

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

Science & Society

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in science?

The School Run

Cutting car use will take much more
than educating children and parents

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motor industry pioneer and founder of
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Welcome

EDITORIAL

Resolutions are traditionally made in early January; but summertime, with its changes of routine and, for some, the more relaxed pace of life which they bring, can also provide an opportunity to take stock. On page 26, Pauline Weaver lists "staycation" as one of the new words which have found their way into the language. If you were lucky enough to have a few days away from home this summer, did your holiday give you a chance to stand back from the pressures of life and to reflect on things that you would like to change, habits you would like to break or form? Did you make any New Academic Year Resolutions?

Our contributors this month have some ideas for you if you're struggling to come up with your own. They include: drive less, walk or cycle more, especially on the school run (p.8); treat the Earth gently and learn from the species with which we share it (p.20); seek out conversation and companionship (p.26); eat more fruit & vegetables (p.32); spend time immersed in nature, finding joy in God's Creation (p.34); and join others in raising your voice in defence of the irreplaceable, for the sake of all our futures (p.40).

On page 25, you will see that we have at last reached the point where your parish church can return to a more familiar pattern of weekly worship, including some innovations. There are two services to choose from each Sunday morning, evening services are back, children's activities are clearly signposted and we are even retaining the monthly outdoor worship which the pandemic taught us to value, come rain or shine!

We need each other. Do join us, and keep an eye on the website as plans evolve.

*David Ash*

Science and Society

Larry considers where our faith in science has led us, for good or ill. Can it provide all the answers?

Scientists seem to be everywhere in the media. During the past 17 months some have become recognisable public figures. In addition to the “official” scientific spokespersons, other scientists have commented, questioned and opined about aspects of the pandemic, often offering contradictory views. One of the consequences of this pandemic is a greater awareness of how scientific advice and expertise informs governmental and societal responses to this global threat to humanity. It’s been fascinating to witness the variety of views expressed by scientists and scientific advisors as the pandemic has unfolded and the race between infection and inoculation has progressed.

Science has been defined as the intellectual and practical

activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment. Science, then, is a function of the brain which attempts, through study and experiment, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the world. Some would say that science is also a means of trying to control the world we live in. To redefine it, to overcome it and even to replace nature with scientific alternatives. Such ambitious claims for science have been a particular feature of the past one hundred years or so as expertise and technology brought rapid improvements in healthcare, agriculture, industry and just about everything else which has an impact upon our daily lives.

Some of the greatest benefits for humankind were the result of the experiments which improved our basic understanding of hygiene and health in the 18th and 19th centuries. How sad that one of the leading scientists in that era, who believed passionately that doctors and midwives needed to wash their hands and all instruments used to assist at a birth, was ridiculed and stigmatised. How many preventable deaths of babies occurred while the scientists argued amongst themselves? Germs and bacteria were, it



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



PHOTO BY HANS RENIERS

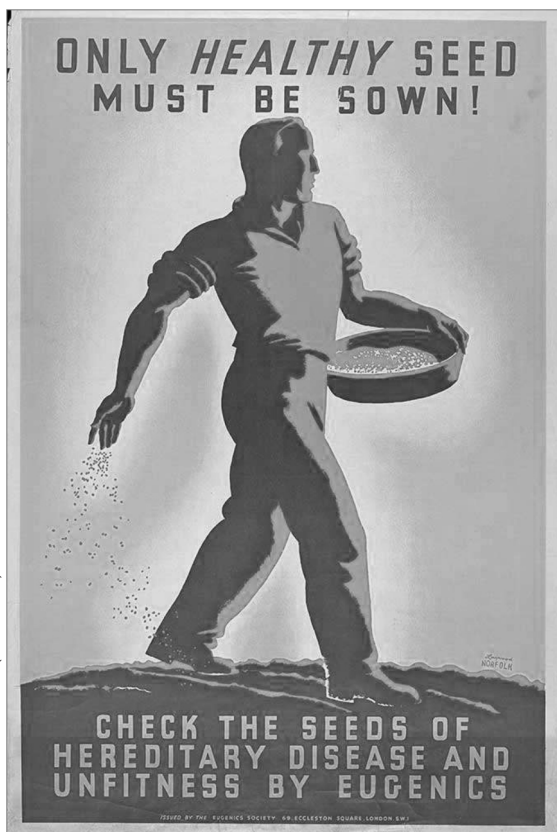
seems, not only invisible to the human eye but a blind spot in the scientific imagination.

The current ascendancy of science as a means of providing answers to all human problems probably originates in the 1950s and 60s. This was a golden era for science at the service of humanity. Space travel began, reliable and cheap contraception made family life more manageable, the mass production of medicines and machines transformed lives forever. The petro-chemical industry gave us such benefits as cheap petrol, cheap plastic and even cheaper lifestyles. Processed food, with chemical

↑ Some see science as a means of trying to control the world in which we live

additives, allowed us to store food for longer while remaining fresh. We could fill our homes with chemical cleaners, deodorants and chemical air fresheners galore to keep those nasty invisible bugs at bay.

We must note, however, that the scientific experimentation of the 50s and 60s also gave us the nuclear bomb and began to destroy the natural world through mass pollution, in response to which the early advocates of the environmental movement came to prominence. It was also the era of fierce debate among scientists and medics about the value to our health of smoking. The pro-smoking



scientists pointed to the relaxing, tranquilizing effects of tobacco even claiming it assisted those with bronchial problems. The anti-smoking scientists pointed out the increasing levels of cancer amongst smokers and related cardio-vascular problems. The debate was to rage for another 60 years. While this particular scientific debate rumbled on, laboratories around the world were forcing monkeys and dogs to smoke 60 or more cigarettes a day to provide data for this particular debate.

↑ This poster from the 1930s promotes the idea of “positive” eugenics through the figure of the “healthy” sower.

Science has not always served humankind or nature well.

There are scientific theories which captured the popular imagination in their time but were subsequently discredited. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, phrenology, the science of assessing a person’s intelligence and capabilities by the shape of their skull, was widely practised but subsequently debunked. As late as 1936, there was an International Gathering on Eugenics, which espoused the science of eugenics as a means of controlling procreation so that only ‘desirable and healthy’ babies would be born. The movement promoted the sterilization of the “weak of mind, deviants, criminals and other undesirables.” Eugenics underpinned Nazi racial purity laws, which resulted in the horrors of the Holocaust. There is a warning here for society. Science without a guiding morality can be misused and abused for immoral ends by the powerful, elites and governments.

In our own times there are ethical questions being asked of a number of scientific developments. Think of GM crops, genetic manipulation of animals and human beings for example, and the effects of global warming. Do the scientific ends always justify

the scientific means? What might people say about some of our scientific theories and practices in a hundred years' time?

People of faith have been at the forefront of scientific progress for centuries. The rather tired and ill-informed narrative that science and religion are opposed to each other is now challenged by scientists who are people of faith and scientists without a faith who are humble enough to concede that science can't provide an answer to everything in nature and the universe.

One of the leading Anglican scientists who wrote extensively about the positive ways in which religion and science may learn from each other, the Reverend Dr John Polkinghorne, died recently aged 90. He wrote, "If we are seeking to serve the God of

→The Revd Dr John Polkinghorne KBE FRS (1930-2021), theoretical physicist, theologian and Anglican priest.



truth then we should really welcome truth from whatever source it comes. We shouldn't fear the truth. Some of it will be from science, obviously, but by no means all of it. It will sometimes be perplexing, how this bit of truth relates to that bit of truth; we know that within science itself often enough and we find it outside of science as well. The crucial thing is to be honest."



The School Run

Cutting car use will take much more than educating children and their parents



Dr Rob Noonan is a Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Liverpool. He specialises in childhood health

As the summer holidays come to an end and children return to school following lockdown, there couldn't be a better time for us to consider the school commute. Nowadays, many children in the UK commute to school by car. But getting more parents to ditch the car for school journeys and switch to more active modes of travel, such as walking or cycling, is of great public health importance.

Using a car to ferry kids to school has a large impact on the environment and society. If more parents ditched the car for school journeys, air quality would be greatly improved. Following the introduction of lockdown travel restrictions, air quality in the UK improved substantially – in mere weeks – showing what can be achieved when fewer cars are on our roads. Air pollution has the greatest effect on children, as their lungs are

still developing and they breathe more rapidly and closer to the ground than adults.

Then there's the noise pollution and the pedestrian injuries that serve as a "barrier", discouraging families and children from walking to school. Roughly 1,000 children are injured on school roads every week. Poor children are the most likely to be injured on school roads because they're the ones most likely to be walking to school.

Why are so many children driven to school?

In the UK, almost 80% of households own one car and almost 40% own two. As car ownership has increased, the public and private investments complementing it have too, which has enhanced road capacity, made car travel easier and car

ownership more valuable and essential to private and public life. Roads have widened and are reserved for cars, not pedestrians, car parking is abundant, and people's everyday schedules require them to travel to places further and further afield.

It's not just towns and cities. Neighbourhoods are also designed and built on the assumption of universal car access. This assumption and, indeed, social norms make car ownership in many ways a precondition for social inclusion.

The rise in car ownership has led to more traffic on our roads and fewer children walking to school. What we have now is a social trap.

Influenced by the many cars on the school-to-home route, parents opt to drive their children to school as a form of protection from the other cars. The clogged traffic and parked cars on narrow pavements only add to these parents' safety fears.

Increased road traffic has driven children indoors and turned the streets empty. In her book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs wrote about how: "Eyes on the street, keep streets safe." In lots of communities in the UK, there are few eyes on the street. This only compounds parents' fears over children's safety. Streets once belonged to the people living in them. Now they belong to the car.

22/9 World Car Free Day

▼WHAT
WOULD IT
TAKE TO
PERSUADE
YOU OR YOUR
FRIENDS TO
DITCH THE
CAR FOR
SCHOOL
JOURNEYS?



PHOTO BY PAVEL DANILYUK

As cities have expanded under suburban sprawl, commuting distances to school have increased. They are longer now than they have ever been before. This is another reason more children travel to school by car now than they used to. Less than half of all children in England attend their most local school.

An education policy that lets parents choose their child's school compounds the issue of suburban sprawl. Those parents that are able to exercise choice do so, and in some cases travel great distances so that their child attends the best-performing school. Once school choice has been decided, so too has children's mode of travel to school. Longer school commutes equals more car travel.

If distance alone determined how children travelled to school, then you would think the calculus would be different for cycling. Most trips to school for primary school children are under two miles. They are slightly longer for secondary school children, but even a casual riding pace covers three miles in 15 to 20 minutes. The prospect of cycling to school, though, is unthinkable for most children. It's simply too dangerous.

More children cycle to school in Copenhagen, Denmark, than they do in UK cities, not because they have the "cycling gene" but because cycling is prioritised over cars, enabling children to get from A to B more easily and quicker than the car.

In Copenhagen, where cycling is prioritised, cyclists have separate lanes from cars and separate traffic lights, which turn green ahead of those for cars, allowing them to move off first. Cycling in Copenhagen is enjoyable and safe for children. It's not in UK cities.

Is there a better way?

Cyclists rule in Dutch cities such as Amsterdam (right), but their elaborate network of safe and comfortable cycle paths and lanes haven't always existed. Walking and cycling were once dangerous pastimes in Dutch cities, and many children were injured as a result of taking to the streets. The Stop de Kindermoord (stop the child murder) campaign is a great example of how fierce activism can enact change in transport policy. The Netherlands now boasts over 20,000 miles of cycle paths, and more than 25% of trips are made by bike, (rising to 60% in some cities), compared with 2% in the UK.

We need to start by slowing motor vehicle traffic on our roads. Local councils have powers to lower speed limits in residential areas to 20mph. And we know these policy measures reduce pedestrian casualties, especially among children. Children will be more inclined to walk and cycle to school when they have the reassurance they're not going to be injured on the way.

We need to claw back our street space. Nowadays, most neighbourhoods are designed for



cars, not pedestrians or cyclists. We need a more balanced distribution of road space with cars, with wider pavements and more cycle paths. Cities that build protected and separate lanes for cyclists end up with more cyclists, and safer roads for people on bikes, in cars and on foot.

We know that commute distance determines whether children travel to school by car, on foot or bike. So

we also need to make our communities more localised so that all children have access to essential amenities, including a local school. Any behaviour-change programme to reduce car use for school journeys will be limited in the long term when there's no requirement for children to attend their local primary school.

Providing children with road safety education is often seen as the magic bullet for *(continued on page 15)*

Adam introduces a Mexican giant

In July, I mentioned I had sown seed of that bee attractor *Echium* "Blue Bedder" The seedlings were a bit slow growing at first but then galloped away and were planted in a group in a largish pot. They are still flowering and their pale blue-pink flowers attract bumble bees all day long.

Good gardeners keep their eyes open and I have noticed that a rather overgrown Hebe has been humming with bees and, with butterflies, hoverflies and moths, must have

done wonders for the local insect population.

On reflection, I think planting pollinators in groups must be the way forward as the bees only need one whiff of the nectar to locate a concentrated source of energy and will not need to waste time locating isolated plants. There will be a big clump of *Echiums* planted next year. I have had great success with a large clump of English Lavender, not forgetting to trim back twice a year

Incidentally, I have noticed that Cabbage Whites spend the early part of the morning seeking energy from the Hebes and later flitter away to lay their eggs on my nasturtiums and on my neighbour's cabbages! Heigh ho!

In last month's article, I promised to suggest some more weeping trees and I only have space for one suggestion, particularly for



IMPERIAL DAHLIA, PINK FLASH

the small garden. All the way from Scotland I present the Kilmarnock Willow. About one metre tall, in early Spring this wee beauty bears fluffy silver catkins that turn bright yellow with pollen and are much appreciated by bees emerging from hibernation. The tree will not grow much taller but will thicken out considerably as the years go by.

Our **tree of the month** is for the adventurous and actually I must confess that it is not really a tree at all; but this plant will grow up to ten metres tall with "trunks" like a bamboo, all in one year. This Dahlia, for such it is, will bear semi-double flowers of pink or white and, as it hails from Mexico, will appreciate a sunny situation. If the tubers are planted fairly deep then a good mulch of 15 centimeters of leaves will help to get it through any winter frost ready for the emergence of growth in late spring. Stand well back and listen for the noise of growth!

The Dahlia *imperialis* has been known for a long time and the improved form "Pink Flash" illustrated opposite is quite a small



MCKANA HYBRID AQUILEGIA

specimen. There is also a white variety. Tubers of either can be had from Gardening Express at £6.66 each. A quick scan of Ebay will reveal packets of 15 seeds for £3. I am going to have a go at this one next year.

The Aquilegia is our splendid **flower of the month**. With its bicoloured, elegant flowers borne in early summer on fine stems which never seem to flop about, they well deserve our accolade of approval. The Columbines have been much hybridised but they seem to fall into three groups: the elegant singles with long spurs; the Nora Barlow strain, double and with no spurs; and lastly the species which can be tiny and can be grown in your alpine house (if you have one). The



NORA BARLOW SERIES AQUILEGIA

RHS lists 617 varieties so I suppose you could build up quite a collection.

Do not panic if your seedlings appear a bit feeble and grow slowly as this is normal. Patience will have its reward as they are actually quite tough with good root systems. Plants can show a lot of variation in colour and form and the better strains will show more uniformity. Named varieties can be bought from specialist suppliers but, of course, they will be more costly. There is more than one national collection. You can

get some interesting information from touchwoodplants.co.uk/aquilegias, where you can buy plants and seeds. As always, there are other suppliers.

Just a few tips. Seed sown in August will give bigger plants for the following year. Aquilegias are happiest in some shade and the bumblebees love them.

I am writing this article sat outside on my newly painted garden seat, surrounded by Surfinia petunias and with the faint drone of aeroplanes in the air as they head in to Birmingham Airport. Travel is becoming a bit easier in these troubled times and I hope you will be able to take advantage of this for a well-earned break.

Bye for now.



(continued from page 11)
changing school travel behaviour and improving children's safety when they're walking and cycling. Great effort and expense go into teaching children road safety and cycling skills, through schemes such as the Bikeability programme.

The reality is that these programmes don't ensure children have somewhere to walk and ride safely. Nor do they significantly reduce child pedestrian injuries and deaths. It's the environment we need to change. Not just for the children who already walk or cycle to school, but for the many children who are put off walking or cycling to school because of safety concerns.

In the UK government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, it's stated that environmental changes are needed to support walkers and cyclists if we're to reduce car dependency on our roads. Little, though, is being done to see this through. Transport planning and the allocation of government funding continue to marginalise walking, cycling and children's mobility. Because of this, walking and cycling to school remain far from the mainstream transport planning agenda.

The UK government, for example, spent £95m in 2016-17 on walking and cycling (£2.07 per person) annually outside London and plans to spend only £33m in 2020-21 (72p per person). Over the same five-year period, funds for the Roads Investment Strategy are set to rise from £1.83 billion to £3.86 billion. In contrast, other European countries, such as Denmark, spend almost £20 per head each year on cycling projects, the vast majority going on improving infrastructure.

Tackling the real causes of car dependency on the school commute would benefit children, society and the environment. It would solve several public health challenges.

If all children attended their local school, fewer children would travel by car, and because of this, fewer children would be injured on the roads. There would be less noise pollution and less air pollution, which would reduce children's risk of developing respiratory conditions. We would see more people speaking to each other on our streets because of the increase in footfall, and there would be an improved sense of safety because there would be more "eyes on the street".

If ditching the car for school journeys means more activity for children, safer and healthier environments and stronger communities, then there is little to lose and much to gain. Car traffic on the school commute blights our communities in the way open drains blighted Victorian towns.

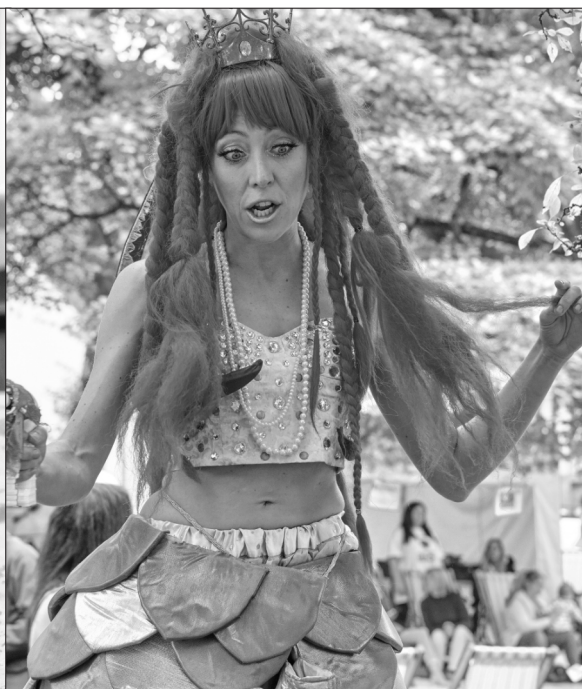
Getting cars off our streets could be the next big public health advance. We need to decide who our streets are for: cars, or walkers and cyclists?

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PHOTOS BY DAVID ASH

Kings Norton





Beach 2021



B30 Foodbank News



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

After a hectic first few months in lockdown, with new models of working required overnight, we have settled into a good pattern now. Work bubbles are on duty on each shift at the warehouse and there is a growing team of volunteers at Cotteridge Friends' Meeting House, where our clients come to collect their parcels.

We have worked alongside some support workers quite closely and have also begun a good partnership with FoodCycle. This NGO works to use surplus food, often from supermarkets, by creating meals for those who need either the food, the companionship at the table, or both. In recent months they have been using take-away or delivery models, but are now returning to shared meal tables. It is a national NGO, but we have several centres locally, including Hampstead House at West Heath and Longbridge Methodist Church. The Birmingham FoodCycle is now working with Fred Rattley from Church of England Birmingham to think of other centres where their model would work well, including possibly St Gabriel's Weoley Castle. Their goal is to bring together food, kitchen & dining space, volunteers and diners for food and companionship, building bridges between different social groups.

We frequently receive donations of cooking ingredients and currently have no way to get them to appropriate clients, so making the link with FoodCycle has been excellent for both us and them. All our donations are given with the best of intentions, but sometimes there is little practical connection between donor and potential recipient. Most of our clients walk or come by bus. Their three-day parcel comes in four bags, to spread the weight. To add catering or large-family sized bags of rice or pasta to this would be very impractical. We cannot split them into smaller quantities as we do not have the correct levels of hygiene in our warehouse for that level of food handling, so donating them to someone else who can make meals is a win-win situation for us all. It also means that less conventional donations can find a good home, such

as the catering containers of tea bags and coffee which came from West Midlands Ambulance Service Training Department.

Other good relationships that have developed over the latter part of lockdown include our partnership with the Cotteridge Quakers. They have been welcoming hosts, accommodating even our more bizarre needs and questions. Distribution at the Meeting House on Watford Road has gone very smoothly thanks to this.

We are just beginning to develop a relationship with Acorns Hospice Shops too. Shopping patterns have changed a lot, particularly in the last year. Many more people now shop online and most online grocery deliveries now come bag free. Our supply of pre-used carrier bags has therefore shrunk; but then we discovered another possible source. A donor responded to our request for “bags for life” (they are on our urgent list) through her voluntary work as a retail assistant in an Acorns shop. Like many charity shops, Acorns put customers' purchases into a branded carrier bag or one supplied by the customer. The bag in which the donation arrives at the shop is discarded and the shop has to pay for its disposal. If we could use these carrier bags, Acorns and others would not have to waste money on disposal and we would have bags! The system is in its infancy, so we will see if it works for both of us.



PHOTO BY LUBA BILYK

Life Lessons from Beekeepers

Stop mowing the lawn, don't pave the driveway and get used to bugs in your salad

For many people, the past year has led to an increased appreciation for our fragile natural world. This is important because, alongside Covid, we are also facing a global climate and biodiversity crisis.

A recent report by IPBES (the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services) highlighted enormous pressures on land and marine ecosystems and concluded that more than a million plant and animal species are at risk of extinction. The authors call for fundamental changes to how we all live, to reverse these existential threats.



SIOBHAN MADERSON IS A POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW AT ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY

One recommendation from the report is that we should listen more to Indigenous people and local community knowledge, and learn from their relationship with the natural world as a way of solving environmental crises. This makes a lot of sense to me, because as my research and interviews with beekeepers has found, beekeeping changes how people see and relate to their environment.

Beekeepers talk of “seeing like a bee”. One beekeeper I spoke with noted that “part of the psyche of people who work with insects is that they are very observant, and passionate about their environment”. This passion leads many beekeepers to change parts of their lives to



better help bees and the wider environment.

Here are the main lessons I've learned from my time spent researching and working with beekeepers.

Go wild in the garden

Beekeepers recognise that an untidy garden is a wildlife haven and advise letting a little mess into our outdoor

spaces. Some beekeepers told me how they've stopped mowing their lawns altogether.

This approach is encouraged by scientists, along with the charity Buglife, which is developing a national network of B-lines, insect pathways through the UK's towns and countryside that are rich in wildflower forage and habitat. Beekeepers will also make

sure nutritious plants are available throughout the year, including Snowdrops, Lavender and Asters, for their bees and other pollinators such as bumblebees, hoverflies and wasps. Ivy is also an important late-season forage source, so don't pull it down.

But be aware of "greenwashing". Plants may be advertised as good for bees when they have been treated with hazardous pesticides, so make sure you check how they've been grown. In my experience, UK beekeepers avoid using any chemicals in their gardens, as they are all too aware of the damage they cause. In many other countries, and in the EU, domestic and municipal use of garden chemicals has been banned.

Whatever you do, don't pave over your front garden or put down artificial turf. Both of these lead to less habitat for wildlife. If you must park your car on a hard surface at home, add in climbing plants and hedges to absorb CO2 and provide forage for insects.

Learn about your neighbourhood

Beekeepers often work in one area for years, sometimes even generations. These years of experience in one place show them what's growing,

and what's living in their area, and what has changed over time.

Strengthening our connection to, and our knowledge about, our local area has lots of advantages. It's good for our mental health and happiness and can help us know what's happening in our local environment, whether that's a garden, park, woodland, or beach.

Phenology (learning about the seasonal cycles of plants and animals) provides valuable information for scientists studying the effects of climate change. You don't need to keep bees to learn these things. Anyone can start collecting, and contributing information about local areas by recording sightings of flora and fauna you may see on your daily outings.

Pay attention

Beekeeping is often a starting point for deeper learning about the environment. Some beekeepers, for example, go on to learn about botany, which helps them know what to plant to provide food and habitat for their bees.

Unlike beekeepers, many of us aren't really aware of the differences between honeybees and other species of bees. Many bee species are solitary, and have smaller



PHOTO BY BLANCA AKERMANN

foraging ranges. Understanding the needs of different species can help make sure the environment is healthy for all pollinators, not just honeybees.

In some parts of the UK, particularly urban areas, there are now too many honeybees, and not enough forage for them, or the wider pollinator community. Some beekeepers are now decreasing the number of colonies they keep, to support all pollinators, by decreasing pressure on environmental resources.

Think global, act local

If we want to live in a world that is good for pollinators, as well as the rest of us, big changes are needed in our environment, and our food system. This is why many beekeepers change their diet and their shopping, eating more locally grown vegetables that aren't treated with pesticides.

Being willing to buy fruit and vegetables that may have the occasional insect living in it is better for us and for nature. To live more harmoniously with the natural world, we need to relax about larvae in the lettuce and slugs in the spinach.

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YOUR PARISH CHURCH

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

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

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Assistant Rector.....	The Revd Eliakim Ikechukwu
Parish Lay Minister	Pauline Weaver
Honorary Assistant Priest	The Revd Jayne Crooks
Methodist Minister.....	The Revd Nick Jones
Lay Readers	David Ash, Fay Fearon, Ruth Howman, Parisa Pordelkhaki
Lay Preacher	Steve Wright
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

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



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

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

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

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

4th Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion with Choir (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Outdoor Service in St Nicolas' Churchyard (Child-friendly)
6.00 pm	Compline (Night Prayer)

5th Sunday of the Month	
10.30 am	United Service

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

KTTEA (Keep Talking to Each Other)

Have you noticed how many new words and acronyms have entered our vocabulary? Did you know that the Oxford English Dictionary is updated four times a year with new words added and others removed?



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

Sometimes it can be hard to keep track, especially when words take on a new meaning. "Snowflake", for instance, no longer relates only to snow. There are words that just seem to be made up that enter our speech via the media and some that have appeared during the pandemic: 'pingdemic' or 'staycation' for instance. Others just seem to appear suddenly and you feel foolish not knowing what they mean when they are used in conversation, words like 'woke' and 'gaslighting'. Sometimes, I feel like I need a glossary of new words to help me keep up with the latest meanings. It can be so confusing. But it isn't really that new.

When I was little, I can remember my dad would talk to his sister in back slang, the language of the barrow boys; and this, mixed in with a smattering of cockney rhyming slang, would make following the conversation almost impossible to the untrained ear. I could never make head or tail of it! My mum would get cross with them too, especially when they used the ruder bits of rhyming slang. Words of back slang are still used without our realising it: 'yob', for example, is 'boy' backwards.

My dad and his sister would also play a game in which they wrote to each other, signing themselves off with an increasing number of abbreviations. It would start out with the fairly simple KTTT (Keep Taking The Tablets) and end up with more and more creative variations such as YLSABIL (Your Loving Sister And Brother In Law). The abbreviations could be as long as the letter as they tried to outdo each other. It was their



PHOTO BY ONO KOSUKI

equivalent of text speak: BFF, LOL and BTW.

I wonder what they would have made of texting. It has introduced all sorts of abbreviations and some very comical corrections from the dreaded autocorrect, not to mention just mistyping things when texting in a hurry, or without your glasses.

Then of course there are the non-native speakers among us who have the endless task of translating our linguistic peculiarities into something that they can understand. Shopping can be a real challenge when even basics like sugar and flour have different names.

Whatever words and abbreviations we use, the important thing is that we talk to each other. Since Covid took over our lives we have seen how vital it is to keep in touch.

It doesn't matter if you text, phone, write or video call, being able to talk to each other makes so much difference to our lives. We are social beings and we need that contact with other people. We now know, more than ever, how important these interactions are to our mental health. Isn't it wonderful now to be able to meet up with people and have real, face-to-face conversations?

▲ WHATEVER WORDS AND ABBREVIATIONS WE USE, THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO TALK TO EACH OTHER

Lord Austin

A vital influence on local life for 100 years

Herbert Austin, later Lord Austin, was Kings Norton's first MP but far more significantly, a motor industry pioneer who, if things had turned out differently, could still have been just as much a globally venerated figure as Henry Ford.

By some accounts, he was not keen to become an MP when the constituency was first established in 1918. If so, that was understandable, because by far his greater priority was to re-establish the Austin car marque, and the Longbridge factory that he had created in 1905, after his company had been turned over to the production of military supplies during World War I.

It was largely for the wartime achievements of his factory that Herbert Austin was knighted in 1917. It was probably the fact that his name carried national prestige that he was persuaded to be our first MP, but it was not the right time for him. In fact, over a parliamentary career of six years, he never made a speech in the House of Commons.

By choosing a site in the Longbridge area for a pioneering new car production facility, for nearly a century Herbert Austin made a vital contribution to the local economy and provided livelihoods for generations of people from Kings Norton and south Birmingham generally. It was a factory that, at its peak in the 1950s and 1960s, employed nearly 30,000 people and was one of the country's major manufacturing employers for decades, becoming one of the most significant car makers in the world. It continued to be so throughout the post war period until industrial strife, weak management and over-ambitious trade unions brought the British motor industry to its knees in the 1970s.

Born in November 1866 in Buckinghamshire, Herbert was the son of a working farmer. His family moved to the Rotherham area in Yorkshire when he was three. He was an ambitious young man, determined to progress in his chosen field of engineering. At the age of only 17 he emigrated to Australia to



**MICHAEL
WRITES
REGULARLY
ON LOCAL
HISTORY**

work for his maternal uncle, who ran an engineering company in Melbourne. Three years later came a fateful stage in his career, when he took up a role with a company called Wolseley that was developing a new sheep-shearing machine.

In 1890, Wolseley decided to wind up the company in Australia and transfer to Britain. Herbert followed and it was under his management that the Wolseley company, still committed to sheep-shearing equipment, set up a manufacturing base in Birmingham, initially in Broad Street and then in larger premises in Aston.

To Herbert it became clear that the Wolseley company need a wider portfolio of products. He had always had an interest in the development of the motor car. He built a number of three-wheeled vehicles in his own time, one of which was accepted by the Wolseley board and was launched in 1900. But Wolseley did not share Herbert's vision for the motor car, and that element of the business was sold off to the Vickers company, which did want to build vehicles. They invited Herbert to manage the new company. It was successful until, in 1904, there was a disagreement over technology and Herbert resigned, determined to start his own business.



PHOTO : BIRMINGHAM MUSEUMS TRUST (CC BY-SA 4.0)

▲ A PORTRAIT
OF LORD
AUSTIN, DATE
UNKNOWN

Herbert found a location in the hitherto relatively rural area of Longbridge, taking over the site of an old print works. His first model was a conventional four-cylinder model priced at £500 and launched at the British Motor Show at Olympia in 1906. It was well received and within three years, the Austin Motor Company was producing no fewer than seventeen different models.

The company was increasingly successful for nearly a decade, its workforce rising to some 2,000 employees. Then the First



World war intervened, and Herbert willingly committed his facility to the war effort. The local impact was tremendous: the workforce mushroomed to 22,000 in a couple of years!

The aftermath of the war posed major problems for Sir Herbert. The workforce had become too large. Even after making adjustments, the company nearly went bankrupt in 1921. It was only saved by the development and launch in 1922 of a car which, like its successor nearly 40 years later, the Austin Mini, became internationally famous. It was the Austin Seven, soon popularly known as the 'baby Austin', which was initially sold at a mere £225, a price affordable by people who had never been able to own a car. With the help of the Seven, Austin weathered the worst of the depression and remained profitable through the 1930s.

During the rest of his career, Herbert Austin presided over a

▲ THE 1922 VERSION OF THE AUSTIN 7, NOW ON SHOW AT THE SHANGHAI AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM IN CHINA

company whose products earned an international reputation for innovation and versatility. In 1936 he was created Baron Austin of Longbridge in the City of Birmingham.

Once his factory was established, Herbert and his wife Helen, whom he had met and married in Australia, always wanted to stay close to it. They built a home, Lickey Grange, on the slopes of the Lickey Hills, and lived there until he died in May 1941. By then, he was still Chairman and his factory was again making an immensely significant contribution to the war effort in the Second World War, producing not only munitions and equipment, but more than 3,000 complete aeroplanes, including the famous Hawker Hurricane fighter.

Regrettably, factors have worked against the sustained legend of Herbert Austin. His peerage could not be passed on because his only son had been killed in action in France in the First World War. The great and erstwhile prestigious Austin marque was dropped in the 1980s by BL, the successor to British Leyland: astonishingly for those who remembered its international prominence in the post war years, the Austin name was considered unfashionable. His factory gradually reduced in size until it closed in 2016, by which time, almost

unbelievably, it employed just 400 workers assembling Chinese vehicles: the humblest of fates for a factory that in its time had made no less than 14 million cars.

While there is therefore little to sustain his name and legend nationally, he still has a local presence. He and Lady Helen are buried together in an unassuming but well-maintained plot in the churchyard of Holy Trinity Church in Rose Hill, a mile or so from the factory site. The new Longbridge Town Centre development, which now occupies most of the old factory site, has a number of mementos to him and his company, including a new leisure area that is named Austin Park and is overlooked by a totem carrying his story and image.

And though the factory has gone, there is one tangible legacy of his time and career that exists largely intact. In 1917 when employment at

Longbridge was at its highest, Herbert decided to create a local community so that at least some workers could live close to the plant. He bought some open fields less than a mile away, and created a brand new estate, the "Austin Village". He bought 200 red cedar wood pre-fabricated buildings from an American company in Michigan and erected them there, together with a number of conventional brick-built houses.

Though they were intended to be temporary, as some readers will know they are all still there, loved and cherished by their owners, nearly all of them carefully preserved, some of them tastefully extended. The "Village" is located on the Longbridge side of Turves Green, its principal road being Central Avenue. It really is a charming and moving place to visit, as significant in its own way as any stately home: a living testament to a man and an industry that are key elements in Kings Norton's history.

▼ A RECENT PHOTO OF AUSTIN VILLAGE, PROBABLY THE ONLY HOUSES IN BIRMINGHAM MADE IN MICHIGAN



PHOTO BY MICHAEL KENNEDY

THE HUNGRY GARDENER

The Turning of the Seasons



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

For me, September conjures up apples ripening on the trees, tomatoes, french beans and courgettes in plentiful supply, all against the backdrop of a softer, warm sunshine glow and early morning mists. The season is turning. The garden, allotment and Kings Norton nature reserves seem easier, mellowed, the colours are starting to change. A hint of red on the trees, the grass with a hint of yellow. The length of the day is shortening and the light levels are changing.

September is a time for reflection. Perhaps the new school year is the catalyst. I reflect on what is in abundance this year, what could do better next year and what am I going to change in the hope of getting the best out of the next growing season. What can I store and preserve now for the winter? Towards the end of the

month, the hens will slow down with their egg laying and maybe take a full break for the winter months.

The harvest moon falls on the 20th September and this is truly an abundant month. Summer harvests are still with us and autumn harvests are starting. Enjoy them and preserve and freeze the extras to keep tasty memories of the warmer months for winter. There's nothing better than spreading a homemade jam on warm toast from fruits you've gathered in the summer. I also like to give jam and preserves as Christmas presents.

In the morning light and sparkling dew you may be able to spot some spiders' webs. Spiders are really useful garden companions, they eat a lot of the beasties that munch on edible plants. I really consider them a gardener's friend as are so many other beneficial insects that help with the pests. One of our favourite activities is a bug hunt. Charles tells me where he thinks they might be hiding and, armed with his magnifying glass, goes on a hunt around the garden. We

will have to try it at the faraway garden (aka the allotment) to see if we find any different bugs and creepy crawlies there.

Seeds to sow in early autumn are companion flowers especially calendula, nigella, phacelia, borage and chamomile. They will flower early next spring. Corn salad and claytonia (winter purslane) is good if sown now for salads through winter and early spring. If you have any seeds that like to be cold before germinating (stratification) now is their time for sowing. For windowsills, you could sow some herbs like coriander, rocket or basil or you could try some microgreens (coriander, basil, radish, oriental salads) for harvest in 10-14 days by

snipping the heads off with scissors and sowing some more.

The hedgerows in the nature reserve will be particularly abundant. It's a good time for blackberry picking up to 20th September. There are plenty of other berries to find, such as rosehips for a cordial and maybe a rosehip and apple jelly (apple contains pectin to get the jelly to set) and I might pick some haw berries from the hawthorn. The berries can be used to make a sauce similar to HP and I am sure this is the original brown sauce from back in the day. I know Charles will be leading the charge with the hedgerow hunts. The question is, where is he going to take us?

PHOTO BY JONATHAN PIELMAYER



RETURN TO THE COUNTRY

Summer was in freefall when we were blessed to return to the North Norfolk coast last month. It inspired me to return to the theme of the wonders of God's creation. The grass verges, the banks, the yards of Norfolk were like one giant cottage garden.

Yellow-eyed dog daisies, profusions of bright, scarlet poppies, pale purple mallow, grass as high as an elephant's eye and an abundance of roses were just everywhere. Swathes of grass on public land across the UK are no longer cut aggressively, thankfully, to within an inch of their lives, and verges are left at the side of the roads and in the middle of traffic roundabouts, so that they become welcome, and often stunning, meadows.

On the salt marshes of North Norfolk, a remarkable variety of sea birds flew across the marshy pools. We sat in the Norfolk Wildlife Centre at Cley-next-the-Sea, one of the oldest nature reserves in the country, watching the mist roll in, which created a moody, dramatic atmosphere. The birds flew in low, seeking shelter and cover, delightful to watch. The North Norfolk coast is an SSSI, a



THELMA MITCHELL IS LEAD CHAPLAIN AT BOURNVILLE COLLEGE

Site of Special Scientific Interest. These are protected nature conservation areas in the UK and the Isle of Man and hugely important

I read an article in the Waitrose News, 22nd July, which I thought was both innovative and practical, the sort of thinking we need, if we are to restore health to the planet. Here's an extract:

"Buzzing at the bee stop. Leicester has transformed 30 of its bus stops into green-

roofed 'bee stops'. Planted with a mix of wild flowers and sedums, they're part of a programme to renovate and replace the city's existing bus shelters. They're designed to attract pollinating insects but also reduce the urban heat island effect and capture particulates from the air. Work is to be completed this summer, when other bus shelters will receive solar panels."

The countryside, our parks and gardens have taken on an increased significance during the lockdowns. There has, for instance, been a movement in Ireland to return to the countryside, to live in the villages of their predecessors in response to the pandemic. It all feels never-ending. With the Lady of Shallot, I, too, am "half sick of shadows", the endless, often incomprehensible rules which change from day to day, the spread of new variants, the tragedy for poorer countries who do not have access to vaccines. For example, fewer than 2% of the population of the African continent have had the first vaccine. A handful of countries and companies control the supply and the richer nations have commandeered them.

"Swathes of grass on public land across the UK are no longer cut aggressively, thankfully, to within an inch of their lives

The summer of sport has gladdened the heart, however, helping us to step back from and briefly to forget the pandemic and all its attendant horrors. There was the cycling, the tennis, the Olympics and, of course, the football. Safe to say, was it ever more exciting? Football almost came home! The English team, with three of the youngest players, Bukayo Saka, Marcus Rashford and Jayden Sancho, were so inspirational, and all of them Christians. The shocking, hurtful racism expressed by a minority which followed the final was shameful and intolerable. Post-Covid, such events may inspire us with a renewed sense of purpose, a renewed sense of possibilities, as well as to work for the defeat of racism.

Now autumn beckons. As I write this, August so far has been disappointingly wet and not very warm, with intimations of the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness just around the corner. John Keats, considered to be one of our finest English poets, wrote his ode *To Autumn* in September 1819 after a walk near Winchester (see p.38). He was just 24 years old and would die in Rome of tuberculosis just three years later. He had trained as an apothecary, doctor and surgeon at St. Thomas's, London. Writing was his

overwhelming passion, however, and it began to consume his life. In 1820, as the disease spread through his body, he moved to Italy. Keats's house is in the Piazza di Spagna, at the foot of the Spanish steps, across from Babbington's English Tea rooms. The Anglican church in Rome is situated close by so, when we lived there, we passed it each time we travelled into the city for a service. He is buried in the non-Catholic cemetery (Cimitero Acattolica di Roma) in Rome.

Keats knew, as he wrote this magnificent poem, that his life would be short. It reflects both his joy in Creation and his melancholy that he must leave it so soon. His rich imagery of Creation's extravagant bounty, its sights and sounds, however, are warm and heartening. We can feel the warmth of the "maturing sun". It was also the time of the development of landscape painting, which moved controversially right away from classical settings and took joy in the countryside and its surroundings. Think of Constable and Turner as two great exponents of the celebration of the English scenery.

To Autumn is a short masterpiece, described by some as one of the most perfect short poems in the English language, and it is worth reading again and again. Its beauty and imagery will help to sustain us through the coming months of uncertainty.

As I close, I must confirm that I am not on the payroll of the Norfolk Tourist Board, nor that of Worcester Cathedral. I would, however, like to recommend the art installation there, *The Leaves of the Trees* by artist Peter Walker. It consists of 5,000 steel sycamore leaves which carpet the floor of the Lady Chapel, as a memorial to honour the lives lost through Covid-19, as well to help visitors to contemplate what they have been through. The leaves symbolise the past, and what has transpired, but are also emblematic of

confidence for the future. Local children have added paper leaves with the word HOPE written on them, in the Dean's Chapel and visitors can add their own. Peter Walker said that he chose the sycamore maple leaf as it symbolises strength, protection, eternity and clarity. The exhibition is on until the end of August.

With these thoughts in mind, I close with some favourite words of hope and encouragement from the Bible, especially when the shadows loom.

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you His peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you. (2 Thessalonians 3:16)



PHOTO BY ELENA KLOPPENBURG

Funerals July 2021

9th July	Angela Marie Loach	76	SN.Bu.KN
14th July	Susan Jean Seal	72	In.CY
23rd July	Clive Godfrey Oakley	85	In.CY
23rd July	Robert Edward Tilser	63	SN.Cr.LH
28th July	William Ernest Taylor	82	SN.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

HEALTH AND SAFETY

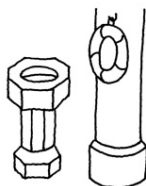
GUIDANCE FOR CHURCHES: THINGS YOU NEED TO DO



RISK ASSESSMENTS
BEFORE EACH SERVICE



HI-VIS JACKETS
FOR SIDESPERSONS



A LIFEBELT
NEXT TO
THE FONT



PADDED BUFFERS ON
PEW-ENDS FOR CHILDREN
CAREERING AROUND THE
AISLES AT HIGH SPEED



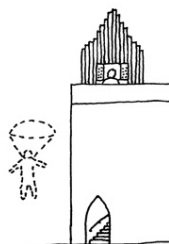
HARD HATS
FOR ANYONE
CARRYING
A STICK



GLOVES TO BE USED BY
ALL BISCUIT-ARRANGERS



A SERVER TO TRY THE
COMMUNION WINE
IN THE VESTRY
(IN CASE POISONED)



PARACHUTE FOR
EMERGENCY
DESCENT FROM
ORGAN LOFT

CartoonChurch.com

To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spare the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

John Keats

Remembering Molly Barron

Readers who, like many in Kings Norton, remember Molly with affection, will be interested to read this obituary, which originally appeared in Ringing World in June 2021. It has been edited for length.

With Molly's passing in November 2020, the number of people who learnt to ring for VE Day grows ever smaller. Born in 1932 in Kings Norton, Molly Patricia Flynn was one of four children, her brother, Michael, also being a ringer. She remained local, with St Nicolas' Church a focal point, sustaining a deep sense of faith throughout her life. It was via a church youth group that Molly learnt to ring.

Described by Bill Cartwright, the formidable ringing master of Selly Oak, as "achieving almost the impossible", a new band learnt at Kings Norton in three months. The teacher was Edward Blake, the vergier. Molly made rapid progress and by 1953 was deputy ringing master who had already made headlines in the Birmingham Post: "Girls take over bell tower of a Birmingham church."

Molly played a vital role in revitalising the Kings Norton band in the post-war years, teaching new ringers, organising outings and taking new charges to practices. (Harborne on Mondays, King's Norton on Tuesdays, Northfield on Wednesdays, Edgbaston on Thursdays and Packwood on Fridays, travelling by bus). The band of mainly young women which she nurtured became capable of ringing the 17 cwt ten, an added attraction for the university students moving into the area.

Almost all of Molly's twenty-one peals were rung between 1950 and 1957. The first was Grandsire Doubles at Tanworth in Arden, with four first peelers in the band. The second, in the same year, was Grandsire Triples at Kings Norton, the first by a Sunday service band for many years. Venturing further afield into Shropshire, Molly rang peals with Clifford Barron's band until after their marriage in 1957. In the years which followed, their children Richard and Elizabeth were born and were taught to ring by Molly and Ray Aldington, reaching a very high standard. Molly's last peal was Cambridge Surprise Royal at Kings Norton for the Silver Jubilee. She was active as part of the Kings Norton Handbell Ringers, run by Ray Aldington, and affiliated to the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain.

In the early 1980s, Molly began a new life in a house which she bought in Downcroft Avenue. She cared for the elderly and volunteered in the community. Molly ceased tower bell ringing in 2008 after achieving sixty-three years of service ringing at St Nicolas' Church. We all miss her very much. A forthright person, never afraid to speak her mind, she was a first-class ringer and striker, with excellent powers of concentration. She rarely made a trip which this writer can remember in over twenty-five years of our ringing together.

31 OCT - 12 NOV 2021
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COP26

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

1. Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach

Countries are being asked to come forward with ambitious 2030 emissions reductions targets that align with reaching net zero by the middle of the century.

To deliver on these stretching targets, countries will need to:

- accelerate the phase-out of coal
- curtail deforestation
- speed up the switch to electric vehicles
- encourage investment in renewables.

2. Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats

The climate is already changing and it will continue to change even as we reduce emissions, with devastating effects.

At COP26 we need to work together to enable and encourage countries affected by climate change to:

- protect and restore ecosystems
- build defences, warning systems and resilient infrastructure and agriculture to avoid loss of homes, livelihoods and even lives

Where to find out more :

UNITING THE WORLD TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE.



The UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31 October – 12 November 2021.

3. Mobilise finance

To deliver on our first two goals, developed countries must make good on their promise to mobilise **at least \$100bn in climate finance per year by 2020.**

International financial institutions must play their part and we need work towards unleashing the trillions in private and public sector finance required to secure global net zero.

4. Work together to deliver

We can only rise to the challenges of the climate crisis by working together.

At COP26 we must:

- finalise the Paris Rulebook (the detailed rules that make the Paris Agreement operational)
- accelerate action to tackle the climate crisis through collaboration between governments, businesses and civil society.

ukcop26.org • arochoa.org.uk • greenchristian.org.uk • bit.ly/37DEavi (Jesuit Missions) • bit.ly/3jJoXia (The Methodist Church) • bit.ly/3xywEMR (Churches Together in England) • bit.ly/3Azu4Z6 (Christian Aid)

More Beer, Vicar?

I must confess that, during my years at sea, there was a big gap in my church attendance. Perhaps, while I was on leave at home, I could have come to a Sunday service; but there always seemed to be so much to do and the hours would pass so quickly when I was having a pleasurable time. Nevertheless, Saint Nicolas, that friend of seamen, had sown some seeds. During long periods spent crossing oceans, I often remembered time spent at church, especially those times I had spent in the choir as a lad, many years ago.

In ports around the world there were and are seamen's clubs, many of which were administered by the "Flying Angel". Such clubs were often equipped with tables for snooker and table tennis. A few had swimming pools. Others would organise football matches against other ships or local teams. But the services they offered often went beyond recreation. Most would provide practical help to seafarers of all nations. Support might be given, for example, over a family matter such as a bereavement. The club in New Zealand was very kind to me when my father passed away. I was visited on board by the chaplain, who said some prayers with me.

Until a few years ago, before the days of the internet, international communication could be difficult. Asian mariners, in particular, could spend up to a year on the same ship. Seamen's Clubs would assist them in making telephone calls home when they were in port, sometimes helping with translation and call costs as well.

I used to visit the "Missions to Seamen" club in most ports and would often have a chat with the chaplain, padre or priest. If our ship had not been visited, I would sometimes invite him to come on board for a drink or perhaps a spot of lunch and to meet us all, including the Captain.

I must confess to a slightly embarrassing moment in 1959 when the *Corfu*, a small passenger liner owned by P & O, visited the island of Penang off the Malaysian peninsula. It is a beautiful, tropical island. The small group of lads of which I was one visited the Seamen's Club and the young chaplain there offered to give us a lift in the Mission bus to a super-isolated beach. We took our football and a few chilled beers the following day.

The beach was pristine and in the middle of nowhere. We could not wait to dash across the white sand to enter the beautiful, blue water. We were told that the bus would return about two hours later to take us back to the ship. Well, time flew by. Before we knew it, we heard the toot of a horn. The bus was back. Unfortunately, we were all stark naked, in the midst of enjoying some skinny dipping! We felt a bit embarrassed, but the matter was laughed off by our driver.

In later years, when my ship was in Singapore, my two stewards and the cook told me that the Mission bus had driven them into town, but that the young padre was all over the place, definitely the worse for drink. I knew the chap and had given him a beer from the hospitality fridge in my office, but I thought at the time that he seemed a bit tipsy. What I didn't know was that he had been in the Officers' bar for most of the afternoon!

The next day, I had a chat with him and had to say "Please be careful about drinking before you take the lads to the city. We do not want our crew members to be at risk of an accident." Poor chap! But I told him that, even though I could not let it pass and that something had to be said, the matter would remain between ourselves.

To lighten the atmosphere, I told him the story I have just told you, about being caught skinny dipping by the Mission Vicar. All was fine in the end. He promised he would be more careful about his drinking and we parted good friends.



In which we discover that there are few things which Eddie has not seen on his travels!



Harry L Marks



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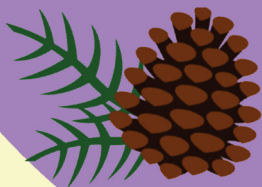
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