

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

The Rector Retires

Larry Wright prepares to step down

The Two-Minute Silence

A tradition with roots in Kings Norton

A Quiet Revival

The tide of faith is turning

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Larry Wright 4

The Rector Retires

Larry announces a new beginning

Adam the Gardener 7

Roses

How to care for them

Michael Kennedy 8

The Two-Minute Silence

A local man's gift to the world

Kathryn Bates 12

Why loneliness should be...

...treated as a social issue

KNYF Organisers 1950 14

The Kings Norton Youth Fellowship

Friendship is essential for community

David Ash 16

A Quiet Revival

Church attendance is rising in the UK

Pauline Weaver 18

Sensational Parenting

Caring for a child with special needs

Thelma Mitchell 22

Roman Holiday

Easter at All Saints' Church, Rome

C.A.P.Rogers 26

Looking Back 3

Canals & bricks in old Kings Norton

Christine Adams 30

Physiotherapy

A career as a Birmingham 'physio'

M.G.M. 34

Still Life Works for Me

The art of Nicola Currie

Claire Lindow 36

Midsummer Foraging

Free food on your doorstep

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Later deadlines are under review and will be published later in the Summer.

Welcome

EDITORIAL

In our last issue, we said goodbye to The Revd David Booker. This month, we say a sort of farewell to another member of the Ministry Team, The Revd Mark Bennett (photo opposite), whose appointment as Area Dean of Kings Norton, Moseley and Shirley Deanery and Interim Minister of St Paul's Balsall Heath was announced recently. He's not going far away, which is why it's only a sort of farewell; but we should nevertheless record our thanks for all that he has given to the parish in recent years. I have asked him to write something about his new role for the July magazine.

By the time that midsummer edition appears, we will be approaching another two significant milestones as our Rector, Larry Wright, reaches retirement (p.4) and priest-in-training, Imogen Smith, takes up her first curacy in Wolverhampton. As a reduced Kings Norton Ministry Team reorganises itself around these departures, other staff changes are likely; but the work of the parish will go on.

It will do so against the backdrop of some interesting developments in the life of the national church, and not just the Church of England. When the Bible Society published its research into church attendance among young people earlier this year, it caused quite a stir, not least because the findings were so unexpected. Intrigued? The article is on p.16.

Equally unforeseen was the recent discovery that the man who came up with the idea of the two-minute silence in 1918 started life at St Nicolas', where his father was a churchwarden who had a particular interest in our bell tower. Read the full story on p.8.

*David Ash*

The Rector Retires

Life as a priest has many chapters and turning points. It begins with a sense of calling to serve God as an ordained minister. This is followed by a long process of discernment by the Church of England (in my case) to ‘test’ one’s vocation. The process culminates in a selection conference where experienced examiners live with candidates for three days to interview and observe. If recommended, one then begins a six-year training period, a combination of academic training at a college followed by three years as a curate in a parish. This happened to me back in the early 1990s and I look back in 2025 at 36 years of public ministry. Though there have been changes to the selection and training process, the fundamentals are the same: discernment, academic training, curacy and then first parish.

It has been my privilege to serve in parishes in Western Australia, Cornwall and Birmingham. I also served in two chaplaincy posts, one in a refugee removal centre and another at a YMCA branch. I

use the word privilege with care. Most Christians serve God and the Church as volunteers in a variety of capacities and they do it without any expectation of recognition or status. This is the model of discipleship Jesus encouraged among his first followers. As the early church expanded its membership, it became clear to the apostles that office holders were needed. People with particular gifts were sought out to take on specific roles within the new company of believers. They were still to be servants, not masters, in the model of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. One can read of these developments in the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

Within a few decades the early church had developed three formal orders of ordained leaders to serve the community: Overseers (Bishops) Presbyters (Priests) and Deacons. These three ‘orders of ministry’ continue to be those recognised by the mainstream Christian churches to this day. To be given the privilege of serving as an ordained minister is to be a small part of the great sweep



The Revd Larry Wright is the Rector of Kings Norton Parish

of church history which began with Jesus and the apostles and is destined to continue for all time, in one form or another.

In April, I reached the age when clergy may retire. Retirement is a word that carries weight. It speaks of transition, of an ending, but also of new beginnings. The decision to retire is not made lightly but after times of prayer and reflection. Having announced my retirement from full-time ministry, **Amanda and I will be leaving Kings Norton at the end of July this year and our last Sunday will be 27th July.**

In retirement, most clergy continue to serve in one way or another in a voluntary capacity, to assist where there are gaps

or vacancies. Later this year, I will begin a part time, honorary role as an assistant minister in the parish of St Andrew's, Wilmcote. Wilmcote is a village near Stratford-upon-Avon with a small Victorian church and Church Primary School. I look forward to getting to know the people of the village and to serving them as their parish priest.

Looking back, I am profoundly grateful. The parishes where I've served have been my home, my congregation my family. I have witnessed the milestones of many lives: baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and farewells. I have held hands in grief, celebrated in joy, and shared in the sacred

PHOTO BY DAVID ASH





PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

▲MOST OF
THE KINGS
NORTON
MINISTRY
TEAM IN
FEB 2024

moments that remind us of God's presence in the everyday.

But there is also weariness. The demands of ministry, the weight of responsibility, and the ever-changing needs of a community can take their toll. There is no shame in admitting that it is time to rest, time to entrust the leadership to others, time to embrace the next chapter with faith.

We don't retire from faith, nor do I retire from my love for this community. I leave knowing that the journey does not end, it simply changes. My hope is that I leave behind a legacy, not of perfection, but of compassion, of commitment, of a shared journey in faith.

As I step into retirement, I am excited for what lies ahead.

More time with family, a chance to travel, to read, to reflect; and, at Wilmcote to serve in new ways, albeit with a lighter burden. The Church will always be part of me, and I will always be part of it.

So, to all who have walked alongside me, who have listened to my words, who have allowed me the privilege of ministering to them, I say thank you. Thank you for your kindness, your patience, your prayers. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

Retirement is not an end, but a beginning; and so, I step forward with faith, trusting that the path ahead will be as rich and rewarding as the road I have travelled thus far.

Roses

June is the month of the rose. Here are some reminders concerning rose care.

Buy your roses in two-litre containers. This seems to work so much better than bare root plants.

Transfer your new rose to its new home with as little root disturbance as possible. Firm the soil around it in the prepared hole in the ground or large pot, gently but thoroughly.

Water fairly frequently in the first year and feed three times over the summer with liquid, multi-purpose fertilizer containing micro-nutrients.

Any pruning which is necessary can be done after the leaves have fallen. At the same time climbers can be secured to supports, ready for winter gales.

Keep an eye out for greenfly on the growing points of your roses. They can cause distorted growth and the destruction of flower buds. Spray daily for one week with an eco-

friendly rose spray. After two days finish the process by blasting off any surviving aphids with water from a hose or hand air sprayer. This process is a bit of a fiddle but works well without killing any bees in the area.

The photo below is of our 'Olivia Rose Austin', as recommended by garden designer Dermot Gavin. It is planted in a large container under the kitchen window and began flowering on 1st May! It has delightful mid-pink rosettes and a light fragrance. It thrives in borders as well as containers.

Last month I did promise you an article about greenhouses, but this will have to wait a little longer for various reasons.



The Two-Minute Silence

A Kings Norton Man's Gift to the World

► SIR
HARRY
HANDS,
1860-1948,
MAYOR OF
CAPE
TOWN

The month of May was a momentous one in terms of our memories of wartime. Though VE Day was essentially a joyful celebration, it again brought to the fore the tragedy of warfare, the sacrifice of the lives of so many young people with hopes and fears cancelled out for ever.

The most powerful of the ways in which we remember those losses is the 'two-minute silence', whether we observe it here at St Nicolas' Church, at formal monuments such as The Cenotaph in Whitehall, the Menin Gate in Belgium, or at countless other ceremonial sites around the world.

It's a remarkable fact, but the individual who played the main role in creating that dramatic and emotional tribute was a Kings Norton man: indeed, someone who as a boy and as a young man worshipped at St Nicolas' Church for many years with his family.



Harry Hands, born here in September 1860, was the eldest son of Josiah and Selina Hands. Josiah was a Registrar for Births and Deaths in Birmingham. We know that the family was deeply committed to our church because Josiah was actually a churchwarden for several years, responsible for important aspects of parochial administration and other significant matters. He is commemorated on a plaque that's located in the church



MICHAEL
WRITES
ABOUT
LOCAL
HISTORY

tower (see page 10), marking a project in which he played a major role: the re-hanging of the church bells on a new frame in 1892 at a cost of some £314, the equivalent of £50,000 today, together with the installation of a new clock, with Westminster chimes, in February 1893. Please keep in mind those Westminster chimes.

The Vicar's letter in a Parish Magazine published in 1948, found by David Ash, our Editor, describes the Hands family name as 'a very old and respected one in Kings Norton'.

Young Harry was a bright boy. He was educated at King Edward's School, which was then in New Street. He built his career as an accountant in Birmingham and married Aletta Myburgh in October 1886. His local roots soon yielded to a career abroad: he and Aletta, who had South African roots, emigrated to Cape Town. It was a move that brought great success: he became a prominent accountant with his own practice and, by 1915, he had actually become Mayor of the city. The couple had three sons, Reginald, Philip and Kenneth, all of whom were highly promising. They were all Rhodes Scholars at Oxford University and were



◀CAPTAIN
REGINALD
HANDS,
1888-1918.

outstanding and versatile sportsmen.

It was when he was Mayor that Harry visualised the idea of the two minutes' silence, though actually his original idea was that it would last three minutes. South African troops were making an increasingly important contribution to the British cause in Europe in the First World War. Reginald and Kenneth were both serving in Europe.

In February 1918, there was a major recruiting drive in Cape Town, seeking further soldiers to support the war effort. Just twelve days after it began, Harry and Aletta received a telegram telling them that their eldest son, Captain Reginald Harry Myburgh Hands, had died of wounds sustained on the Western Front, fighting with the South African Heavy Artillery. It was another example of the tragic waste of promising young lives that war

created. Reginald had earned a degree in law while at Oxford and had been called to the Bar in London in 1911. He was also a double sports international, playing one test match for the South African cricket team and two rugby internationals for the England team in 1910 (an early example of dual nationality).

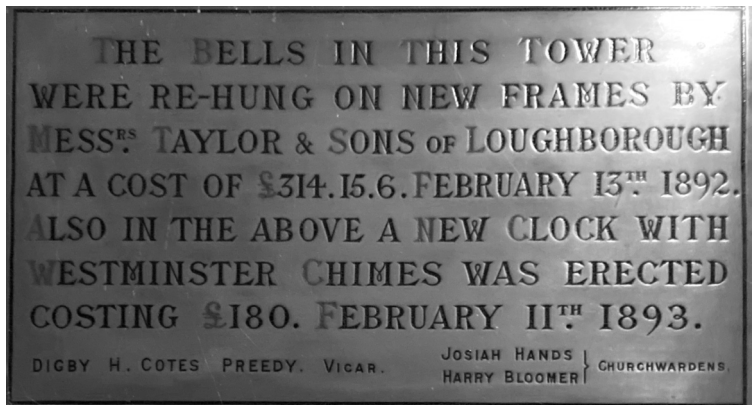
Though he always said that it was not the direct cause of the 'two-minute silence', the tragic loss of his son to war clearly devastated Harry and his wife. Only days after the tragic news, at 11 o'clock in the morning, Harry was sitting in his chambers with a friend, Mr Brydon, when they heard the Westminster chime on the nearby City Hall clock tower followed by its slower chimes marking the hour. An hour later, they heard the sound of the traditional noonday gun which was fired every day from Signal Hill, a Cape Town landmark, a tradition which

had been in place since the early 1800s.

Harry and Mr Brydon were prompted into the thought that there should be a silent 'street pause' inaugurated in the city to commemorate the fallen of the First World War, starting with the noonday gun, and incorporating the Westminster chimes on the City Hall clock. Being Mayor, Harry was in a position to turn that thought into action. He issued an instruction that on Tuesday May 14 1918, there would be a three-minute city-wide pause in which local people would stand in silence, remembering those who had been lost and those who were still fighting. Harry himself stood with his head uncovered in a prominent public area of Cape Town. He also arranged for a bugle to sound the Last Post.

It was comprehensively observed. Harry was amazed and deeply moved by the

► THE PLAQUE
IN ST
NICOLAS'
CHURCH.
JOSIAH
HANDS,
HARRY'S
FATHER, IS
NAMED
BOTTOM
RIGHT.



◀THE FIRST
'MID-DAY
PAUSE' IN
CAPE TOWN,
1918



willing response of his fellow citizens, but quickly decided that three minutes had been too long, changing it immediately to two minutes. It was a world first: news of Cape Town's special tribute raced around the world, including a report by the Reuters news agency correspondent which was transmitted to London. King George V was instrumental in ensuring that the practice was adopted in London, across Britain and throughout the Commonwealth, incorporating each of the key elements developed by Sir Harry, though ultimately the start of the silence was revised to 11 a.m. after the war ended and the annual Remembrance Day was established.

Sir Harry retired from office as Mayor at the end of his term, in September 1918. He was nonetheless part of the city's

Peace Celebration on 2 August 1919, standing next to the bugler for the Last Post. He was knighted that year for efforts during the war, particularly for his services as Chairman of the Cape Town Recruitment Committee. The citation included a reference to his role in creating the two-minute silence. Thankfully, his two other sons returned safely from their wartime service.

Sir Harry Hands died on 17 March 1948 in Cape Town and is buried in Maitland Cemetery along with his wife. We don't know whether he ever knew that, by a pleasing coincidence, his father had been largely responsible for installing the Westminster chimes in our own clock tower, many years before the Big Ben version became an integral part of the two-minute silence.

Why loneliness should be

Anyone who has experienced loneliness knows how deeply personal it feels. We feel lonely when our social and emotional needs aren't being met. Because of this, psychological research often focuses on individual-level solutions, encouraging people to change their perceptions or behaviour through therapy. But this focus misses the heart of the issue: the absence of meaningful connection with others.

It's right to be concerned about high rates of loneliness among young people, especially given the negative impact of severe loneliness on physical and mental health. Some argue that technology is to blame and point to increased time spent on phones or social media.

While studies do show that higher internet use is associated with greater loneliness, the direction of this relationship remains unclear. Are young people lonely because they're online, or online because they feel lonely?

The internet is not devoid of social interaction. In fact, studies suggest that young people's online activities often mirror their offline behaviour, especially when it comes to seeking connection and communicating with friends. This complicates the idea that technology alone is to blame.

Rather than placing all responsibility on a person suffering from loneliness, we need to look at societal solutions. This doesn't mean psychological interventions have no value. Therapies like cognitive behavioural therapy

(CBT) or social skills training can be effective for some, particularly in cases of severe loneliness.

But these approaches aren't universally successful. They're expensive, require trained professionals and any resulting improvements are often short-lived.

Societal solutions, by contrast, offer broader and more sustainable impact. These can be thought of in two main ways: creating spaces for meaningful social connection and addressing the root societal conditions that lead to loneliness.

While loneliness is a subjective experience, social connection is more tangible. It's reflected in whether we have people we can rely on, whether we feel supported, and the quality of our relationships. In this sense, social connection can be an antidote to loneliness.

When public spaces shrink, loneliness grows

But opportunities for connection are shrinking. In the UK, hundreds of millions

treated as a social issue

of pounds have been cut from youth services and half of all youth clubs closed between 2011 and 2021. At the same time, a global cost of living crisis has left many young people, even those in full-time work, with little or no money left at the end of the month.

Meanwhile, ‘third spaces’ – places outside of home, school, or work where people can connect – are disappearing. Cafés and bars are often too expensive, while public libraries and community spaces are underfunded and closing rapidly. In this context, it’s no surprise that young people are spending more time socialising online: there are simply fewer affordable and accessible places to connect in person.

Taking a societal approach also means acknowledging the inequalities that shape how loneliness is experienced. We’re not just individuals making isolated choices: we’re part of communities and systems. And, for many, structural issues like marginalisation and discrimination play a role in their experience of loneliness.

Young people from marginalised backgrounds, including those from lower-income families and those identifying as LGBTQ+, are at significantly higher risk of loneliness. Researchers argue that exclusion and

discrimination, not individual deficits, are contributing to this.

That’s why some are calling for us to understand the causes of loneliness at every level, from personal traits to societal attitudes to the design of neighbourhoods and communities.

If we want to reduce loneliness in young people, we need to go beyond telling them to seek therapy or use their phones less. We need public investment in spaces that foster connection, and we must address the broader structural issues that make some young people especially vulnerable. Focusing only on the lonely individual won’t be enough, especially for those facing the deepest barriers to belonging.

Kathryn Bates is a Research Fellow in Psychology at King's College London.

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PHOTO BY DAVID MCEACHAN

KNYF

1950

Loneliness is not a new phenomenon but, as the previous article illustrates, the claim that it is a growing problem for an increasing number of people seems to be rooted in fact. British society has changed radically in recent decades leaving many feeling stranded, particularly the young and the elderly.

While we cannot turn the clock back, there may be lessons we can learn from the past which may help us to address today's challenges. Some of them are implied in this letter, which was sent to a former Editor in 1950. One of its most striking phrases appears in the first paragraph. Seventy-five years ago, the youngest members of St Nicolas' Church accepted their responsibility to 'promote a society of friendship', believing it to be 'essential for all community life'. Can we revive this vision of the church, not just for the young, but for all?

The Editor

I think that few people realise the good work of the Youth Fellowship in promoting a society of friendship in Kings Norton. To bring this point home I must use facts. In 105 evenings in 1950, the K.N.Y.F. has been active on 58 of those evenings in the form of socials, discussions, debates, dramatics, cycle rides and hikes. This has had the effect of creating a unity among the young people; a unity based upon respect and on a deeper insight into one's friends. It has established new friendships that would not otherwise have existed. We do feel that this type of association is essential for all community life.

On Sunday evening the Y.F. holds a discussion, which is usually on a philosophical plane, with such subjects as 'Should there be any Relationships between Politics and Religion,' 'Man's Greatest Achievement,' 'Are the Fine Arts Necessary in

A 1950S YOUTH GROUP



a Modern Scientific State?' 'Free Love,' 'What do you Look for when You Choose Your Friends?' All of these subjects have been discussed on a Sunday evening. The good attendances, the serious nature of the discussions, the freedom in which members have expressed their views, these factors have all combined to make these evenings a custom as well as a success.

Wednesday evenings are usually on a less serious plane, taking the form of a social, with the appearance, occasionally, of an outside speaker.

Very rarely is the Y. Fellowship inactive on a Saturday. Weekdays are used for rehearsals of the play which the Youth Fellowship is producing this Christmas. The play is '1066 And All That.' Much work has already been put into the production of this play. If enthusiasm counts for anything, then this latest venture of the Club is assured of certain success. The difficulty of maintaining the Club on this level reaches Parliamentary heights, with committees, officials, programmes of organisation.

The Youth Fellowship then is far from being a static body of youths and young girls meeting twice a week; it is an intelligent and enthusiastic Club made up of people who have the Club uppermost in their thoughts and deeds. The Club is now a gathering ground for people who have learnt to 'Give and Take' in the true club spirit.

Our only real regret is that we represent such a small portion of the youth of Kings Norton (although we have well over 130 members to date). We are always glad to see a new face because we realise that then we are taking our club spirit farther afield.

NOT THE KNYF



We have many future ventures arranged for the summer. A tennis tournament has been arranged, two cups have been obtained and we think that the trophies will be keenly contested. Perhaps the most interesting of our future ventures, from the point of view of the general churchgoer, will be our proposed cricket match with the Church. We should like to take this opportunity to challenge the Church to a cricket match, to take place sometime during the summer. (We think we should tell you that it is taken for granted by the Youth Fellowship that we will defeat you.)

A Quiet Revival

Gen Z Fuels a Surge in Church Attendance



▲ READ THE
RESEARCH



▲ INTERVIEW
WITH THE
LEAD
RESEARCHER



DAVID IS A
LAY READER
AT ST
NICOLAS'
CHURCH

After decades of steady decline, church attendance in England and Wales seems to be experiencing a remarkable turnaround, led by a surprising age group, Generation Z, who are generally defined as those born between 1997 and 2012. In other words, those currently aged between 13 and 28.

New research from the Bible Society, conducted by YouGov with over 13,000 participants and published under the title *The Quiet Revival*, reveals a 50% rise in church attendance over the past six years, with the most dramatic growth among young adults, particularly young men.

Gen Z and Millennials: The New Face of Churchgoing

In 2018, just 4% of 18–24-year-olds reported attending church monthly. By 2024, this figure had quadrupled to 16%, signalling a profound shift in youth engagement with Christianity. Young men have seen the most significant change: attendance among 18–24-year-old men soared from 4% to 21%, while

young women rose from 3% to 12% over the same period. The 25–34 age group also saw a notable increase, from 4% to 13%.

This surge has helped lift overall monthly church attendance from 8% of the population in 2018 to 12% in 2024, an increase of over two million people. Where once congregations were dominated by the elderly, today's churches are increasingly filled with young adults, reflecting a reversal of long-held assumptions about Christianity's future in Britain.

Diversity and Denominational Shifts

However, the revival is not evenly spread across denominations. Roman Catholic and Pentecostal churches have seen the greatest growth, while the Church of England continues to experience decline, a fact that should give us pause for thought. Among 18–34-year-olds, 41% now identify as Catholic and 18% as Pentecostal, compared to 20% Anglican a marked shift from previous years.

Ethnic diversity within congregations has also increased. In 2024, one in three churchgoers aged 18–54 came from an ethnic minority background, up from one in five in 2018. Migration from countries with strong Roman Catholic and Pentecostal traditions, such as Poland, Ukraine, South America, and parts of Africa, has contributed to this trend. Notably, white attendance is also rising, especially among young men: 18% of white men aged 18–34 now attend church monthly, up from 3% in 2018.

Faith in Action and Personal Wellbeing

This renewed interest in Christianity is not merely cultural; it is marked by active participation. Churchgoers are more likely than non-churchgoers to volunteer, donate to charity, and engage in community initiatives. Regular Bible reading is also on the rise, with 67% of churchgoing Christians saying that they read their Bibles at least weekly outside church.

The research also highlights a link between faith and wellbeing: 80% of churchgoing young people report a strong sense of meaning in life, compared to just 52% of their non-churchgoing peers. Churchgoers also report higher life satisfaction, greater

community connection, and lower levels of anxiety and depression, especially among young women.

Why is it Happening?

Observers suggest that the search for community and meaning in an increasingly fragmented society is drawing young people back to church. The pandemic, social isolation, and a growing mental health crisis have left many, particularly Gen Z, seeking deeper purpose and belonging. Churches which offer both spiritual and social connection appear to be meeting these needs in new ways.

Dr Rhiannon McAleer, co-author of the report, notes that the stereotype of inevitable Christian decline is no longer accurate: ‘These are striking findings,’ she writes, ‘that completely reverse the widely held assumption that the Church in England and Wales is in terminal decline.’ Instead, the data point to a vibrant, evolving faith community, increasingly shaped by young adults and enriched by ethnic diversity.

Looking Ahead

While fewer people in Britain now identify as Christian by default, those who do are more likely to be active in their faith, moving away from nominal affiliation to genuine engagement. As Professor Paul Williams, chief executive of the Bible Society, puts it: ‘Full-fat Christianity is back.’

The Quiet Revival suggests not only that the Church is alive and well, but that it is being revitalised by a new generation eager for connection, meaning, and faith in action. Among the many searching questions it poses for traditional Anglican churches such as ours is ‘Will young adults find what they are looking for when they walk through the door?’. If not, what needs to change?

Find out more at www.biblesociety.org.uk/research/quiet-revival

Sensational Parenting

Being a parent is hard work. Being the parent of a child with special or additional needs is even tougher. There is little support and much bureaucracy. There is prejudice, judgement, misunderstanding and a lack of compassion. Don't get me wrong, there are some brilliant people, organisations and schools out there, those who go the extra mile to ensure that these children are cared for and supported. But sadly, there are too many exceptions, some with approaches and attitudes more suited to the Victorian era than to 2025.

Earlier this year we set up a new group called 'SENsational Parents'. The name is based on the educational acronym *S.E.N. - Special Educational Needs*. It is a friendly group where parents of children with special needs can get together and chat about the issues they are facing over a cup of tea and a biscuit or two. They are parents from all walks of life with children who have a range of additional needs. We have talked about many subjects which matter to them including schools, food and diet, mental health and suicide. What unites them is the desire to do what is best for their children so that they have the same opportunities as any other child.

Learning more about what these families are going through is staggering. I have supported several families over the years, but I think I have under-estimated the scale of the problem: how much parents have to fight to get the right support for their children; the amount of extra paperwork, meetings, appointments, tests, specialists, emails and telephone calls. As with all parenthood, there isn't a manual to tell you what to do. The worry and the stress can be all consuming.



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



PHOTO BY ALIREZA ATTARI

We celebrate difference, but living with difference is hard. Trying to be positive, trying to find solutions to problems, dealing with endless issues that, to other people, sound ridiculous. It's exhausting. But it is also hugely rewarding when it pays off. When small changes happen. When they ask to do something or try something. When they are happy and content.

'SENSational Parents' gives parents the chance to offload, to share and to know that they are not alone in a safe place where no one will judge or criticise. If you know anyone who could benefit from coming along, then do please tell a member of the Ministry

Team and we can share the details of the next session. They take place once a month at the moment.

I'd also ask that, if you see a parent with a child who is behaving in an unusual way, please don't judge. Please be kind. Please remember what that parent may be going through and consider that their child may have additional needs. Parenting is tough and they deserve our help, our support and our prayers.



PHOTO BY VANESSA LORING

YOUR PARISH CHURCH

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

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0121 458 3289 • www.facebook.com/kingsnortonteam**

THE MINISTRY TEAM

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

THE CHURCH WARDENS

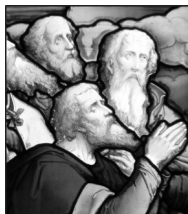
St. Nicolas' Church..... Annette Dickens, Mark Sandilands
Hawkesley Church Jim Clarke

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Treasurer David Badger
Finance Officer Amanda Kaye-Wright
Verger and Groundskeeper Shane Williams
Safeguarding Coordinator Annette Dickens
Regular Giving The Revd Jayne Crooks
Flower Arranging (0121 486 2837)..... Alison Blumer

(*Lay = not ordained as a priest)

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



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

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

3 rd Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) - Said
10.30 am	Holy Communion with Music Group & Choir
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	Morning Praise for All Ages
6.00 pm	Compline (Night Prayer)

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

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

ROMAN HOLIDAY

I felt very blessed to have been able to spend a few days at Easter staying to the south of Rome. I was a guest at a former Cistercian monastery, Villa Palazzola, now a hotel and retreat house, which retains a number of its monastic traditions. The villa is owned and run by the Venerable English College in Rome. It stands high overlooking Lake Albano and looking across to Castel Gandolfo, where the papal summer palace and observatory and the Vatican summer gardens are situated.

Whenever possible, I feel that the Day of Resurrection is best celebrated with our own church community. All Saints' Anglican Chaplaincy, part of the diocese of Europe, is situated off the Piazza di Spagna, in the heart of Rome and was our church for 15 years; so it felt like returning to our spiritual home, albeit a former one. It was where we were active members, despite the fact that it took at least an hour and a half to travel in from Genazzano, 45 kilometres south of Rome, the village where we lived at the time.

All Saints was always a warm, welcoming and supportive community. We would share Sunday worship followed by refreshments in the small walled garden, with its orange, lemon and pomegranate trees. (A garden was a rare thing in a city where real estate was at a premium). The refreshments might be accompanied by invaluable advice on the best way to pay the electricity bill or to sort out difficulties with the bank, or why you might not be able to buy gnocchi on a Thursday. To be back there on a sunny Easter Sunday morning was a joy and a privilege. All Saints was packed, the service was joyous and the welcome as warm as ever, especially from old friends.

The service at All Saints is always conducted in English, with parts translated into Italian for the local folks who join us. Anglican chaplaincies were created across the British Empire to cater for the English-speaking communities who lived and



**THELMA MITCHELL
WAS FORMERLY LEAD
CHAPLAIN AT
BOURNVILLE
COLLEGE.**



PHOTO BY THELMA MITCHELL

worked in the locality, such as diplomatic staff. Where English workers settled more permanently, parish churches were created, such as St. John's, Calcutta. There may be as many as twenty nationalities represented in one service at All Saints: Canadian, Japanese, Madagascan, Australian, South African, German and so many others.

The People's Pope

We were still in Rome when we heard the news that Jorge Mario Bergoglio, born in Argentina, a Jesuit and the first Pope from a religious order, better known to us as Pope Francis, had died. Rumours had circulated over the Easter weekend of his increasing frailty and deterioration, but it still came as a sudden surprise. Pope Francis was not a theologian like Pope John Paul II, nor an academic like Pope Benedict XVI. He was a Pope of compassion and care for the poor and dispossessed, who sheltered the homeless in the shadow of Saint Peter's Basilica and wanted them invited to his funeral. He berated world leaders, speaking truth to power, and toiled for peace, especially in Ukraine and the Holy Land. He worked well with the leaders of other Christian denominations and those of

other faiths. But he disappointed women, holding the party line on their role and status in the Catholic church.

Pope Francis visited All Saints' Church in Rome in February 2017. This was a major step forward in ecumenical relations and he looked as if he was having a great time. He was presented with a beautiful simnel cake and a basket of homemade jams and chutneys from the congregation. Apparently, he asked if he could eat them in Lent!

► POPE
FRANCIS AT ALL
SAINTS'
CHURCH, ROME
IN 2017



PHOTO BY ANSA

His funeral was viewed by millions across the world, as was that of our late Queen Elizabeth. As I write, we have just seen the election of Pope Leo XIV. (If you have read Conclave by Robert Harris, or seen the film, you have a pretty good idea of how this process unfolds although bear in mind that the film is based on the novel and is not a documentary.) Meanwhile, may Jorge Mario Bergoglio rest in peace and rise in glory.

So many fond memories were recalled during our time in Italy, and spending Easter day in Rome at All Saints was a privilege. The Diocese of Europe is the largest Anglican diocese, its communicants spread far and wide, from the Arctic to North Africa and from Ireland to Turkey. If you ever have the opportunity to worship in one of these chaplaincies do take it. We're all members! It really is an unforgettable experience and one you may treasure.

June is rapidly approaching as the Parish Magazine goes to press. I close with part of a song of praise for this glorious

month of God's creation, encouraging you to reflect on the beauty of nature and on how it can inspire us to look at the world in a new way. June marks the beginning of summer, the halfway point of the year and the longest day. Then it's all downhill to Christmas!

A Night in June

The sun has long been set,

The stars are out by twos and threes,

The little birds are piping yet

Among the bushes and the trees;

There's a cuckoo, and one or two thrushes,

And a far-off wind that rushes,

And a sound of water that gushes,

And the cuckoo's sovereign cry

Fills all the hollows of the sky.

William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850)

This poem is part an anthology of poems on nature which was published in 1807.

Pray for world leaders and, if you are able, celebrate and enjoy blooming June.



THE POET WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Looking Back 3

July 1950



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

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

In the third of these monthly reminiscences, C.A.P.Rogers recalls a world in which our local canal was a much busier waterway than it is today; introduces us to the brick works which put the famous Kings Norton clay to good use; and revisits memories of cricket and football matches played between local boys on the 'broad meadow'.

In summer time it was a common sight to see boatloads of school children from the poorer parts of Birmingham arrive at the wharf, and, accompanied by teachers, make their way to a field at the bottom of Bells Lane for sports, games, and tea on the grass if the weather permitted. For this annual treat the children brought their own cups, which could be seen tied around their necks with tape or ribbon, and they usually returned home carrying huge bunches of flowers which had been purchased from local gardens.

I can remember similar outings arranged for our Church Sunday School treats, by boat to Earlswood via the Stratford canal, which was a welcome change from a railway journey and long walk to the Lickey Hills or Dodderhill Common, but it had rather a disadvantage if the weather suddenly changed because there was no cover in the boat, and I can recollect on one occasion during a heavy thunderstorm, we were forced to shelter under the tunnel which runs under Brandwood Road.

The traffic on the Birmingham and Worcester canal was far greater in those days than at the present time, because, although it was much slower than its main competitor, the railway, the charges were much cheaper and the canals were always busy. It was interesting to stand on the old bridge at the bottom of Parsons Hill (which at that time was a 'hump back' construction similar to those in Lifford Lane) and watch the gaily painted barges containing salt, hay, etc. being towed along by one horse or two donkeys. Upon reaching Hopwood Tunnel, which was commonly called the 'Three Mile Tunnel' (although it is reputed to be just over two miles long), the animals would be untied from the barges and make their way by the top path to the other end of the tunnel. This path is still called the 'Donkey Track.' Before a steam tug was employed to tow the barges through the tunnel, the bargees used to lie on their backs and propel the barge through by pushing against the brickwork with their feet. When this tunnel was cut during the last century, the excavated soil, etc., was carted and left in large heaps over the cutting. These are now known as the 'Mounds' and are a favourite playground for children and make delightful spots for family picnics in summer time.

Barges were often tied up outside the old wharf for the night and there were some stables at the side of the towpath to accommodate the animals. The bargees used to come over to my parents' shop for provisions to last them throughout their journey, which often included Worcester or Gloucester. A short distance along the towpath stood the 'Boat Inn' (now a private dwelling house) managed in those days by Isaac Smith. This was patronised by local customers, bargees, and by fishermen, who lined the banks of the canal at weekends and came in large numbers from the city. Sometimes a customer, perhaps a little merry, would leave the inn with uncertain steps, miss the towpath and finally walk into the





▲ JUNCTION HOUSE

► THE GREY AREA SHOWS THE SITE OF THE KINGS NORTON BRICK CO. IN 1936, SOUTH OF PARSONS HILL. IT CLOSED IN 1959.



© CROWN COPYRIGHT. REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF NLS/ORDNANCE SURVEY 1936.

canal. This ducking quickly restored the victim to a sober state again, once he was hauled out.

Beyond the inn lived Mr. Jones, the 'keeper' of this section of the canal. He had an unusual kind of boat which he used in connection with his work. We boys called it the 'Iron Duke' and in winter time it was used for ice breaking. It was very amusing to see it being towed along by six men with a looped rope around their waists, while two others rocked the boat from side to side, breaking the ice to allow the barges to get through. I can remember several severe winters when it was impossible to do this, and the barges were icebound for several weeks on end and the ice many inches thick.

By the junction of the Stratford and Worcester canals stands 'Junction House', which was occupied at that time by Sam Heys and family. The two sons, Jack and Jim, were both in our church choir at the same period as myself.

Kings Norton has always been noted for its loam and clay, so it is not surprising to find a Brick Works established in this district. This industry was started at the end of the last century and I can remember my parents telling me that the

first bricks were made by two women (one was named Mrs. Grantham) entirely by hand, and the row of houses, called Ardath Terrace, on the right hand of Parsons Hill, were constructed from hand-made bricks. The Hough family, who lived in Walkers Heath Road, were associated with the works for many years, as also the foreman, Harry Newell, who lived by the works and was an expert in brick making.

Laburnum Cottages, situated on the bank above Ardath Terrace, also date back to the last century. I can remember them being occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Watton, two charming old people, and Mrs. Smith, whose daughter, Ada, was the local dressmaker. On the Ardath Road side of the old canal bridge were a row of stables owned by Joe Hobbis, who was a haulier in this district for many years, and a little further along the canal bank was a large boat house which belonged to a city doctor and his family who, in their delightful boat, often spent a weekend cruising on the canal.

As my early boyhood days were spent at my parents' shop, first at the corner of Ardath Road and later on the opposite corner of Baldwin Road, I can naturally recollect more changes in this part of the village than any other. Baldwin Road was partly cut about 1907 and only 24 houses were erected together with our shop on the corner. It remained a cul-de-sac for 29 years until the Broad Meadow Estate was commenced in 1936, and there are still a few families living in the road that I remember came to live here when those few houses were first built.

At the top of the road was the "broad" meadow which was owned by the Baldwin family and covered the large area on which the present day housing estate stands, bounded by the two canals and Broadmeadow Lane. Here was our natural playground, and as there were no playing fields or park in Kings Norton at that time, many hard games of cricket and football were played on this field between a combination of Parsons Hill, Baldwin Road and Wharf Road boys, against our chief rivals, the boys from the 'Green' district. Many of the former boys were in the church choir and it is an interesting fact that the bigger percentage of our choir boys came from this district and as many as two and even three brothers from different families were in the choir at the same time.



PHYSIOTHERAPY

Then and Now



CHRISTINE ADAMS IS A RETIRED PHYSIO AND HEALTH SERVICE MANAGER IN MENTAL HEALTH

Once the Parish Men's Group was well established it was obvious that the ladies at St Nicolas' and Hawkesley Churches would want their own group! The Reverend Christine McAteer bravely stepped forward to take on that responsibility.

At the first meeting at Hawkesley Church we took the opportunity to get to know each other better by talking about something that was part of our lives. We discovered who loved swimming, line dancing, 'Slimming World' and walking in the local countryside amongst other topics. Sue Sandilands got us all making spiders out of pipe cleaners and a wooden bead, which was a great ice breaker.

I thought it would be a good idea to talk about physiotherapy training and, with two ex-physios in the group, I was happy to have a go. I trained at the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital. Sylvia Fox, our Music Minister, trained at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I need to confess that, when a career in physio was suggested to me, I had no idea what they did! I was relieved to discover during my interview that they were only interested in whether I was at least 5ft 7ins tall and had straight thumbs suitable for massage. I passed both tests!





◀THE
WOODLANDS
ON THE BRISTOL
ROAD IN THE
DAYS WHEN THE
TRAMS STILL
RAN.

The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital at The Woodlands is situated on the Bristol Road and the school was at Belmont on the corner of Hole Lane. It was a beautiful old house and had a huge gymnasium at the rear, kindly left by the armed forces after the war. It has all sadly been demolished now. While training at the ROH, we were very well fed at regular intervals both at Belmont and the Woodlands.

I was horrified to find that the lecture timetable included electrotherapy, which involved a decent level of physics, a subject that I had hated at school. It was important that we understood how the machines we were using worked: infrared heat lamps, short wave diathermy (through joints) and Faradism for muscle stimulation. Before starting our training we had to do three weeks nursing on the wards at the Woodlands to ensure that we left patients neat and tidy after treatment.

At that time, 60 years ago, the wards were filled with patients who had tuberculosis of the bones. They would lie on plaster beds moulded to their body shape to support them. We spent time on passive movements to reduce pain and discomfort.



The Woodlands was a small school compared to the QE and with only fifteen students each year. Once they thought we had a vague idea of what we were doing we were sent out on placements. These included:

Dudley Road Hospital: mainly young men with motor bike accidents.

East Birmingham (now Heartlands) to the chest units for before-and-after treatment for lung cancer.

The Skin Hospital (no longer there) to treat psoriasis, eczema and so on.

The Sorrento Maternity Hospital : ante-natal and post-natal classes.

Droitwich Brine Baths: exercise classes in the water followed by a hose down.

Victoria School in Northfield: taking children swimming to help joint movement.

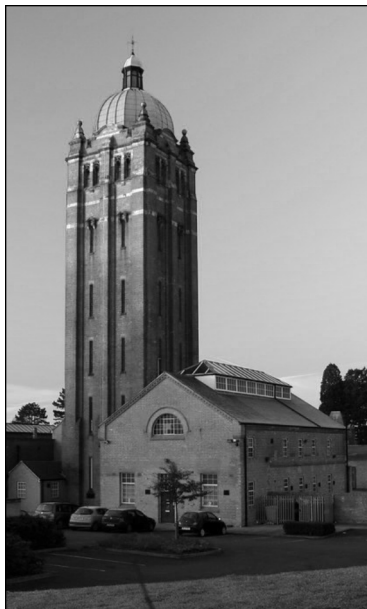
Forelands in Bromsgrove: a rehabilitation unit for surgery patients at the Woodlands.

Patshull Rehabilitation Centre near Wolverhampton: again mostly young men after accidents.

Hollymoor Hospital, near Rubery: mainly treating leg ulcers and pressure sores.

At that time there were three psychiatric hospitals in the area, Hollymoor, Rubery and John Connolly. All are closed now and have been replaced with housing. Working there as a student could be grim at times but I had a great affection for Hollymoor and worked there for





some time after qualifying, even overseeing the closure and the move to smaller units in Solihull.

Finally, once qualified, I was sent to cover a vacancy at what was then known as The Artificial Limb and Appliance Centre in Selly Oak. It is now called the West Midlands Rehabilitation Centre. I was put in charge of the 'walking school', teaching amputees how to use their artificial limbs. The unit also saw the fallout from the tragedy of the Thalidomide children and it was really upsetting to see

young children with parts of their limbs missing.

Unfortunately, I did not practise what I preached after visiting older people at home who had fractured wrists and hips following a fall while feeding the birds in the garden. I, too, had my only fracture after a fall in the garden while feeding the birds. Nobody is perfect!

I started my training 60 years ago and am still in touch with ten of the fifteen who started the course. Very recently, seven of us met up, as we do each year, for lunch and a natter. Physiotherapy turned out to be a wonderful career option for me.

After my talk to the Parish Women's Group, we all had a good stretch to maintain joint movement. Physio in practice! The next meeting will take place at the beginning of June, when we will go for a guided walk round Millennium Green. you can contact Rev Christine McAteer for details.

◀THE TOWER OF HOLLYMOOR HOSPITAL NEAR RUBERY, STILL A LANDMARK ON THE SOUTH BIRMINGHAM SKYLINE



You can buy the Parish Magazine for the past three months in PDF format on the Kings Norton parish website. Scan the QR code or visit kingsnorton.org.uk/magazine.



Still Life Works for Me

Call me old-fashioned (I am) but I'm distinctly attracted to those forms of visual art whose popularity may wax and wane but rarely disappear. I refer to still life, florals, landscape and portrait painting in the traditional rather than abstract sense.

A couple of years ago I came across a Midlands artist who specialises in contemporary, evocative still-life paintings, which blend traditional oil painting techniques with a modern sensibility. Nicola Currie was born in Manchester, she grew up in the North West of England before settling in Ledbury, Herefordshire, where the surrounding countryside serves as a constant source of inspiration for her.

Currie's artistic journey is deeply intertwined with her academic background. She initially studied Theology at Durham University before pursuing Fine Art at Worcester University, followed by specialized training in oil painting at Malvern Hills College and the Norfolk Painting School. This dual foundation in theology and art informs her approach, imbuing her work with a sense

of contemplation and reverence for the ordinary.

Her paintings focus on still life, particularly floral compositions and everyday objects, elevating them into subjects of quiet beauty and reflection. She believes that, in a fast-paced world saturated with visual stimuli, still-life paintings offer a moment of pause, inviting viewers to engage in deep observation and appreciation. Her subjects range from delicate flowers to simple household items, each rendered with meticulous attention to colour, light, and texture.

One of the defining characteristics of Currie's work is her use of gold leaf, which adds a luminous quality to her compositions. This technique enhances the interplay of light and shadow, creating a sense of depth and richness that draws the viewer into the painting. Her fascination with colour derives from childhood memories of her father's textile samples, which demonstrated how different palettes could transform a design.



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

Currie has exhibited widely across the UK, including prestigious venues such as the Mall Galleries in London, the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, and the New Gallery, Walsall. She has also held solo exhibitions at Worcester Cathedral, Carlisle Cathedral, and Spetchley Park Gardens, where she served as Artist in Residence from 2019 to 2024.

Nicola Currie's work continues to evolve. Upcoming exhibitions showcase her latest explorations in colour, composition, and technique. Her ability to merge classical methods with contemporary themes ensures that her paintings remain both timeless and relevant, offering a moment of stillness and wonder in an ever-changing world.

Nicola Currie is exhibiting in Worcestershire Open Studios and will be a guest artist at Croome Court Gallery, which is within the Walled Garden at Croome Court, the splendid National Trust property near High Green, Worcester, during opening times on the weekends of 16th-17th August and 23rd-25th August 2025.



SCAN THE
QR CODE
TO VISIT
NICOLA'S
WEBSITE

THE HUNGRY GARDENER

Midsummer Foraging



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

This month sees the arrival of midsummer and, like your garden, the hedgerows and meadows in your local green spaces are absolutely bursting with forage foods waiting to be discovered.

Hawthorn

The young leaves of the Hawthorn used to be known as ‘bread and cheese’, the young leaves being the bread and the unopened flower buds representing the cheese.

A hungry gap nibble no doubt. Hawthorn are ubiquitous since they were the hedging plant of choice for many years. As I write, they are just coming into bloom and the more shaded hedges may still be in bloom when we go to print. The main things to gather are the flowers and the fruit. Here are some cooking ideas:

- Use the flowers to make a wild flower syrup
- Make a jelly by mixing with apples
- Make a haw ketchup (I think it tastes a bit like brown sauce) 500g haws, 300ml

vinegar, 170g sugar.

Rose

There is a fine dog rose in the Waterways Meadow (the entrance for the meadow is at the bottom corner of Meadow Hill Road). I visit it every Autumn for rose hips and I check its progress throughout the year on my walk to church on a Sunday morning. Rose hips are a rich source of vitamin C. As well as the rose hips, the petals can be used. All roses are edible, even garden varieties.

- Use the petals in a summer salad
- Use the petals to make a flower syrup or a jelly
- Use the rosehips to make a syrup or a jelly

Elder

There is a lot of folklore linked to the Elder. Perhaps

this is because the tree has so many medicinal properties. The tale goes that if you break a branch, damage or burn the tree that the Mother Elder will come after you. I believe the tale was invented to ensure that there would be plenty of elder flowers and elder berries to go around. The flowers have a delicate, sweet flavour and the berries a stronger flavour that tastes delicious in syrup. The berries are full of vitamin C.

- Use the flowers to make the famous elder flower cordial
- Elderflower or elderberry wine
- Elderberry syrup or jelly
- Pontack (berry) sauce, made with 500g elderberries, 500ml vinegar and 200g shallots.

Rosebay Willow Herb

I was really surprised to learn that this common damp meadow flower is edible. As a child, I would see it in great swathes as I would look out of the school bus window, travelling through the Welsh lanes. It grows in great abundance in the Kings Norton Nature Reserve not

far off the path to church. It is rich in vitamin C and all parts of the plant are edible. The roots can be eaten as a vegetable and young shoots can be steamed like broccoli.

- Use the flowers to make jelly and syrup.
- Young shoots steamed.

Himalayan Balsam

This plant grows in huge abundance in the Nature Reserve. It is one of those that was introduced by plant hunters, cultivated in green houses in Kew and, over the course of time, has become ubiquitous. It simply loves damp soil. The flower looks similar to a rather large, pink orchid. The seeds are the interesting edible part of this plant. The tender seeds can be added to stir fries or steamed as a vegetable. When the seeds are mature they have a nutty flavour and can be added to pestos, toasted seeds added to dukkahs or salads, curries, breads, etc.

The gathering technique is to place a jar over the the tear drop seed pods and trap the seeds so that they don't spring open and distribute themselves. They are like a coiled spring and, if touched, can catapult their seeds. The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve battle every summer to keep it at bay so, if you develop a taste for this plant, you will be doing an exceedingly good service to your local community.

- Seeds can be used in jams, jellies, syrups and vinegars.
- Make a seasoning with peppercorns.
- Grind the seeds and add to porridge, soups, etc.

Recipe: 1 litre of Flower Syrup

- Pick flower petals to fill a 1 litre jar: some ideas are Rose, Elderflower, Dandelion, Meadowsweet, Sweet Cicely
- 1kg sugar
- 550ml boiling water

In a large jug put a thick layer of flower petals so that you can clearly see their colour in a stripe. Then add a layer of sugar. Another layer of flower petals, then another layer of sugar and keep going until you have used all your petals and your sugar and have lots of stripes of petals and sugar going up the jug. Leave the jug with a tea towel over the top for a day.

The next day, empty the contents into a pan, add 550ml boiling water. Gently heat and stir the mixture until all the sugar has disappeared.

Strain through a jelly bag and bottle the syrup. You can use the syrup like cordial in summer drinks.

Note: Please only pick and consume plants if you are 100% sure you have identified them correctly.

*The books I used to research for this article were:
Forage - Liz Knight, River Cottage Handbook No. 7
Hedgerow - John Wright, River Cottage Handbook No. 2 - Pam Corbin.*



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PHOTOS BY DAVID ASH



Funerals April 2025

1 Apr	Veronica Ann Ryan	72	SN.Bu.KN
4 Apr	Joyce Margaret Prosser	87	SN.Bu.CY
12 Apr	Dean Bowland		SN
17 Apr	Rita Majorie Martin	93	SN.Bu.KN
29 Apr	Ania Buckley	66	SN

SN : Service at St Nicolas’ Church, Bu : Burial, In : Interment of Ashes
CY : St Nicolas’ Churchyard

VE DAY SERVICE 11 MAY 2025

