?" was the next question. David got in quickly and volunteered to investigate summer punches and nibbles and Larry said that he would provide fizz for those that wanted it. Steve and I looked at each other. "OK, we'll do it. It's the strawberries and cream for us.

Can't be that difficult for a couple of organised men, can it?"

As I sat there involved in the ongoing discussion of the possibilities for that night, I thought about the trials of obtaining sufficient fruit for an unknown number of people. Unknown, because discussion had decided that we would open the evening to all and sundry not just our active members.

Walking home, I mused on how we would have done it when the children were younger in the 70's and 80's. "Pick your own" was how we would have got the fruit in bulk and at a reasonable price. Couldn't be easier, could it?

Well, it could. Believe it or not Pick-Your-Own has

disappeared from the horticultural calendar in our area. Trawling the internet, I became aware that this was not going to be the way forward. Only two fruit farms offered this facility, but they were over in Stourport and Kidderminster and they were picking now in late May early June. Too soon for us. What had happened to Hilliards over in Bromsgrove where we went on family trips with the kids in days long past? I guess that they had also long gone under bricks and mortar or solar panels. Such is progress, I suppose.

I began to fret about it and even consulted my corner shopkeeper who frequented the wholesale market regularly to see if that was a possibility. No, strawberries from the market come pre-packed as in

▼THE
"MEN'S"
GROUP IN
THE
RECTORY
GARDEN



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

the supermarkets because of the fragility of the fruit. Obvious really, I suppose, but it didn't help me.

So, I needed a plentiful and reliable source of good-quality fruit for mid-July and, despite my attempts to cut corners and strike a good deal, I was left with the option that everyone else would choose: raid the supermarkets.

Having made that decision nothing could be easier, could it? Well, maybe it's me, but I couldn't just go to the nearest supermarket and clear the shelves of strawberries without knowing that I was getting the best deal in quality and price. Thus began a prolonged investigation that took me to all the local supermarkets and online searches too as I endeavoured to get us the best deal. Aldi (cheap but disorganised), Co-op (quality but expensive), Tesco (not local so online only and hence a risk on quality), Sainsbury's (decent quality but limited special offers), Farmfoods (nothing on the shelves but later advised I needed to get there as soon as they opened to get any as they were so cheap that retailers bought from them and sold them on), finally Morrison's (quality fruit and 3 for 2 offers).

I noted all the weights and costs for each supermarket visited and sat at home with the calculator working out the cost per kilogram. I was determined to get us the best deal. And the winner of the Great Strawberry Price Challenge? Morrison's! Their 3-for-2 offer clinched it as long as it lasted up to when I needed the fruit. My next move was to buy some and try them. Did they

meet our stringent quality requirements? Answer: Yes! Succulent, sweet, plump strawberries. "They'll do," I thought.

On the weekend of the Rectory Garden event, I loaded my trolley with 18 packs of strawberries (from Herefordshire as it happened) some cream and ice cream and escaped before I was accused of causing a strawberry shortage. The shelves did look decidedly empty. I felt as if I had mugged them.

Monday evening was Rectory Garden night so that morning was spent removing the stalks from five kilos of strawberries and carefully replacing them in their packets. Strawberries are so fragile that you can't just pile them in a bowl. But you knew that, of course. As I finished, I breathed a sigh of relief and knew my task was done.

What I haven't mentioned of course was that this July was the wettest July on record and, even while I was topping the strawberries, the rain was pouring down outside my window. Would it actually happen, I thought?

We had contingency plans to relocate to the church in the event of rain; but surely, after all this trouble, would it not happen as we planned?

Then, in answer to our prayers, the weather brightened up during the afternoon and we were Go for Launch. I even got out my Henley Regatta jacket for the occasion which, I have to say, caused quite a stir, not least with my wife! We assembled in the Rectory garden at 6.30 pm, put chairs

and tables out and sorted out the arrangements. Raffle ready. David had his punches to mix, and Larry his fizz and wine ... and we waited. Would anyone come? Had the earlier weather put everyone off?

It was a meeting open to anyone connected with the church and the Men's Group, so we had estimated that there could be a number if they didn't decide to stay away. We were ready for them, but would they come?

As seven o'clock ticked by a slow but steady stream of people began to fill the garden. They ate the strawberries and cream, drank the punch and fizz and chatted. Even the garden Jenga proved a popular pastime for the young at heart.

It didn't take long for 5 kilos of strawberries to be consumed with the summer drinks lubricating the conversation. Many new acquaintances were made too. Nine O'Clockers (those who regularly attend the 9.00 am Sunday service) met up with Ten Thirtiers, some for the first time. The raffle realised a considerable sum towards Men's Group funds which will enable us to pay our future speakers.

So, was it a good idea? Of course, it was. Was it a success? Definitely, judging by the numbers attending (upward of forty) and by the favourable comments we received. Will we do it again? Maybe. Did we learn anything? Yes. Men can do catering. But beware of the Rector's suggestions in future.



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

The Eclectic Electric

Oldest Working Cinema in the UK

How many local independent cinemas get a mention in the Houses of Parliament? Well, Birmingham's own Electric Cinema did in December 2009. Three Birmingham MPs (Richard Burden, Khalid Mahmood and Tom Watson) presented this Early Day Motion:

"(This House) recognises the value of independent cinemas to the cultural and social life of local communities; celebrates the continued success of Britain's oldest working cinema, The Electric in Birmingham; notes that on 2 December 2009 a centenary celebration is taking place for the cinema that started life as a silent movie theatre, became a news theatre during the Second World War and succumbed to dereliction in 2003."

For over a hundred years the Electric Cinema in Station Street has served as a cinema for Brummies and is now reputed to be the oldest continuously-operating cinema in Britain. It has had a varied history, of which more later. If you visit this unique building today you will find it tucked away between that behemoth of the building we know as Grand Central, incorporating New Street Railway Station, and the edge of The Chinese Quarter, a lively area of variable Chinese and other Far Eastern restaurants and eateries which extends across Smallbrook Queensway towards and beyond The Birmingham Hippodrome theatre.



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

The Electric first opened in December 1909 showing early silent films. Electricity was still a novelty in Edwardian Birmingham so its name reflected changing times as did what it offered as entertainment: films. All other theatres in Birmingham at that time would produce live plays or music hall variety nights. The

Electric was built a few yards away from what was The Birmingham Repertory Theatre, now known as The Old Rep.

One can imagine the excitement engendered by this new form of entertainment. The newspapers reported "a cosy and attractive entertainment hall with a capacity of 376, with red plush tip-up seats." On its opening day it was reported, "It is estimated that upwards of two thousand persons paid for admission on the opening day, and from two o'clock until eleven there is a constant stream of fresh arrivals."

The Electric survived the First World War but, in 1921, it was rebranded The Select. It would be the first of many changes of name but it remained a cinema throughout. In the late 1930s, it became The Tatler News Theatre where one could go and see news reels rather than listen to the radio, though the news items were often out of date. At a time when radio was the main source of information and entertainment in people's homes, the cinema offered the only visual alternative until the advent of television.

In the 1940-50s its fortunes waxed and waned. With the arrival of mass-produced television sets, cinemas went into a steady decline. By the 1960s and 70s its owners were trying to find ways of making it popular again. It had a second screen installed and its Art Deco features renewed. In one period, it specialised in cartoon films, then it was taken over by a company which showed "continental" films, a euphemism for adult-only films.

In the mid-80s it rebranded again as an art house cinema showing obscure independent films to art house aficionados. After years of rebranding and renaming (Select Cinema, Tatler News Theatre, The Jacey, The Classic, The Tivoli) in 1993 a new owner gave it back its original name, The Electric Cinema, and so it remains to this day.

The only period when it closed completely was in 2003. At this point its future looked bleak but then an entrepreneurial lover of cinema, Tim Lawes, bought it and refurbished its Art Deco features. This revival lasted until the pandemic when the cinema closed again and a new owner was sought. Fortunately, another passionate film lover with money to spend took over in



electricbirmingham.com

PHOTO BY TONY HISGETT

2021 and after further refurbishment it is once again open and flourishing.




If you haven't visited this cinema yet you are in for a surprise. It retains charming bygone features. Tickets are sold by a real person in a glazed kiosk from a ticket machine from the 1930s. A small bar selling drinks and nibbles is a good place to gather with friends before a show and you can opt for service at your seat for further refreshments during the film.

While keeping the red velvet seats of its earlier days, it also offers modern comfy sofas which can be booked in advance, though they are usually snapped up quickly at popular screenings.

You can become a member of The Electric. There are three levels of

membership, an arrangement which allows for special offers and ticket price reductions. They show a variety of films and usually have one of the popular blockbusters showing. Alongside this will often be programmed a more unusual or foreign-language film. They also have classic features to celebrate the anniversary of such films as "The Sound of Music", "2001 a Space Odyssey" or "A Clockwork Orange". In addition, they provide a popular afternoon film, tea and cake session for those who enjoy such afternoon treats.

Whether you're a cinema goer or not, next time you're in town have a look for this unique piece of Birmingham's history. If it's open, pop in and have a chat with the staff. They are friendly and always willing to talk about this mini-palace of entertainment.

BRONZE	SILVER	GOLD
		
<p>JUST FOR YOU</p> <p>3 FREE FILM TICKETS PER YEAR £1 OFF ONE FILM TICKET PER VISIT 10% OFF FOOD & DRINK 10% OFF ARTS ON SCREEN</p> <p>£40 per year</p>	<p>BRING A FRIEND</p> <p>6 FREE FILM TICKETS PER YEAR £2 OFF TWO FILM TICKETS PER VISIT 10% OFF FOOD & DRINK 15% OFF ARTS ON SCREEN</p> <p>£80 per year</p>	<p>THE ULTIMATE</p> <p>A PAIR OF FILM TICKETS, ANY DAY, ANYTIME, ALL THE TIME.</p> <p>15% OFF FOOD & DRINK 20% OFF ARTS ON SCREEN</p> <p>£380 per year or £35 per month</p>
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YOUR PARISH CHURCH

If you cannot find what you are looking for here, you will probably find it on the Parish Website (www.kingsnorton.org.uk). Alternatively, please ask questions at the Parish Office, which is open between 10.00 am and 1.00 pm, Monday to Friday.

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

THE MINISTRY TEAM

Rector	The Revd Larry Wright
Assistant Rector	The Revd Eliakim Ikechukwu
Parish Lay Minister	Pauline Weaver
Curate	The Revd David Booker
Honorary Assistant Priest	The Revd Jayne Crooks
Lay Readers	David Ash, Cate Bennett, Fay Fearon, Ruth HowmanChisom Ikechukwu, Parisa Pordelkhaki
Lay Preacher	Steve Wright
Music Minister.....	Sylvia Fox
Pastoral Care Team Coordinator	The Revd Jayne Crooks
Pastoral Care Advisor	Susan Farrell
Learning & Discipleship Coordinator	The Revd Mark Bennett

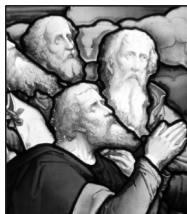
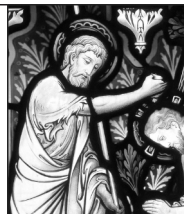
THE CHURCH WARDENS

St. Nicolas' Church.....	Peter Hay & Julie Hill, Mark Sandilands
Hawkesley Church	Jim Clarke

OTHER CONTACTS

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

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



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

1 st Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Holy Communion (Children's activity : Muddy Church)
12.30 pm	Baptisms
6.00 pm	Taizé Prayer

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

3 rd Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Holy Communion (Children's activity : Godly Play)
12.30 pm	Baptisms
6.00 pm	Evening Worship

4 th 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)

5 th Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
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

All I Really Need to Know



THELMA MITCHELL IS
THE FORMER LEAD
CHAPLAIN AT
BOURNVILLE COLLEGE

September, a month of glowing autumn colours in a lowering sun. It's the time to begin to buy new calendars and diaries. It's the month when the children return to school, with some thankfulness on both sides at home, and when teachers settle in for the long haul to Christmas. It's a time of new school anxiety for those who have just completed Year 6, facing a move to secondary "big" school as well as for those pupils moving into the liminal world of the Sixth Form.

But first, let's deal with a well-known myth of the timing of the British six-week school summer holiday, from mid-July until the end of August. This myth was perpetuated recently by a Cabinet minister who claimed that our school children must have shorter holidays so that Britain is not disadvantaged in the global economic race. (Shades of Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World"). The minister claimed that the current system was only fit for the agricultural economy of the nineteenth century when children were needed to help in the fields. He should have checked his facts first.

Six weeks in July and August were much more likely to relate to the weather, as it does across Europe, than to the need to involve children in the harvest, which goes on well into September. By the late eighteenth century, English farms were largely mechanised. Small holdings were increasingly

rare and threshing machines were used much more extensively. The harvesting of hundreds of acres could be achieved in a very short time, compared to using human hands. This meant that many people were short of work. The Factory Act of 1830 had put increasing restrictions on children in work, for their welfare, and for that of those seeking work.

In Scotland and other parts of the country as, for example, in the Lancashire mill towns where the factories closed (and still close) during the traditional Wakes Weeks, schools break up at the end of June and return in mid-August. The long stretch to Christmas is broken up by a two-week half term break in October. In southern Europe the schools break up at the end of June until mid-September, when it becomes very hot, although the other school holidays tend to be much shorter.

Compulsory schooling was introduced in England in 1880 when all children had to attend a school until they were ten years old. Prior to that, only the rich could afford to educate their children. As early as Saxon times, a few pupils would be educated in cathedral schools. The rich, from Elizabethan times, sent their boys to boarding school at about the age of 8, and more enlightened parents began to engage tutors and governesses for the girls. However, the church offered free classes in literacy and numeracy on Sundays for working people from the eighteenth century.

The school curriculum for the working classes taught the children to be

more efficient by being literate and numerate, and thus more productive in work. In 1891 the leaving age was increased to twelve and education became free. By 1900, the leaving age had risen to fourteen, although many dropped out earlier. The Industrial Revolution benefited the factory owners who needed basic literacy and numeracy in their workforce as the use of newly developed machinery and technology increased rapidly.

The school day would begin with prayers and religious instruction. The basics of the three R's – reading, writing and arithmetic – were taught, often to classes of seventy or eighty pupils in the inner cities. Pupils worked on slate boards, using a slate pencil. Boys were destined to go to work in factories and apprenticeships and the girls into service. The washing and care of laundry was part of the curriculum for girls well into the 1930's.

It was not until the 1944 Education Act, which introduced the tripartite system of education, that the leaving age was raised to fifteen. Following examinations at the age of eleven, children were divided between grammar, technological or secondary modern schools. This system continued until the 1970's, when a less divisive, more comprehensive system of education was introduced and the school leaving age was raised to sixteen.

My maternal grandfather, born in 1887, was a carter on the docks in Bootle. He dropped out of school aged ten to work with his father, also

a carter, a much more secure job than that of a docker. It was a job he loved, and his family used to say that he cared more for his shire horses, which he had to look after seven days a week, than for them! I do just remember the pride he took in grooming and decorating the shires for the annual Bootle carnival. His cousin was able to stay on at school and became a pharmacist, eventually owning two shops in Walton. And my mother had a life-long terror of horses!

In the late 1980's, a Californian friend who was then the lay Roman Catholic chaplain at the University of Lancaster's multi-faith chaplaincy, introduced me to this quite well-known poem by Robert Fulghum, an American author who grew up in Waco, Texas. He was a Unitarian Universalist minister.

Unitarianism is a non-credal, liberal religious movement which involves the free and responsible search for truth and meaning, drawing on the sacred texts of some of the major religions, in particular, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity. Fulghum said that he was inspired by a bumper sticker which read, "Don't believe everything that you think".

"All I really need to know I learned at Kindergarten" was written in 1988 as part of a collection of writings of the same title.

(Kindergarten = nursery or pre-school. From the German: Kinder = children, Garten = garden).

Most of what I really need
To know about how to live
And what to do and how to be
I learned in Kindergarten.
Wisdom was not at the top
Of the graduate school mountain,
But there in the sand pile at
Sunday school.

These are the things I learned:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say sorry when you hurt someone.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.

Live a balanced life : learn some and think some

And draw and paint and sing and dance

And work and play every day some.

Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world watch for traffic.

Hold hands and stick together.

Be aware of wonder.

(Robert Fulghum, published 1988)



PHOTO BY YAN KRUKAU

Is it New-Age-ish, trite or saccharine-sweet, or a simple way of explaining eternal truths for life? It certainly doesn't mention studying maths until you drop! It suggests that these are lessons for living, learned in our earliest years, later often forgotten. Would the world be improved if adults adhered to the same basic rules as children? The book of Ecclesiastes, in the Hebrew scriptures, reminds us that there is a time to dance and a time to sing. Let's promote and support the arts in school, not marginalise them and let us begin personally by making time each day to relax and to enjoy the arts. I like the idea of an afternoon nap!

Our hearts go out to, and our prayers go with, all children, teachers and support staff starting or returning to

school in September. They pick up where they left off remarkably quickly. A prayer especially for them:

Lord God, we come to You today in prayer, asking that the children, teachers and staff may experience peace. We pray especially for the children, that they will not worry about things they cannot control. May they find school to be a place of great discovery, adventure and creativity. Guard their hearts and minds and keep them safe in your love. Pour out your blessings on the whole school community. Give them truth love, wisdom and peace. In the Name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

By the way, did anyone just mention how many shopping days it is to Christmas?

I AM GRATEFUL

It has been five years and six months of ministerial and cultural exploration at the parish church of St Nicolas', Kings Norton. Moving up the ladder as the soon-to-be incumbent of the benefice of Lozells and Newtown, I am beginning to count my blessings with gratitude. I can confidently say, of the several decades spent in pastoral ministry across the globe, these have been my most cherished and rewarding years. And all I wish to say here is "Thank you, really!"

First, my gratitude goes to the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whom we celebrate this Trinity Season. From Him I have received life, forgiveness, and healing from various challenges while I served in this parish, before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. God did bring my family and me to a larger, loving, and caring family of believers in Him. Over these years He has established us in career, education, spirituality, and ministry. We are really grateful.

Second, I must appreciate both the ministry team I met on arrival and the current one I am leaving behind. Led by the Rector, Larry Wright, I enjoyed the good company of ministerial colleagues with expertise in various fields across science, the arts, medicine, architecture, management, health, and social care. I have been blessed among godly and gifted people.

Serving across the four congregations of the parish comprising of the 9.00 am and 10:30 am congregations at St Nicolas', and the 10:30 congregations at Immanuel and Hawkesley Churches is also worth thanking God for. The learning experience from the variety of worship traditions I have encountered here has been remarkable. At one end, the nine o'clock service, whether it takes the form of a said Eucharist or sung Matins, keeps parishioners in touch with the Authorised Version of the Bible. At the other end would be the ever-vibrant charismatic services of the former Immanuel congregation, now integrated within the 10:30 am



lozells-newtown-church.org



evangelical tradition of St Nicolas' Church. The Hawkesley congregation, on the other hand, also maintains its firm grip on the evangelical tradition, while providing the worshipper with the much-cherished inspirational hymns from the "Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New". I have never been so privileged to serve in a parish with such rich liturgical and ministerial heritage. I am very grateful.

Worthy of mention, too, are the huge opportunities for mission and ministry to the parish through numerous pastoral offices including baptisms, marriages, and funerals. The encouraging thank you notes and numerous letters of appreciation from the family and friends of parishioners who expressed their satisfaction over the support they

were given in times of joy, comfort or bereavement and discomfort have been quite unprecedented. To be honest, I have shared more of these services and testimonies with fellow colleagues in this parish within this period than I have in all my ministerial years elsewhere. This can only confirm that God brought me to this parish as my preparatory ground for a higher calling, for which I am really grateful.

Furthermore, my ministerial experience has been extended by responsibilities across the wider communities of the parish. Whether as the lead of our pastoral care team, or as a foundation governor of the Hawkesley Church Primary Academy or as a member of the team of chaplains at Cadbury Sixth Form College, my pastoral ministry received quite a remarkable outreach.

I am happy to say that it does not matter where I go from here. I am convinced that the Lord placed me in good hands with the people and places of this parish, in preparation for a wider ministerial exploration in the United Kingdom.

In all this, I just want to say thank you to God, to one, and to all!

Eliakim has been appointed Vicar of the United Benefice of St Paul & St Silas, Lozells, and St George's, Newtown, Birmingham.

Serving the children and families of Hawkesley

It has now been nearly a year since I started work as the Children's and Families' Mission Enabler for the Deanery, based here in Kings Norton. Over my first year, I have felt incredibly welcomed by the team at St Nicolas' Church, members of Hawkesley Church and everyone in the community.

In this update, I wanted to share some of what we have already been able to achieve over the first nine months and what we are still working towards in the future.

My work has mostly been focused on Hawkesley Church Primary School and Hawkesley Church. It's been a great privilege to have been allowed to work in and with the school as I explore my project aims of serving the children and families in the community and giving children opportunities to explore faith within the context of the school.

A big part of the work that I have been doing involves running after-school clubs for the children. For most of this year, I have provided two clubs a week, giving children a chance to engage in activities, games and conversations about faith and life.

As part of one of these clubs, I met a girl whom I will call Bella. Bella joined one of the after-school clubs that we were running in January. She was quiet but engaged well with what we were doing and wanted to come back every week. Over the last six months, as Bella has attended the club every week, I have seen her grow in confidence, learn more about

God and really enjoy engaging with conversations about faith and what it means to her.

Giving children and families opportunities to explore faith and the difference that it could make to them is a crucial part of what I'm hoping to achieve through my work in Hawkesley. We also do this through our Forest Church, which gives families the opportunity to explore church and faith in a welcoming, outside environment, that is different from a traditional Sunday morning service. It's been amazing to gather together with a few families on a Saturday afternoon, once a month, to explore stories from the Bible, to be creative and to chat together over a cup of tea and a slice of toast, or even homemade bread on one of the weeks.

As time moves on, we are continuing to work out how we can serve and support the community. We have begun to run some family craft mornings, which will be continuing during each holiday in the Hawkesley Pastoral Centre. We are also looking into how we can provide more support during the school holidays.

If you'd like to join us for our next Forest Church, we'll be meeting at the Hawkesley Pastoral Centre next to Hawkesley Church Primary School at 2.00 pm on Saturday 9th September and Saturday 14th October. We'd love to see you there.



THE HUNGRY GARDENER

Summer Harvests

Back in the January 2023 edition of this magazine, I wrote about my gardening plans for this summer under the title “Our Hopes, Dreams & New Shared Adventures”. As we have passed Lammas, or loaf mass day which is the midpoint between the summer solstice and the autumn equinox, it is a great time to reflect on those plans for the summer harvests.

We have had it all thrown at us this summer season. We had a very dry June and then the slipstream drifted down over the UK and took residence throughout July and August. The weather experts have promised some dryer days around the time when you will be reading this article.

So how did we do with our vegetable choices this year? I followed some advice which I heard a few years ago: plan for a hot dry summer and a wet cool summer and you will have something to eat whatever the weather.

This year I grew lots of peas, even more than I have done in previous years. They frazzled in June with the heat. It looked like it was game over. I resisted the urge to tidy them up while I waited for the French and runner beans to take over, leaving them as climbing supports for the young beans. This was a good move as now we have more peas to eat and lots of French and runner beans. What I missed has been dried in the greenhouse to replenish seed stock for next year.

I dedicated a raised bed in my back garden to cucurbits. For me, that is courgettes, summer squash, tromboncino and three varieties of cucumbers. As you can imagine, with our rainy July, this bed has been incredibly abundant. Charles



Claire is a keen kitchen gardener, ably assisted by her 7-year-old son Charles.

likes the look of the knobbly yellow crookneck squashes. He wasn't won over by the flavour but I was so impressed that he tried some when I made a ratatouille. The round courgettes have been very prolific and we've enjoyed these sliced in half. Scoop out some from the centre and stuff them with whatever you fancy. We've been enjoying tomato, onion, oregano and cheese on top. Some bolognese with cheese on top is another winner and there are so many variations of stuffed squashes. With all the rain, one round courgette grew to the size of a pumpkin and I must confess that the hens really enjoyed that one. Another recipe I've been turning to is polpette. It's a bit like meat balls except that you swap the minced meat for lightly fried chopped courgette and mozzarella. The courgette balls freeze well and I've been taking these to work for my lunch. This makes easy lunchbox food together with crystal lemon cucumbers which you can munch whole.

I've never had much success with roots in the past and have grown carrots in old wellies to get around this. However, this year, I was determined to grow a roots and onions bed. I put copper rings in the bed in the hope of deterring slugs and some netting to deter the birds. I don't think I stopped the slugs but I think I slowed them down! They still ate some and the June heat was hard on these emerging seedlings. However, I watered and resowed every fortnight and now have what currently looks like a respectable roots and onions bed. We have some

golf-ball-sized beetroots which will do nicely, some salsify, scorzonera, mangel, celeriac, turnip and radish. I tried to do parsnips as well but the seed didn't germinate for me. Now we have had all that rain, the root crops are growing strongly. The onions are looking pretty good too.

The tomatoes are just starting to ripen in early August and the Galina variety were, predictably, the first to ripen. Luckily, I haven't seen any blight but have been shutting the greenhouse door whenever we've had the big rain storms just in case the rains bring it. In previous years, when we've had blight, I've removed the worst affected plants and made green tomato ketchup (which is absolutely delicious) and we still managed to have a good crop of red tomatoes. However, I am checking the plants regularly for the first signs.

I planted the garlic late in the hope of avoiding damp conditions which might lead to rot in the heavy clay soil. When the rain started in July, I started digging up the bulbs and one variety didn't do particularly well, however, I pulled them up before they got the rot and we have a reasonable harvest. The other variety I grew tolerated the damp conditions very well. It is a soft neck variety called Mersley White and originates from Auvergne, the volcanic region of France. I will definitely be saving some of these bulbs for next year's garlic. They have produced big, fat, healthy bulbs. This is a nice surprise as I hadn't done well with garlic in the



PHOTO BY TIM MOSSHOLDER

last few years and, being half French, I do like to use garlic in my cooking!

The pumpkins struggled a bit at the start as they were planted in late June just as the rains started. Great for settling them in, but also great for the local greedy slug population. Some pumpkins have been very determined to survive and have started to grow strongly. The sweetcorn and the popcorn on the other hand seemed to really like the rain, so we should get a good crop of these by the time you are reading this.

And the asparagus? As I mentioned in my January article, I planted some three-year-old asparagus crowns that I grew from seed. They survived the winter but they have grown less strongly in the ground than they did in the pots in the garden. They are still growing, so maybe there'll be a small crop next year. There is always

the next growing season to hope for, after all.

So, all in all, we've been really happy with the food we've grown and we have had more than we expected to eat at the table. It really has been a very abundant summer and the learning curves have been interesting. The main thing I learnt was to mulch everything to help with water retention in the soil when it was very dry. Something else that worked really well was using the greenhouse for sowing the pumpkins, courgettes, sweetcorn and sunflowers. I used to use a heated propagator. However, when I tried using the greenhouse, there was much more space and it was more accessible for Charles so he could join in with the fun of seeing all the seedlings pop up.

As the season turns we are hoping to welcome a good tomato harvest and autumn fruit harvests. There's always something to look forward to in the garden.

(Continued from page 13)

... This perhaps better explains the gradual decline in volunteering over the past decade or so. As people's lives have become more challenging as a result of falling living standards and rising costs it is not surprising that they do not have the time, money, or motivation to volunteer.

If the cost of living crisis in the UK continues, it would not be a surprise to see volunteering numbers decline further. People will have to continue to focus their attention and effort elsewhere.

This is a problem, because volunteering is beneficial to those doing the volunteering as well as the cause they are supporting. Volunteers can gain skills, experience new cultures and communities and increase their employability and research suggests volunteering improves mental health and reduces mortality risk.

If particularly groups of people, such as people with disabilities and people from ethnically diverse and socially disadvantaged communities, are less able to volunteer, then they miss out on any benefits

The whole notion of volunteering could widen rather than reduce social inequalities: the gap between the most well-off and the poorest. Growing inequalities already have negative effects on the health and wellbeing of many people and their communities.

Over the past decades there have been multiple attempts to support UK

volunteer numbers. These include David Cameron's coalition government's Big Society and The Big Help Out as part of the coronation celebrations.

However, the focus of these strategies and programmes is inevitably on individuals, trying to tap into their personal motivations rather than addressing the deeper social issues that affect participation.

Getting more people volunteering again means making sure people have the time, energy, and inclination to get out and help out in their communities. This will be stymied if they are having to worry about paying bills, getting a secure job, finding good quality childcare or waiting for a doctors appointment. It is unclear whether participation rates will recover until broader social inequalities and issues are addressed.

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► KRIS SOUTHBY IS A RESEARCHER IN HEALTH PROMOTION, LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY



Drains, Gutters & Merlons

As it has been a while since I talked to you about our historic buildings, I thought it might be a good time for a catch up.

Some of you will have noticed that we have had a very high scaffold on the side of the tower of St Nicolas' Church but not much happening on it. The scaffold was constructed so that the stonemasons could access the merlons that form the parapets of the tower. Basically, they are the bits that look like castle battlements.

The stonemasons needed to take tracings of the complete merlon to form the basis of the new one. Once that was done, nothing happened on site until the new merlon was complete and ready to be installed. Then we added a hoist to the scaffold to transport the pieces to the top, so that the stonemasons could work safely on the installation.

The new merlon is now in place but, unfortunately, during the work, the adjacent merlon was seen to be unsafe and beyond repair. That meant that we have had no choice but to remove it. All this means that we are still one merlon missing. We are also still working on repairs to the tower so that we can have the clock working again and ring the bells. Firstly, though, we have to deal with the pesky pigeons and the mess that they make.

A lot of other work has been taking place behind the scenes. Together with Shane Williams, we work continually to monitor the condition of all five of our buildings and to ensure that maintenance, health and safety checks and repairs take place. That means five boilers, about fifteen



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

toilets, and more doors and door locks than I care to count, which all seem to go wrong at the same time. With five buildings, including three listed heritage buildings, it is never easy, quick or cheap to get things repaired, so do bear with us if things don't always get sorted out quickly. Some of the tasks we do, like checking that the drains and gutters are working during a storm, mean that we have to get wet and dirty.

We are also still working on our major building and heritage skills training project called *Living Stones*. In order to move this project forward, we have to do a lot of background research and preparation including writing business plans, assessing risks, budgeting and project planning. All of this takes time but, hopefully, with the help of our advisors, we will soon be in a position to move forward with funding bids.

While all that is going on, we are still fundraising and are always looking at new and different ways of raising money to pay for all the work we want to do. Do let us know if you have any ideas!



Parks

I may have come across as a "Jolly Jack ashore" in last month's description of some of the streets I have known around the world; but I wouldn't want you to gain the impression that all I did on my travels was to frequent taverns and other seedy places which I cannot mention here! So am going to reminisce about a few of the the parks I came across during my years at sea. Yes, we have a wonderful collection of public gardens and estates to enjoy in this country; but for a few moments, let's go overseas!

New York, of course, has Central Park, set in the middle of Manhattan Island. It opened in 1876 and occupies 840 acres. It has three lakes, shady glens, rocky ravines, numerous footpaths, about five million trees and shrubs and even a zoo. Central Park is a real nature reserve in a bustling city and takes one almost into another world.

In San Francisco, California, I once took a taxi to Battery Bluff Park which overlooks the famous bay. The name refers to the historic gun batteries on the hillside above. With its high vantage point, it offers stunning views of the Golden Gate Bridge and of the notorious



This month, Eddie takes us to parks he has known and enjoyed

prison on Alcatraz Island. Not to be missed! That wonderful legend Tony Bennett, who died on 21 July this year, used to sing of leaving his heart in San Francisco: "High on a hill, it calls to me, to be where little cable cars climb halfway to the stars." Such a wonderful description.

Situated on the shores of Sydney harbour in Australia is Taronga Zoo. "Taronga" is an Aboriginal word meaning "beautiful view". The zoo sits on a hill overlooking the world-famous harbour, covers 69 acres, including gardens full of tropical plants, and is home to more than 2,600 animals. Tourists love to get the chance to hold and be photographed with the koala bears. It's not quite the thing for me, but fun to watch.

And now to Lisbon. I spent two days in this picturesque city while visiting Portugal to see my sister, who lives there. Right in the centre, beside the Botanical Gardens, was the Parque Mayer. It had an ambiance all of its own with cheap places to eat good food, some bars and cafes. There was also a small theatre which I called the "Windmill" of Portugal, after the one in London's Great Windmill Street.

Finally, I am going to mention a park which evoked many sombre thoughts and the occasional prayer: the Peace Park in Nagasaki, Japan. Our ship, the SS Canberra, entered the port on a "Cherry Blossom" cruise and, with two friends, I went to visit this haunting place, which I mentioned in a Parish Magazine article some two years ago. The park

and museum tell the story of the atomic bomb which was dropped on Nagasaki on 9 August 1945, the second such bomb ever to be used in warfare. It killed 150,000 people and destroyed over 18,000 buildings. The park contains lots of flower beds and a 10-meter-tall statue, whose extended right hand points to the threat of nuclear weapons. Teachers were leading children around the site in groups. I was pleased to observe that they were not allowed into the museum, which contains some very graphic photographs. There are many varied opinions as to whether such a terrible event should have happened. All I will say is that my friends and I were deeply moved and hardly spoke to each other throughout our visit. A rather sad day, not to be forgotten.

Feet for a King

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Funerals July 2023

5th July	Mary Edkins	90	SN.Cr.LH
11th July	Doreen Betty Doran	98	SN.Bu.KN
11th July	William Noel Upsett	83	Bu.KN
14th July	Margaret Lilian Slater	93	SN.Bu.BE
17th July	Mary Janette Lloyd	94	In.CY
21st July	Mabel Pedley	100	In.LH
25th July	Beryl Irene Peters	87	In.CY
25th July	Brian William Green	74	SN.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, BE : Brandwood End

The main problem of Christians and others, it often seems to me, is not so much that they do not love God or do not want to love God or, in trying to love God are conscious of not being successful. The problem consists much more in the fact that we do not allow God to love us. [...] Yet the key to the spiritual life, the authentic beginning, is the realisation of God's love for us.

Cardinal Basil Hume, "Searching for God", Hodder & Stoughton, 1979.

Jennifer Hughes Lic Ac, MBACc

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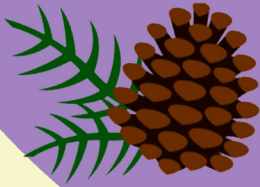


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