

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

Finding Easter

Biblical clues to Jesus' identity, and
to our eternal future

A Day Trip to Kings Norton

A Victorian boat trip from Birmingham to
Kings Norton in 1892

Message from Moscow

The Chaplain of St Andrew's Anglican Church,
Moscow, on powerlessness & possibility



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Welcome

EDITORIAL

"Where can I flee from your presence?" asks the writer of Psalm 139. God's answer is woven through every line of the poetry which follows. You can't. No matter how deep the darkness, you cannot fall beyond My reach. As we read on, we see that realisation dawn. "If I ascend to heaven, you are there [...]. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there [...]. even the darkness is not dark to you!" You can almost hear a whispered "Wow!" as the penny drops.

If you have lived long enough to suffer some of the worst that life can throw at you, you may have discovered that, when you think you've reached rock bottom, mysteriously, you are not alone. Someone has got there before you. Someone who understands and accepts. Someone for whom "darkness is as light". And that, of course, is the meaning of Easter. Though we have yet to see its final victory, the light conquers the darkness. It's the reason why hope is possible in spite of all that invites us to despair. Join us this Holy Week as, once again, we walk through the story from the darkness of crucifixion to the light of resurrection. Larry Wright provides an introduction on page 4. Dates and times are on page 15.

That same Psalm, which tells us that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made", loved and safe, has a surprising sting in the tail. "O that you would kill the wicked, O God." A good starting point, perhaps, for a conversation about a Christian response to evil. Though our aim this month was to focus on the joys of this season, we could not ignore the horrors which are

unfolding in Ukraine. I hope that the articles on pages 8 and 26 will prove helpful.



David Ash

Finding Easter

Larry Wright is on a quest for Biblical clues to Jesus' true identity, and to our future.

Despite the popularity of Easter egg hunts, I've never been involved in or invited to one. Maybe I will this Easter. Like all the best games of discovery and adventure, egg hunts require attention to clues, perseverance and swiftness if one is to claim the prize before other competitors.

Treasure hunts using cars were once very popular. Are they still? Groups of friends would set off on a journey with a list of locations and cryptic clues and stop in various places to try to find the answers.

How many of us recall the 1979 book "Masquerade" by Kit Williams, which contained the clues to the place where a golden and bejewelled hare had been buried somewhere

in England? Thousands were captivated by this quest for a real treasure trove. The popularity of amateur metal detecting has swept the nation in recent years, all hoping to emulate Terry Herbert's detection of the Staffordshire Hoard in a field near Lichfield in 2009, a treasure now owned by Birmingham City Museum.

It appears that, from family egg hunts to actual treasure hunts, we are fascinated by quests leading to a promise of reward or fulfilment. For Christians, the Gospels present themselves as a series of events which are clues to the person, identity and purpose of Jesus of Nazareth. The story of his life, death and resurrection (often referred to as the greatest story ever told) is the historical turning point around which so much of our lives today, whether we are believers or not, still revolve.

Christianity has, by far, the greatest number of followers of any religion in the world and it is growing rapidly in many places. The most remarkable growth in recent years has been in China, South Korea and sub-Saharan Africa. While the varieties of Christianity are many, the core beliefs about Jesus' life and teachings are shared by the overwhelming majority.



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



PHOTO BY EREN LI

How might it look if we interpreted the Gospel stories of Jesus' death and resurrection as a treasure hunt? To begin with, participants would need to refer to the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament regarding a saviour, a liberator or redeemer figure, whom God would send to the people of Israel to inaugurate a new era of peace and prosperity. Various examples of these Bible verses would be given and participants would search the Gospels for their influence on Jesus' story. This would include the verses from Isaiah known as the "Suffering Servant" verses (e.g., Isaiah 52:13-53:12). They are painful to read but are essential clues to

↑ **The Easter egg, a symbol of the mysteries of death and rebirth and a clue which points to our eternal future**

understanding the Easter story.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus indicates to his disciples and close followers he will have to suffer. These statements are met with disbelief, denial or silence. Perhaps their experience of Jesus' popularity and progress in Galilee convinced them that they would enter Jerusalem triumphantly and that Jesus' pessimism about his fate would be assuaged. The crowd celebrating his entry into Jerusalem with cries of "Hosanna!", waving palm leaves, must have added to his followers' sense that all would be well. The clues were there but were ignored or misunderstood. The authorities conspire to arrest

Jesus and the crowd turns against him. He is crucified. Who could blame his followers for their very human responses of running away or denying that they knew him? Crucifixion wasn't the promise or reward they'd anticipated. Humbled, humiliated and fearful they slink away.

Jesus knew how his earthly quest would end. He also knew that his end would herald a new beginning. The real promise and reward of Easter lies not in the way his life ended but in the way in which he revisited his followers after his resurrection. Clues to the miracle of overcoming death are also in the Old Testament.

All four Gospels contain accounts of Jesus' raising people from death. Overcoming death is not only about living again but about living entirely differently from one's former ways. By affirming that death is not the end, Jesus releases us from the fears inherent in our

mortality that so dominate our human experience.

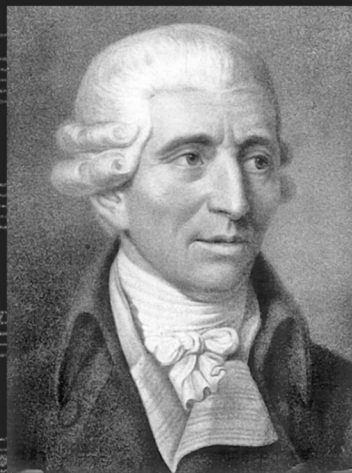
If we can be liberated from anxiety about dying, we can also be liberated from other common burdens preventing us from living fulfilling physical and spiritual lives. The way we choose to live each day is intimately connected with our sense of destiny. If we allow ourselves to leave our destiny in God's care and believe that seeking God's will for our lives is the ultimate quest for all, our destiny becomes God's and God becomes ours.

In Matthew's Gospel chapter 6 verses 19-21, Jesus teaches the importance of distinguishing between the value of earthly possessions, while not denying their importance, and the values we live by. Our true treasure resides not in the things we own but in the way we live. Or, as Matthew puts it more poetically, "Where your [true] treasure is, there your heart will be also."

↓ A 15th century portrayal of the raising of Lazarus, a foretaste of Christ's resurrection, and ours.



SINFONIA SCINTILLE PRESENTS



"First and Last"

Beethoven - Symphony No.1 in C Major

Haydn - Symphony No.104 in D Major

Conductor : Keith Slade

Leader : Charlotte Moseley

21st May 2022 | 7pm

St Nicolas Church, Kings Norton

Adult :£10 | Students : £5 | Children : Free

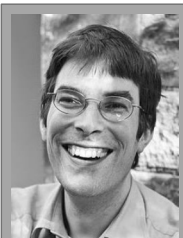
A short history of Ukraine's relationship with the European Union

Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine on February 24 2022 and the war that has ensued are part of the history of what happened in eastern Europe in the years following the cold war. As the European Union is debating what to do about Russian aggression, it is important to remind ourselves of that complex history of relations between the bloc and the nations on its borders.

This war is part of a story of how eastern European countries rebuilt nation-states after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. And it is about the role successive versions of the European Union's neighbourhood policy played in this process of state-building – and how Russia responded. It is a story about how, in Ukraine, the project of state building came to be tied to European integration. Russia's attack on Ukraine is also an attack on the idea of European integration.

For a long time, for many Europeans, Ukraine has been a country without much agency. It was deemed to lie outside Europe. And it was often seen as a mere geopolitical bridge between the EU and Russia.

This debate about Ukraine's place in the European international order after the end of the cold war was connected with Ukrainian domestic politics. There were questions of corruption and of mass poverty. Some regions in Ukraine were steaming ahead, beginning to produce hi-tech computer games and apps, while others were left



HOLGER NEHRING IS THE PROFESSOR IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN HISTORY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING, SCOTLAND.

behind, relying on the decaying infrastructure of the old heavy industries.

Those in the European Union who were sceptical of bringing Ukraine further into the fold cited these issues as reasons for why this was not prudent. For many Ukrainians, by contrast, European integration offered one way to address the structural problems in Ukraine's politics, society and economy. Russia's path towards authoritarianism and centralisation of political control offered another model.

At some point between 2004 and 2013, Putin decided that he perceived the Europeanisation of Ukraine as a threat – a fundamental challenge to his model of authoritarian rule.

As Putin has made clear in numerous interventions since the late 1990s, he questions the principles of democracy and national sovereignty on which the European international order rests. For example, in his speech on the "historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians" on July 12 2021, Putin argued that the fulfilment of Russian nationhood lay in the occupation of the territory of another

▼ A VIEW OF THE UKRAINIAN CAPITAL FROM THE KYIV PECHERSK LAVRA OR MONASTERY OF THE CAVES, A PREEMINENT CENTRE OF EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY SINCE 1051 AD AND A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE.

PHOTO BY CHAIWAT HANPITAKPONG



nation – Ukraine. Reminiscent of early 20th-century mystical nationalists, Putin claimed that "Russians and Ukrainians were one people – a single whole."

Looking west

Since the early 2000s, Ukraine responded to such Russian threats to its sovereignty by debating moves towards the EU. In 1994, Ukraine had already signed a partnership and co-operation agreement with the EU. It now wanted to build on this.

The debate between the Russian and the European model of state-building unfolded especially since Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004. Most Ukrainians decided then that they wanted to follow the course of other East European countries towards democracy rather than the Russian model of autocratic control. The perception in Ukraine at the time was that EU policymakers were rebutting their efforts.

As he tightened his grip on his domestic power base, Putin interfered in Ukrainian domestic politics and tried, unsuccessfully, to support the pro-Russian presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich. The man who beat Yanukovich to the presidency, Viktor Yushchenko, was quick to ask the EU for an association agreement once in power. Negotiations began in 2008, but soon slowed down. Yushchenko's own power base was not strong enough.

The slow progress weakened Yushchenko's standing further. In

2010, the pro-Russian Yanukovich won the elections and subsequently ran a corrupt regime based on oligarchic power. The popular politician Yulia Tymoshenko, Yushchenko's rival, was arrested on spurious grounds. In response, the EU slowed negotiations down further. It warned Ukraine to abide by the rule of law.

At around the same time, in 2011, Putin founded the Eurasian Customs Union which was supposed to make an anti-EU offer to the states on Russia's borders. This spurred the EU into action to accelerate the signing of an association agreement with Ukraine.

In autumn 2013, Yanukovich refused to sign that agreement. In light of the dire economic situation and his government's blatant corruption, tens of thousands of Ukrainians, mainly students, protested against it.

When Yanukovich ordered the use of massive violence against the protesters on November 30 2013, more than half a million people risked their lives and came out against the regime on Kyiv's central square, the Maidan. This led to the spread and growth of the protests.

It was the beginning of a revolution that led to Yanukovich's toppling. The protests in favour of Europeanisation, known as Euromaidan, appealed to a broad cross section of Ukrainian society, including far-right nationalists. In Ukraine, "Europe" now unmistakably stood for a state that fostered

democracy, pluralism, and civil society engagement.

Power struggle

But support for Europeanisation was not spread evenly across the country – a situation which Putin was quick to exploit. In spring 2014, Putin illegally annexed the Crimean peninsula following a fake referendum, and he installed two puppet governments in the mostly Russian-speaking Donbas, a region in eastern Ukraine in 2014: the so-called "people's republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Widespread corruption and poverty in a region dominated by decaying heavy industry formed the social conditions that generated support for Putin's occupation. Around 10,300 people have died, and 24,000 have been injured in the war between Russia and Ukraine that resulted from this occupation.

Euromaidan formed the starting point of a broader process of political and social transformation. This process provided the foundation for successive pro-European governments, culminating in the coming into force of the association agreement in September 2017 and the landslide victory of the former TV comedian Volodymyr Zelensky in the presidential elections in 2019. On February 28 2022, four days after Russia's unprovoked attack on his country, President Zelensky formally applied for EU membership.



PHOTO BY MATTI

It has been popular to sell European integration as a peace project. Many have taken the conditions for this peace for granted: Nato provided it during the cold war. And economic and financial integration and regulation seemed to fulfil that role since the 1990s. But Russia's attack on Ukraine illustrates painfully that the EU and its member states have not thought enough about the conditions that guaranteed that peace.

This has had dramatic consequences for Ukraine. The British historian Alan Milward has called European integration a project for the "European rescue of the nation state". For Ukrainians today this is true in an existential way: Ukraine will be European – or it will not be.

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Adam the Gardener reveals tough new plants

There are so many new plants coming on to the market each year that I have restricted my selection to those recommended for their beauty and for being hardy in the UK.

I never thought that I would be recommending the olive as the Tree of the Month. The foliage is of a colour rare in trees but very attractive in the sunshine. That reminds me that your tree is indifferent to soil quality but must be planted in a south-facing aspect preferably with a fence protecting from the prevailing winds. You may get some fruit but it will probably be too small for eating or pressing. I was startled to see a row of olive trees in enormous pots outside a

local greengrocer's with 15 cm diameter trunks and healthy foliage reaching to three metres. They were on sale at £250, but smaller ones can be had more cheaply. It has become fashionable locally to have two olive trees in containers one either side of the front doors of pubs, restaurants and fish and chip shops. The times they are a-changing.

Hostas are an old favourite with their amazing spear-shaped foliage, often ruffled and in an array of greens and yellows, often variegated. Every year in the United States one hundred new varieties are announced! I have just three large ones to bring before you (all with slightly daft names) and the first is Whee! Yes, that's right! It is of a beautiful yellow-gold which does not turn green as the Summer turns to Autumn; a fine plant. Rhineland has deeply corrugated leaves in a bright green; and, lastly, Diamond Lake is a blue-green variety said to be "slug resistant". I would take that claim with a pinch of salt. If you use the blue pellets use them sparingly and under a piece of slate as they are said to be poisonous to small mammals and birds. A grower of many years once said that the pellets were useless and recommended spreading coir fibre, not compost, under your



OLIVE TREES



OXEYE DAISIES

Hostas as slugs and snails would not pass over it.

Now for some carefully chosen perennials. Hardy geraniums are unbelievably tough and will grow well in the lee of a Cupressus hedge; and so here is a new one for 2022. Boom Chocolatta has dark bronze leaves bearing blue-purple flowers and is vigorous but not a sprawler.

Take a trip to Croome Court National Trust property in early summer and you will be bowled over by acres of ox eye daisies sweeping down to the lake. Formally known as *Leucanthemum vulgare*, they are related to their larger and more sophisticated cousins the Shasta Daisies, *Leucanthemum superba*, a fine and very hardy garden perennial. There are three new varieties to be

had: Bananas & Cream Improved, Marshmallow and Spun Silk. The first starts off soft yellow and fades to the familiar white petals with a gold centre. Marshmallow is a robust fully double, perfect for cutting; and Spun Silk has quilled petals on a large (12cm) flower with long straight stems. If you have trouble in tracking down any new plant varieties then consult the online RHS plant finder and you will be provided with a list of suppliers specific to that plant.

Feeling adventurous and perhaps a little strapped for cash? Then many perennials can be grown from seed, often outside in late spring. Thompson and Morgan have a collection of ten packets of seeds for £10 and a Super Collection of twenty packets for £20. Don't forget to place a plastic label in each tray as it is



SURFINIA PETUNIAS

very easy to lose track of which seedling is which. We've all done it. You will find these bargain seeds under "Special Offers" in the online catalogue.

You will often find that some perennials will form a very nice plant in the first year but that there will be no flowers. Panic ye not, because the first flowers will appear in the second year as a result of vernalisation. This phenomenon affects all sorts of plants and means that the plant must have been subjected to at least one cold spell to prepare it for flowering in the summer. Some seeds planted in open beds may not germinate until the following Spring.

New varieties of bedding plants appear every year and the choice of Surfinia Petunias is astonishing. This perfect container plant is best bought as plug plants and grown on in trays with some protection before planting out several in a pot. Red, white and blue can be had in this year of celebration for her majesty The Queen!

More news from the world of gardening next month.



Holy Week 2022

11th - 17th April

All services are at St Nicolas' Church, Kings Norton

Day	Start Time	Service
Mon 11 Apr	7.30 pm	Compline
Tue 12 Apr	7.30 pm	Compline
Wed 13 Apr	7.30 pm	Compline
Thu 14 Apr	7.30 pm	Holy Communion with Foot Washing
Fri 15 Apr Good Friday	10.30 am	Outdoor Worship
	12 midday	Stations of the Cross (indoors)
	2.00 pm	Tenebrae Service
Sat 16 Apr	10.00 - 4.00	Dotty the Donkey Activity Trail
Sun 17 Apr Easter Day	9.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
	10.30 am	Holy Communion with Baptism
	6.00 pm	Evening Prayer

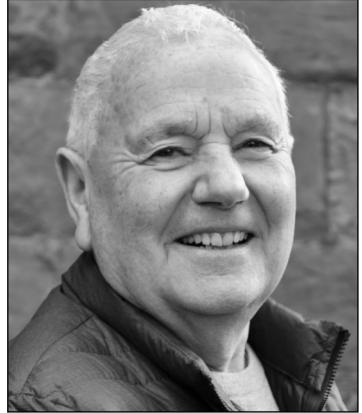
Men's Group Takes Off

And so it came to pass. It was in the early Autumn of last year that I received an email from the Rector asking if I would be interested in a Parish Men's Group. Replying "yes", I found myself, along with Steve Wright, David Badger and Larry, involved in detailed planning of such a group.

Several meetings later, including one which took place over a curry in Cotteridge, we formulated our ideas and began to realise Larry's vision. Brainstorming resulted in an early tentative programme, with venues and presenters, and we were ready to go in the New Year. The proposed monthly events for 2022 were published on a splendid-looking programme card distributed through the church and the Parish Office. Personal invitations and emails resulted in interest from folks from St Nicolas', Immanuel and Hawkesley Churches.

The first meeting was scheduled for February and Steve Wright bravely offered to put himself into the firing line with the first presentation. A very generous anonymous donor provided drinks and Indian appetisers to get the first meeting off to a good start and put us all in a receptive mood. Eleven men attended the first meeting in the church and all three communities were represented, which bodes well for the future.

Steve took as his subject a particular interest of his, "The Glider Pilot Regiment", something that the rest of us knew little or nothing about. However, with aid of informative slides, videos and a lively, interesting presentation we were able to get a feel for the brave exploits of this unique



band of soldiers, for that was what they were, not airmen.

What did we learn? Well, the Army and RAF did argue as to who was responsible for them. Were they soldiers or were they pilots? In the end, the RAF undertook the flying training and the Army took responsibility for the initial recruiting from the ranks of their soldiers as they were to be fighting men. After its inauguration in 1942, the regiment needed special gliders which would be capable of carrying not only men but also equipment and vehicles. Initially, training was on donated civilian gliders which would prove unsuitable for the heavy transport task. However, the War Ministry developed pretty quickly a range of heavy-

duty gliders which were given names beginning with H. The Horsa was the workhorse of the regiment and could carry men and light equipment, The Hamilcar, a real beast, was capable of carrying a light tank; and the imported US Hadrian was big enough to carry troops, jeeps, trailers and AA guns. Amazingly, because of their mode of flying, without an engine and towed behind a large bomber, they were constructed of wood and canvas. There were accidents, often through tow-ropes breaking, and landed gliders were invariably damaged and abandoned after depositing their precious cargo.

During the talk it became apparent why Steve had a particular interest in the history of this Regiment. S/Sgt Billy Marfleet joined the GPR in August 1942 and was sadly killed in a crash into the English Channel off the Normandy coast as he was flying a Horsa

on D-Day, 6th June 1944, age only 24. It was clearly a precarious life. If anything went wrong, your survival chances were limited. The co-pilot and three passengers were also killed. Billy Marfleet was Steve's uncle.

Despite that sad and personal episode, the GPR was instrumental in delivering troops and equipment during many successful WWII campaigns: Sicily 1943, Normandy landings 1944, Arnhem 1944, the Battle of the Rhine, the taking of the Caen Canal and Orne river bridges, to name but a few. Although The GPR is no longer in operation, having been disbanded in 1957, it is clear that, during its lifetime, it lived up to its motto of "Nihil est Impossibile". Nothing is Impossible.

Expectations are high for this new church group and our inaugural meeting didn't disappoint. It turned out to be a very interesting evening with the added anticipation from those present of next month's trip to the micro-brewery in Stirchley.

Above all, and for me at least, meeting new people and being able to put names to faces seems to have achieved its goal. If you would like to join us or need more information, pick up a programme card from the church or have a word with Larry, Steve, David or me. We look forward to seeing you.



A Day Trip to Kings Norton

A Victorian Treat

It's hard to imagine now, but not much more than 100 years ago, Kings Norton was quite genuinely a rural Worcestershire village, a haven of calm and peace: so much so that it was for several years a very popular excursion for day trippers living in the city centre.

It's perhaps only slightly less difficult to imagine that most of those day trips were made by water! In those days, and we're talking about the late Victorian and Edwardian era from roughly 1890 to 1910, there were no coaches or buses and hardly any privately-owned cars. There was the railway, of course, but the only leisurely, and the most picturesque, way to access the delights of Kings Norton was by boat, along the Birmingham & Worcester Canal, normally in a rowing boat or canoe or, rather more exotically, in a steam powered pleasure launch.

There's a charming report in the Sunday Mercury of 29 October 1892. It describes a "boating carnival" organised by the

Islington Canoe Club. Describing the gathering of craft at the start of the event in the area of the canal between Gas Street Basin and Islington Row, it reads "There were pleasure boats going to and fro, all preparing for the afternoon's trip as far as King's Norton and the canal looked for the time being like a river at holiday time. The illusion was heightened by a steamer, The Merlin, in the middle distance, getting up steam. Presently a great commotion was seen to take place among the large number of boats collected, and the cause was not long in making itself known, for a second steamer, The Phoenix, was steaming through the bridge under Islington Row. The start was finally made at about three o'clock, when the small boats were taken in tow by the steamers for the purpose of keeping in close proximity during the afternoon."

The flotilla arrived at the canal wharf by the bridge at the Parsons Hill end of Wharf Lane.



**MICHAEL
WRITES
REGULARLY
ON LOCAL
HISTORY**

Then, in what must have been a noisy and spectacular sight, all rowers, steamboat crews and passengers disembarked and strolled up Wharf Road, past the little white chapel that still exists and the blacksmith's that was soon to disappear, to enjoy what was described as a "substantial tea" at the Navigation Inn. They then all walked back to the wharf and re-embarked for an illuminated procession, lit presumably by candles and flaming torches, back to the city. The only slight detriment to a perfect afternoon's outing was reportedly the cold evening air.

It may not have been quite like it, but it's hard not to conjure up an image of the sort of scenes regularly described in

Jerome K Jerome's "Three Men in a Boat", with the ladies elegantly decked out in flouncy long dresses, set off by flowery hats and parasols, the men wearing fashionable boating attire, white jackets and trousers and straw boaters with gaily coloured ribbons. Imagine that spectacular throng crowding up towards the centre of Kings Norton!

It would have been for them a real trip into the countryside. Once their boats had travelled up the canal past the Cotteridge area, with the Kings Norton Metal Company to their right and the Sherborne Paper mill a little further along to their left (just by the junction with the Stratford-on-Avon canal), they would have left behind the

▼VICTORIAN
BOATING
PARTY IN
1897.



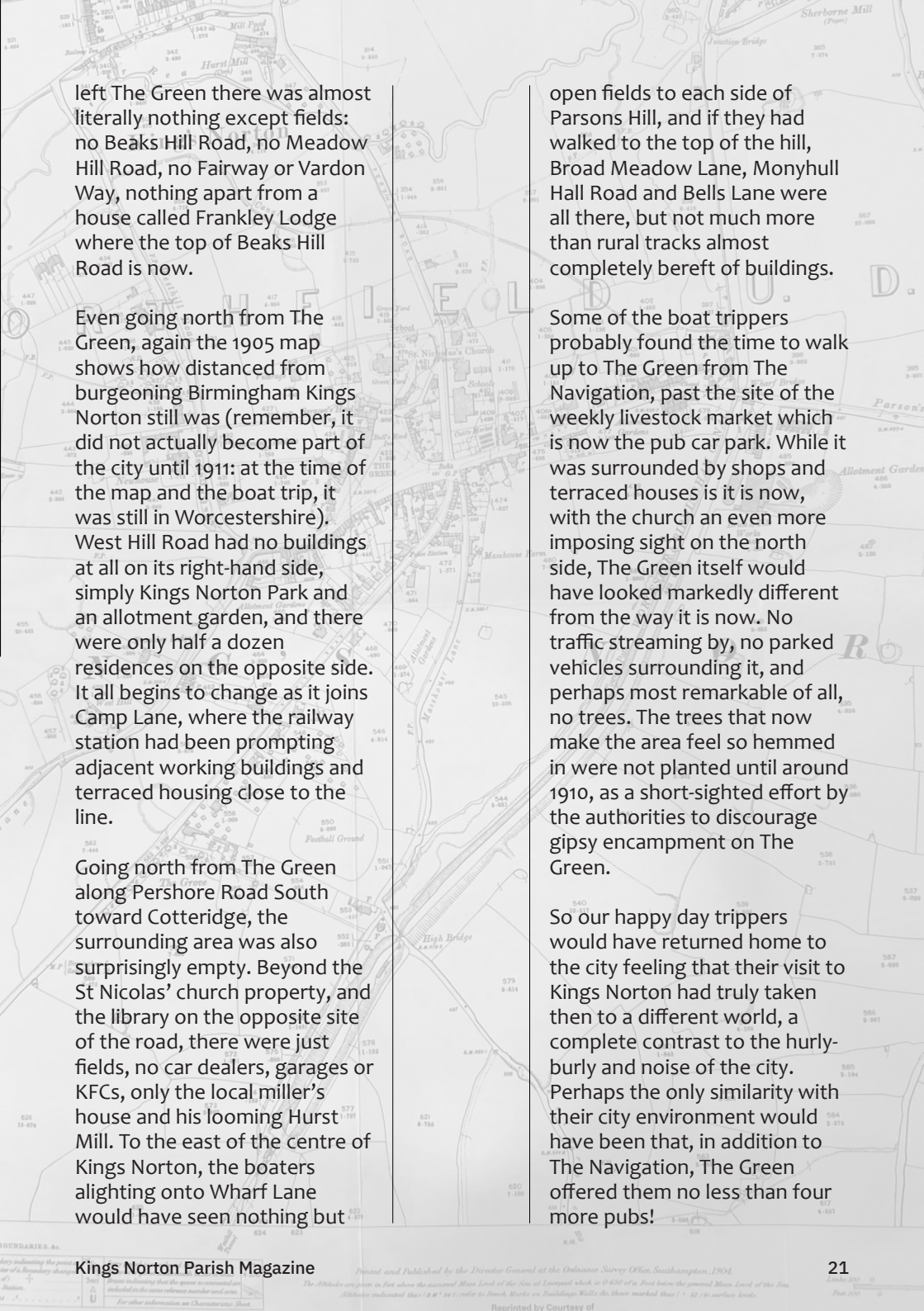


newly-developing industrial conurbation area of busy Birmingham and entered an area of real peace and calm.

Apart from farms, the occasional mill, and isolated private residences dotted around the open fields, the buildings of Kings Norton were very much centred on The Green: almost all the region's shops, private dwellings and, of course, the church and its surrounding buildings were within 200 yards of the centre. Beyond, in every direction, there was almost nothing apart from rolling countryside.

▲ KINGS NORTON GREEN IN 1900, BEFORE THE TREES WERE PLANTED.

This was brought home to me recently when I acquired a reproduction of a 1903 map of the area. Each of the roads leading out of Kings Norton, once you get out of the village centre, is almost completely devoid of any housing. Along Redditch Road, there are just five or six houses spread along a distance of more than a mile (the map doesn't extend any further, but it was probably similarly sparse all the way into Redditch). The Primrose Hill and Hawkesley areas were empty and wouldn't see any development for decades. On the Rednal Road, which according to the map was then called Marl Pit Lane, once you



left The Green there was almost literally nothing except fields: no Beaks Hill Road, no Meadow Hill Road, no Fairway or Vardon Way, nothing apart from a house called Frankley Lodge where the top of Beaks Hill Road is now.

Even going north from The Green, again the 1905 map shows how distanced from burgeoning Birmingham Kings Norton still was (remember, it did not actually become part of the city until 1911: at the time of the map and the boat trip, it was still in Worcestershire). West Hill Road had no buildings at all on its right-hand side, simply Kings Norton Park and an allotment garden, and there were only half a dozen residences on the opposite side. It all begins to change as it joins Camp Lane, where the railway station had been prompting adjacent working buildings and terraced housing close to the line.

Going north from The Green along Pershore Road South toward Cotteridge, the surrounding area was also surprisingly empty. Beyond the St Nicolas' church property, and the library on the opposite site of the road, there were just fields, no car dealers, garages or KFCs, only the local miller's house and his looming Hurst Mill. To the east of the centre of Kings Norton, the boaters alighting onto Wharf Lane would have seen nothing but

open fields to each side of Parsons Hill, and if they had walked to the top of the hill, Broad Meadow Lane, Monyhull Hall Road and Bells Lane were all there, but not much more than rural tracks almost completely bereft of buildings.

Some of the boat trippers probably found the time to walk up to The Green from The Navigation, past the site of the weekly livestock market which is now the pub car park. While it was surrounded by shops and terraced houses is it is now, with the church an even more imposing sight on the north side, The Green itself would have looked markedly different from the way it is now. No traffic streaming by, no parked vehicles surrounding it, and perhaps most remarkable of all, no trees. The trees that now make the area feel so hemmed in were not planted until around 1910, as a short-sighted effort by the authorities to discourage gipsy encampment on The Green.

So our happy day trippers would have returned home to the city feeling that their visit to Kings Norton had truly taken them to a different world, a complete contrast to the hurly-burly and noise of the city. Perhaps the only similarity with their city environment would have been that, in addition to The Navigation, The Green offered them no less than four more pubs!



From The Organ Stool

During January and February, I have been privileged to get to know a choral work that was completely new to me and to all my colleagues in the CBSO Chorus. The work is by **Robert Nathaniel Dett**, an Afro-Canadian composer born in 1882. After studying at Harvard and in Paris, Dett became one of the most distinguished teachers, conductors and composers in the USA. He wrote his oratorio “The Ordering of Moses” in the mid-1930’s and it was premiered in Cincinnati in 1937.

And that is where things begin to go wrong for this wonderful work. It was broadcast at its première, but the broadcast was halted before the end of the concert and the rumoured reason is that there had been calls to remove “black music” from the airwaves. It was rarely heard afterwards. Its first professional UK performance was in February 2022 (BBC Radio 3 are planning to air it in May). There are several more articles to be written about the neglected music of classical composers of colour, but I wanted to share with you something of the libretto and musical setting, rather than the complexities surrounding the racial origins of composer and performers.

Dett created the libretto himself, beginning with the cries of the Israelites suffering in the bondage of slavery in Egypt. They cry to God for mercy: the writing for the orchestra and chorus fit perfectly with the wails of “Lord, have mercy”. There are even the sounds of a chain being dragged along the floor, a soundscape of slavery for Africans many centuries after their Hebrew neighbours.

A young Moses, still a shepherd, then meets God “face-to-face” at the burning bush and questions why God has chosen him to speak for the Israelites (“I am not eloquent; have no gift of



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

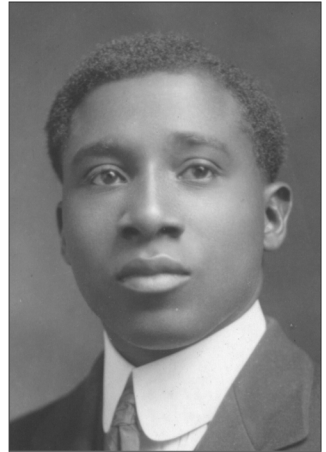
speech; am slow of tongue”) and God’s response is to say “I will instruct thee”. The music for this section was deeply dramatic and made the story come alive to me in a way that film may do for others.

The spiritual “Go down, Moses” is then developed into a massive fugue, calling on Pharaoh to “Let my people go!”. It was impossible not to think of or to pray for all those currently crying out to their modern-day “pharaoh” in the moment of singing those words. It also made me think of new ways to use hymns, songs and presented pieces within regular worship.

The parting of the Red Sea is very dramatically portrayed in both the choral and orchestral writing, and soon the Israelites are safely on the other side. Their first response is to give praise and thanks to God in a piece that was a wonderful combination of Broadway, jazz, romantic classical music and gospel, with the whole being greater than all its component parts. The level of praise is huge but only because of the suffering of “before”. Praise on this epic scale makes no sense if there hasn’t been a “before”.

It made me think once more that the praise of Easter makes little sense if the horror of Good Friday has not come first. In a small parallel, it is like our current worship in church. It is more cherished and has acquired greater depth because we have been deprived of so much of it for the best part of two years.

I came away from the concert very moved to have been part of the team that had begun the process of rehabilitating this work into the regular choral repertoire. I also felt I had lived inside the story of the Exodus in a far greater way than ever before. Like the Passions by Bach, like Handel’s “Messiah” or Walton’s “Belshazzar’s Feast” and many other oratorios, they are special routes into living a Bible story in a way that is deeper than just reading it, or viewing it in a work of art.



R. Nathaniel Dett was born on 11th October 1882 in Drummondville (now Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada) and died on 2nd October 1943 in Battle Creek (Michigan). He was an organist, pianist and one of the most widely-known and admired African-American composers of his time.

It was while he was a student at the Oberlin Conservatoire (Ohio) that he had the idea of blending spirituals with classical music. The work of Czech composer Antonín Dvořák, which he had recently encountered, reminded him of the hymns which he had heard at his grandmother’s house.

Dett accumulated many degrees, prizes, distinctions and responsibilities during his lifetime. He is buried in Niagara Falls.

YOUR PARISH CHURCH

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

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

THE MINISTRY TEAM

Team Rector..... The Revd Larry Wright
Assistant Rector..... The Revd Eliakim Ikechukwu
Parish Lay Minister Pauline Weaver
Honorary Assistant Priest The Revd Jayne Crooks
Methodist Minister..... The Revd Nick Jones
Lay Readers David Ash, Fay Fearon, Ruth Howman, Parisa Pordelkhaki
Lay Preacher Steve Wright
Music Minister..... Sylvia Fox
Pastoral Care Advisor Susan Farrell
Pastoral Care Team Coordinator..... The Revd Jayne Crooks

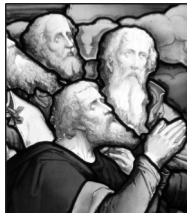
THE CHURCH WARDENS

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

OTHER CONTACTS

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

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



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

1st Sunday of the Month

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

2nd Sunday of the Month

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

3rd Sunday of the Month

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

4th Sunday of the Month

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

5th Sunday of the Month

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

From the Chaplain of St Andrew's Church

MOSCOW

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the
Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia,
Area Dean of Russia & Ukraine

Dear Friends,

St Andrew's Anglican Church in Moscow is situated only 10 minutes walk from the Kremlin, the physical and geographical centre of power. The Ministries of Education, Culture and Defence are near neighbours. We are in the centre of power and yet we are powerless.

Today, as many of our dear friends have left Russia, and as we nervously wonder whether or when we should leave, we are even more conscious of our powerlessness.

Conflict was predicted and we were helpless, unable to do anything to prevent it. Now that "special military operations", as they are called here, have begun, there is nothing that we can do to stop them.

But it is precisely our powerlessness which means that there are things that we can do. We are Gospel people, who serve a crucified but risen Lord. We are the "nobodies" of 1 Corinthians 1, and it is our very powerlessness and insignificance and foolishness that can also be our strength, if it is handed to God.

First of all, we are simply here. We are a community of very messed up people, but as we gather together to hear the Word of God and to receive bread and wine, a community of Russians and foreigners gathered together, centred on and receiving from Jesus Christ, our simple presence can be a witness of what the world can be like, of the future kingdom.



Secondly, in our powerlessness, we can worship and pray. We pray for peace. That is far more than just praying for the absence of war. We praise God for the coming Kingdom, for the hope he has given us. I am struck that in both Mary's song and Zechariah's song we praise God for what we hope will happen, as if it already has happened; and we cry out for God, as we pray and long for the coming of God's Kingdom. We pray for the time when there will be no more "fake news", lies, betrayals or violence, and no more fear and death. And it is our very powerlessness which opens to us our dependence on God and on him doing wonderful works.

Thirdly, we can still speak truth. There are some things that we

↑ St Andrew's Anglican Church, present in the Russian capital since 1885.

cannot say in Moscow, but we can still preach Jesus Christ crucified and risen and reigning. We can call people to repentance and offer people hope. In my 30 plus years of ministry, I have never known a time and a place when people are more hungering for God.

And fourthly, we can love and serve our neighbour. We read the news and feel powerless. Most of us are in no position to solve world problems or to bring peace. The job advert when I applied to come to Moscow said that the person appointed could make a difference for world peace. On those grounds I have been a spectacular failure! But we can make a difference where we are, and love the actual physical



THE REVD MALCOLM ROGERS WAS PREVIOUSLY VICAR OF ST MARY'S WITH ST PETER'S, BURY ST EDMUNDS AND OF ST MARY MAGDALENE'S & ST DAVID'S, HOLLOWAY. FOR TWO YEARS, HE WAS A CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY PARTNER AT THE ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN ST PETERSBURG.

neighbours whom God has given us. For some, the neighbours are Ukrainian refugees.

Yesterday, I heard from the woman with whom I ran our college Christian Union. Since leaving university, she has been working with Polish Christians, witnessing, and serving mainly among addicts and street women. She wrote of how her team met a family of homeless Ukrainian refugees and they are now living in her flat. There are many stories like that. Our neighbours at St Andrew's in Moscow are different. They are the young Russian crushed by what has been done in his name; the mother sick with anxiety for her son who has been sent to Ukraine, the foreign student unsure whether to leave or how to leave, the person who has been named on the wrong sort of list, the older person who fears a return to the isolation and economic depression of the 1980s.

In our hubris we think that we are somebodies who can save the world and we end up paralysed. But it is when we realise our powerlessness, that in the worlds eyes we are "nobodies", that we can begin to see the neighbour whom God has given us and learn to serve them.

Pray for us, for courage and wisdom and perseverance in faith and love. And we will pray for you.

PHOTO BY RAMON PERUCHO



Funerals February 2022

1st Feb	Barbara Janet Woods	82	SN.Bu.CY
3rd Feb	Trevor Victor Lloyd Sanders	87	Cr.LH
4th Feb	Alan Cheney	86	In.CY
4th Feb	Margaret Olive Clements	96	SN.Bu.KN
8th Feb	Rosemary Ann Anderson	71	SN.Bu.KN
9th Feb	James Harold Barrett	77	SN.Bu.KN
15th Feb	James Anthony Doyle	55	SN.Bu.KN
16th Feb	Barbara Anne Smith	77	Cr.LH
28th Feb	Dorothy Anne Martha Harper	84	Cr.RD.SN
28th Feb	Irene Laura Barr	84	Cr.RD

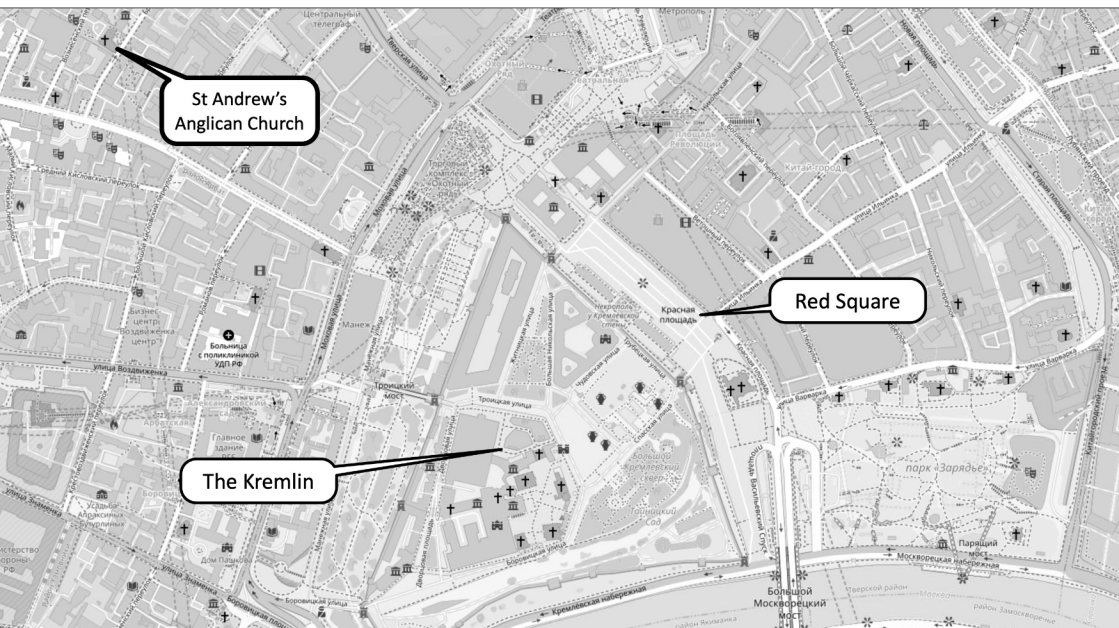
Bu : Burial, Cr : Cremation, CY : Churchyard, In : Interment of Ashes,
SN : Service at St Nicolas' Church

Cemeteries & Crematoria

KN : Kings Norton, LH : Lodge Hill, RD : Redditch.

Baptisms February 2022

20th Feb	Evelyn Betty Caulfield
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April

Spring has sprung and the world wakes up after its long winter sleep. Hopefully you will have remembered to spring your clocks forward too. At this time of year, I check the pond every day for the first frog spawn. There's none yet (writing in March, so it could happen any time soon) but the frogs are definitely getting jiggy. I always think it is one of the most exciting signs of spring; but you also have to be careful, because any sudden change in the weather can put the little fellas at risk, so I'm always ready with something to cover them up with if the temperature drops.

Plants are starting to come into bud. I look regularly to see what has started to show signs of growth and what may not have survived the winter (a bit like my greenhouse, but that's another story). The new rose planted last year is showing lots of growth and those hardy little primulas are in bloom. The camellia has its

first flower, a single beautiful red bloom hopefully heralding a mass of flowers to come.

The forsythia is in bloom and that is where most of my bird feeders are. I have three different locations for them. I say "most" as, so far, since Christmas, I have lost three feeders, not just the food but the whole feeder. Two of them were even cable-tied to the tree! I'm suspecting the squirrel but it could be something much smaller.

Last year, a little mouse trapped himself inside one of them. He'd eaten so much he couldn't get out again. I think I'll have to move the wildlife camera so that I can set up a garden watch to see if I can catch the culprit in the act.

The feeders are very busy now after a slow start this year. Ginny the dog is very good. She will tolerate all the birds as long as they aren't any bigger than a blackbird.



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



Anything bigger is shouted at, along with cats and squirrels, of course, although, strangely, she doesn't always shout at the fox. The fox comes right down to the house for a drink from the bird bath and then continues up and down the gardens along the road.

All of these little signs of Spring (and I'm sure you will have your own favourites) are also little signs of hope. Hope that the days will get longer, brighter and warmer, hope that life goes on in all its awe and wonder.

There is always hope

It is so fitting that Easter falls in Spring. The message of hope and love and peace comes to us just as the natural world is awakening with hope too. Because there is always hope, even if sometimes we have to keep looking to find it. Even if sometimes we find it in unexpected places.



THE HUNGRY GARDENER

Say "No" to peat compost



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

I wonder if you've been fermenting any vegetables? (*Parish Magazine, March 2022*) We've really enjoyed the results of the fermented Jerusalem artichoke. The next edibles I'm going to ferment are rhubarb and wild garlic.

This month is Peat Free April. I am really pleased to see it has a fixed month in the calendar. Back in 2010, as a Master Gardener, I volunteered for Garden Organic and promoted the "For Peats Sake" campaign at national events. Why did I stop using peat based composts? I didn't want my gardening to impact natural peat land so I switched to peat free and have been peat free ever since. Peatlands hold twice as much carbon as the world's forests, and it just makes sense to leave it where it is.

Just 3% of the earth's land is taken up by peatlands, which provide a wetland habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Every time they are dug, it releases CO² into our atmosphere. This is contrary to the climate goals we are all trying to achieve for the sake of

our planet and our children. If you would like to learn more about the Peat Free April Campaign, to discover how amazing peatlands are, visit peatfree.org.uk. The people and organisations supporting the campaign are amazing.

At the start of my peat-free journey, I invested in my first composting system, a wormery. I was living in a flat with a small patio back garden in South London and a wormery is so compact it seemed the ideal solution. I still have it now and we've branched out to a few other different composting methods: a three-bay composter (built by my husband) and a bokashi bin. I love all three composting solutions; however, I have yet to learn how to make my own seed compost so I buy a bag each year. The gardening system I use, and with which I have excellent results, "no dig". I top dress all of my soil with a good inch-thick layer of the homemade compost from a combination of the three composting systems we use.

The wormery doesn't take up much space. Worms eat the waste and convert it into worm castings, basically worm poo. This is excellent for soil and exceedingly rich; too rich for young seedlings. You can put vegetation and raw fruit and vegetable waste into the worm bin. Just be mindful of the acidity level or the worms will leave. We avoid putting in garlic, onions, leeks and chillis. They go in the three-bay composter instead. Worms love brown paper and turn this into worm castings very quickly!

The three-bay composter takes most of our food waste except cooked food, bread and meat. It can also cope with larger garden waste such as grass clippings, plants that have gone to seed or finished producing, bracken, leaves from pruned trees, and so on. Twigs will take a long time to break down as will leaves from shrubs and trees. Our chicken waste goes into this composter.

The bokashi bin is a new and exciting composting system that we've recently invested in. You can put all your food waste into this bin: meat, cooked food, bread. The bin needs to sit in your house as its temperature has to be around 18 degrees centigrade to function. The food is broken down by bokashi grains which ferment the food items. You start the bin by adding a layer of bokashi grains, then add a layer of food, pushing the food down with a plate or something flat to expel all the air.

Then you add another layer of bokashi grains. Continue this alternation of food and bokashi grains until the bin is full. When it is full, we let it sit for 14 days and then we bury it in the three-bay composter with a big layer of that week's used chicken bedding on top. We leave it buried for 14 days and then it will be fine to use in the garden. If you don't have a composting system you could bury it in the garden and wait 14 days before planting anything on top. The reason for this is that it's a bit acidic when it first comes out of the bin due to the fermentation process. We are very new to this system, however when I've turned the compost after 14 days it has completely broken down. We invested in two bokashi bins so that we can always have one to fill in the kitchen. Since we've started using this method, we've got rid of our kitchen bin altogether as we have very little waste for landfill.

So, with all our composting systems and a bag of bought compost, and the fact that we have chicken manure mixed in, we don't need to use anything else to help our plants grow, not even organic fertiliser. We are really pleased with our yields and have never looked back. It is really easy to say 'NO to peat!'

Introducing The Living Stones Project

As most of our readers will know, Kings Norton parish owns a complex of three medieval buildings: Saint Nicolas' Church, Saint Nicolas' Place and the Old Grammar School. They bring a constant host of challenges, from regular maintenance to storm damage, major repairs to minor changes. Nothing is ever straightforward and everything is costly. The amount of specialist work required and the costs involved can make your eyes water. It can sometimes be hard to see these buildings as assets rather than liabilities!

The recently-announced **Living Stones Project** aims to change this, to reinstate our buildings as loved and cherished features of our local community. If it is to be successful, and if we are to safeguard the future of these unique architectural treasures, we need to manage them in a new way. The parish has therefore set itself the ambitious goal of becoming a centre of excellence for the training and

development of heritage skills. This means that each project will be looked at as an opportunity for training rather than repair, and that we will be working with specialists such as carpenters, stone masons and stained glass window restorers, to name but a few. We also hope that, in the process, we will at last be able to bring about some of the developments we have long talked about at St Nicolas' Church, like kitchens and toilets.

We have a long list of tasks, starting with urgent repairs to our spire. If you've been in the centre of Kings Norton recently, you may

already have noticed the return of the steeplejacks, who have been surveying the damage. We are optimistic that the cockerel weather vane will reappear in its rightful place very soon. The stained-glass window in the chancel featuring Jesus and Nicodemus, smashed during a burglary in October 2021, will also be repaired, as will the damage to the roof of the nave caused by Storm Eunice. Among the next priorities will be a new community garden project; restoring the tower so that we can ring the bells again; and repairing the damage to the exterior lime mortar panels of the Old Grammar School. We will need to be patient. No project of this kind can be completed overnight. The process will be long but, hopefully, exciting.

This will be a huge undertaking whose goal is to see all three buildings repaired, maintained, restored and developed, thus securing their future for the next hundred years and meeting the ever-changing needs of local people. It will require us to share our heritage and to tell our stories. We hope that everyone will join in and be part of that.

The other major area in which we would like to see as many local people as possible getting involved is fundraising. Every penny will count. We will be applying for grants but will need to match those grants with our own funding. In the coming months, some of our previously popular fundraising events will return such as Coffee & Cake and Flicks at St Nick's, but what else could we do? What could you do?

We plan to update you regularly on how the project is progressing and there will be lots of requests for your help too.

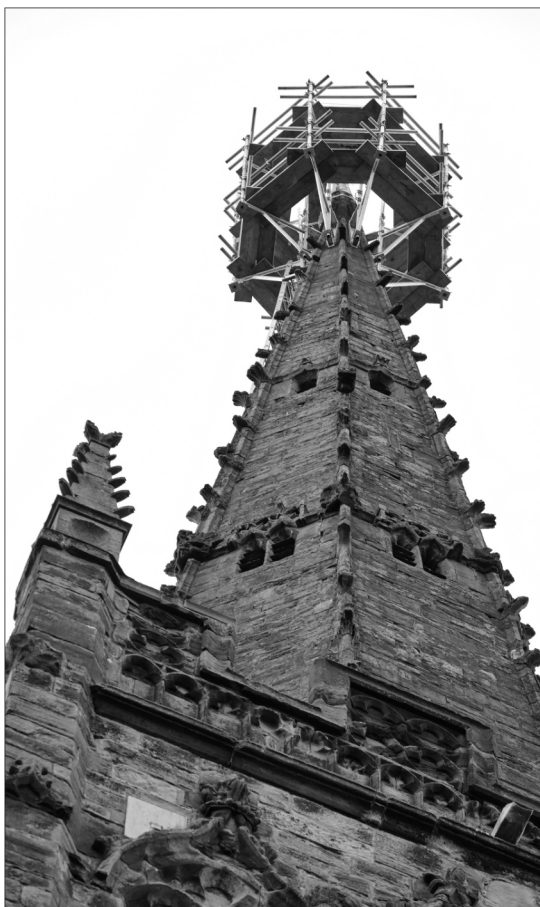


PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

A Spring Resolution



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

On New Year's Eve we often feel moved to make New Year resolutions. After the delights and excesses of Christmas and with the next year approaching we are filled with enthusiasm to take on new habits and promises that we hope will make us better in the coming twelve months. The reality is that, within a week at most, those resolutions will have been broken or cast aside and this leaves us with a feeling of failure. We shouldn't be so hard on ourselves at a time when the weather is cold and miserable, people succumb to various winter ailments and the thought of walking more or running each day doesn't seem so attractive. Personally, I rely on the comfort foods, winter puddings and chocolate, to help me cope with the first 2-3 months of the year.

When we move into Lent we become more thoughtful and willing to share experiences with Jesus by denying ourselves something meaningful in our lives. It is also a time to reflect and consider where we are going in our daily life. Easter focuses our minds on hope for the future; and this brings me to the Spring resolution.

Why not consider what we can do to make life better for others and, ultimately, for ourselves? It will be much easier to stick to our promises when the weather is warmer, the flowers are blooming and we have had a chance to reflect during Lent about what is important in life. It will be much

easier than to eat more healthily and to take regular exercise; but what else can we commit to?

At St Nicolas' Church, there are many jobs to do, some regular but some ad hoc tasks. There has recently been a request for help with refreshments after the morning service. There are groups who springclean the church or who help to tidy the churchyard and clear away leaves. Steve Wright has asked for help with the care of the war graves; but we can also be creative in other ways.

How about a book exchange in a corner of the church with a box for a small donation for those who can afford it? Why not bring a few small posies of flowers from the garden that are available for people to take away after the service? Why not write to that friend whom you haven't

seen for a long time or just send a card to say "I'm thinking about you and praying for you".

Maybe I can ask again if anyone would be interested in a book group? I'm sorry it didn't get going last year, but we could try again. You could ask friends and neighbours to save their stamps to boost our donation to Christian Aid each May. This is a very simple and easy way to make a contribution. I collect them from the Church throughout the year not just at Christmas. Or how about a photo display for each season of the year which could be flowers, animals, buildings or spectacular views from walks or holidays?

As we move towards Easter, reflect on your progress through Lent and then look forward to that Spring Resolution.

▼ COULD YOU
HELP US TO
CARE FOR
OUR WAR
GRAVES?



That Eternal Eastertide

Hot off the press, the Parish Magazine for April anticipates Easter Sunday, which is on 17th April this year. Have you ever wondered why this is a moveable feast, and why it moves around within a five-week period?



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

The dating of Easter is based on a complex algorithm and celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon. Scientists argue that this is a false construct and refer to it as the artificial full moon but let's not get into that right now. The first full moon is on or after the 21st March, known as the Spring, or vernal, equinox. Everywhere in the world on 21st March, the length of day equals the length of night. The Spring equinox is the first time in the year when the sun is directly over the Equator. This year, the first full moon is on Saturday 16th April. For Christians, it is the Paschal full moon.

The dating of Easter became fixed by the First Council of Nicaea following the ecclesiastical vernal equinox, that is, the vernal equinox decreed by the bishops. The last possible date for Easter Sunday is 25th April. Originally, the Pope would announce the date of Easter annually to the entire Christian church. This became unworkable as the Roman Empire began to fall. Clergy wanted and needed to work it out locally. The algorithm is further complicated by being linked scripturally to the Jewish feast of the Passover, the time of the Jewish feast when Jesus was crucified. The dating of Easter does not always coincide with Passover, however, due to the fact that Jews use the Hebrew lunar calendar, in which the lengths of the months are based on the phases of the moon.

The dates are often different in the Eastern Orthodox churches since they still use the Julian calendar, while the Catholic and Reformed churches moved to the modified version, the Gregorian calendar, which was introduced in 1582. You can download an app of the algorithms needed to work this out for years to come. Then again, as I have had to read this through a number of times to make sure it makes

sense, I might just continue to check the date of Easter in the calendar each year.

What we do know is that Easter is not all chocolate eggs, fluffy chicks and cute bunnies. As I write, we are still in Lent. I was struck afresh last Sunday by the poignant Lenten hymn "Forty days and forty nights". Forty days and forty nights in Biblical terms just meant a long time, longer than three days. The Bible, starting with the number of days which Moses spent in the wilderness, relates a number of key events measured in terms of forty.

The hymn "Forty days and forty nights" was written by an Anglican clergyman, George Hunt Smytten, and was first published as "Poetry for Lent" in 1856 in the Penny Post. It is usually sung to the tune Heinlein, which is attributed to the composer Martin Herbst. It was written in 1654 as part of a setting for Psalm 130, "Out of the depths I cry" in a text by Christopher Schwarmlein. Its haunting, mournful music, combining so beautifully with lyrics based on the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, demands a heartfelt response. In particular, the last two verses are particularly striking:

*So shall we have peace divine;
Holier gladness ours shall be;
Round us too shall angels shine,
Such as ministered to Thee.
Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,
Ever constant by Thy side;
That with Thee we may appear
At the eternal Eastertide.*

These words are an essential reminder, as life changes yet again, and explodes in confusion and near despair all around us, that the brutality of Good Friday will be resurrected in the joy of Easter Day, and that, one day, we will be together in the eternal Eastertide.

Isaac Watts, born in 1674, understood this when he wrote that finest of all hymns, certainly of the Passiontide hymns, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross". Born in 1674 in

Southampton, Watts became a non-conformist, Congregational minister at a time when this was punishable by imprisonment. Indeed, his father had been in prison twice for his dissenting views. Watts was not allowed to attend Oxford or Cambridge Universities because of his non-conformity. As a consequence, he studied at the Dissenting Academy at Stoke Newington, then a village north-east of London. After serving as the pastor of Mark Lane Congregational Chapel, where his health deteriorated, he was adopted into a wealthy nonconformist family, the Hartropes, and lived with them until his death thirty-six years later. This gave him time, space and the means to study and write, especially educational books and 750 hymns.

He is recognised for his influence on changes in English hymn writing, for introducing modern Christian poetry into the tradition of using only Biblical poetry, especially the Psalms, which he often reworded to be more Christian. "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" does make some reference to Biblical texts. Verse two begins "Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ, my God". That's a direct reference to Galatians ch.6 v.14. He puts into verse the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus on the cross and his words echo down the centuries in the suffering of our Lord, and of the world.

*"See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"*

The last verse is one of the triumph of Easter Day, the love of Jesus for humankind, and our necessary response to it:

*"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all."*

As we approach Easter 2022, life within sight of the holy, our hearts are yet again in turmoil. The horrors which are unfolding in Ukraine leave us feeling helpless in our anger. What do we do? Just "Keep calm and carry on?" No. Love so amazing, so divine, demands our all. We can offer our support practically with donations or by welcoming the strangers in our midst, as the Bible commands us to do.

We rejoice to see many received in Poland and other surrounding countries, from the sheer horror into safety, if not into home and comfort. Yet our joy is coupled with a kind of incomprehensible desolation that people of colour are being refused at the borders. We are all made in the image of God and should be treated with equal dignity, support, opportunity and protection. These demonstrations of racism undermine profoundly the rescue efforts of this tragic and unlawful invasion.

We know we can all pray, pray, pray. We know that matters shift in the heavenly realms when people pray. Scripture reminds us that God sees and cares about oppressed people and will one day call evildoers to account.



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I draw to a close with a **Christian Aid prayer for Ukraine** by David Thomas, and the prayer of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York:

Lord of all people and all nations, we lift before you the people of Ukraine and the people of Russia, each girl and boy each woman and man living in fear of what tomorrow may bring. We long for a time you spoke of through your prophet Isaiah, when weapons of war would be beaten into ploughshares, when nations will no longer lift up sword against nation. We cry out to you for peace.

Protect those who only desire and deserve to live in security and safety, comfort those who fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones, change the hearts of those set on violence and aggression, fill earthly leaders with great wisdom to find paths to peace. Please, Lord, come and have your way in your world.

May your will be done here, on earth as in heaven. May your peace reign, now and always. We lift this prayer to you, our God, who are able to do more than we can ever ask or imagine, in the name of Christ our Saviour.

The prayer of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of Ukraine today. We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons. We pray for all those who fear tomorrow, that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them. We pray for those with power over war or peace, for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions. Above all we pray for your precious children, at risk and in fear, that you would hold and protect them. We pray this in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Logistics

When I was at sea, I had to calculate and order supplies of food and bonded goods, often a long time in advance. The ships I worked on had to lay in sufficient stores for voyages which lasted many weeks.

I first acquired an interest in logistics on the SS *Canberra*, the P&O passenger liner on which I worked for two years as the Assistant to the Head Barman. It was not unusual to have to place orders for, say, 400 assorted bottles of wine or 2,000 cases of beer, thousands of cigarettes and cigars or large quantities of tobacco.

Later in my career, after a period spent as a Petty Officer and Cook, I became a Purser (Chief Steward) on P&O cargo ships. I enjoyed this immensely as we visited many ports around the world.

At the demise of P&O cargo division, I went back to container ships, this time as a Catering Officer. It was a much easier life but I missed the worldwide experience which life on tramp steamers had offered. A ship is a ship, though, and the logistical challenges were the same. I was still responsible for victualling vessels for long voyages and for advance planning.



Eddie reflects on the importance of planning ahead

As we have seen recently in the news coming out of Ukraine, logistics are important in wartime too. I remember learning about Napoleon's invasion of Russia in the second half of 1812. On June 24th, the Grande Armée, led by Bonaparte himself, crossed into Russia from Poland. The result was a disaster for the



French, as the Russians refused to engage with them and simply withdrew into the Russian interior. Napoleon suffered a crushing defeat because the French did not have the supply lines or the distribution networks needed for such a long march. The bitter winter and shortages of food and munitions all contributed to their downfall. They lost 300,000 men.

I seem to remember that the Nazis encountered similar problems during *Operation Barbarossa*, when they invaded Russia in June 1941 with three and a half million troops. Eventually, probably because of poor strategic planning and the assumption that the campaign would be a short one, the German advance was

stalled by a combination of the vast distances, Soviet troop numbers and, yes, logistical difficulties. It pays to plan ahead.

As I write this, in early March, the brave people of the Ukraine have greatly slowed the Russian advance partly by cutting off supply routes and causing logistical problems for the Russian army. As always in wartime, keeping tens of thousands of troops supplied is no easy matter.

That said, I am sure you will share my hope that, by the time you read this, our prayers for an improvement in the situation and an end to this terrible war, in which so many civilians are being killed, will have been answered.

↑ “The Retreat of the French in 1812” by Illarion Prianichnikov (1874)



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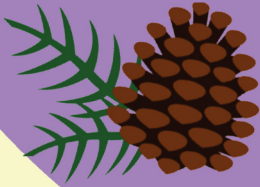
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