

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

Kindness

Larry Wright ponders the benefits of compassion

Amazing!

It's 250 years since a reformed slave trader discovered grace

Edward J Mason

Unearthing the roots of "The Archers" in Kings Norton



Artwork by the pupils of Hawkesley Church Primary Academy

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Editor & Advertising Manager

David Ash

editor@kingsnorton.org.uk

Subscriptions

Alison Blumer

subs@kingsnorton.org.uk

Registered Address

Kings Norton Parish Office

Saint Nicolas' Place

81 The Green, Kings Norton

Birmingham B38 8RU

0121 458 3289

Copy for Publication

copy@kingsnorton.org.uk

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Welcome

EDITORIAL

Watching over each other with love. What better definition could there be of kindness? Thank you, Hawkesley Academy. (p.2). When we express practical care and concern for those whom life has placed on our path, we are being kind. A listening ear, a supportive smile, a hug or a helping hand when most needed, all are expressions of kindness. To those immersed in suffocating pain or isolated by loss, kindness can be a breath of oxygen that rejuvenates with its purity, refreshes with its goodness, and gives strength to persevere. It's what Jesus was calling us to when he reminded us that the second most important commandment is to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

To those who are lonely, desperate or grieving, the kindness of friends and strangers, expressed in words, hospitality or simple presence can be a lifeline, keeping the guttering flame of hope alive when all seems lost. So why is it so rare, even in the church? What are the fears that hold us back from offering ourselves? Are we too comfortable, too busy, or just complacent, content to let others do the loving, to pass by on the other side (Luke 10)? On page 4, Larry Wright digs deeper into kindness and finds that it is good for both giver and receiver.

Lent returns on Feb 22nd (Ash Wednesday). This ancient season of reflection, repentance and spiritual discipline is an invitation and an opportunity to put our inner house in order as we approach Easter (9th April). You will find details of all our Lenten services on p.15 and of our recommended Lent book for this year on p.16. What better time to rediscover God's call

to practical compassion and self-giving?

*David Ash*

The Kindness Factor

Compassion is good for you.

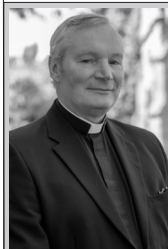
A recent NHS research project discovered that, when people with mild to serious depressive problems engaged with acts of kindness to others, they found their condition steadily improved. It seems that the principle that helping others takes us out of our own preoccupations and concerns remains true. This will come as no surprise to the many who endeavour to live lives which benefit others, particularly those in need, rather than themselves alone.

Caring for others is a principle in most of the world's religions and is often summarised as the golden rule: "Treat others as you would wish to be treated." This is usually interpreted as an act of enlightened self-interest. If we show care and compassion to others in need maybe we will be treated with similar consideration when we fall into a crisis. This may be true, but it has always seemed to me to be too calculating. What if no one comes to our aid when we need them? Do we

stop helping others in the future out of disappointment? What if we were to take out of our thinking the notion of future reward or benefit to ourselves if we show care and kindness to others in the present? Then our care and kindness to others becomes unconditional and an end in themselves.

Unconditional love is a golden thread running through the Christian message. In the Old and New Testament books of the Bible, unconditional compassion for others recurs in various forms as legal obligations and evidence of moral and spiritual progress. The early Christians were undoubtedly influenced by the Greek and Roman beliefs around them but contrasted them with the utter selflessness in the life and death of the one they called Jesus, the Christ.

The early writings about the first Christian communities (see the Acts of the Apostles) are noted for the way the early leaders organised themselves into a welfare and charitable organisation, caring for the



The Revd Larry Wright is the Rector of Kings Norton Parish



PHOTO BY ADAM NEMEROFF

needs of the most needy among them. Those with resources gave generously so that those with little were cared for and sustained. Lest we idealise these early attempts of organised charity by the early church, we must also note that there were plenty of disagreements and conflict among them also, usually over points of belief and authority. Nevertheless, something unique was emerging which would leave its mark on the generations of Christians who followed "The Way" (as early Christianity was called) and which continues to be a subject for soul searching and conscience for contemporary believers. How do we show sincere love and compassion to

others without always calculating its worth to ourselves?

In one of the letters of instruction and encouragement to the early Christian communities in Colossi or Colossae which is located near the modern city of Honaz at the base of Mt. Cadmus in modern Turkey, the apostle Paul writes:

"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so

you also must forgive."
(Colossians 3:12-13)

In these short verses we have an insight into the process of being for others as a circular method beginning and ending with two overarching attributes of God for the believer: they are selected by God and forgiven by Him. Firstly, God chooses us as His own people, "holy and beloved." Therefore, as God has taken the initiative for us, our response is to "clothe" ourselves in the qualities of "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience." There is no human calculation for personal reward here, no mention of any benefits which may accrue to the individual for expressing these qualities. And if one falls short of these virtues, then the remedy is to seek God's pity and renewal through forgiveness. For the very virtues which are to clothe the true believer have their source in God.

Further on in chapter 3, Paul writes, "Above all, clothe yourselves in love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. ... And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God...through him." Here we see Paul's method of constraining our own nagging impulse for self interest when doing good by attributing any

good we do not to ourselves but to the name of Jesus.

Whether we are people of faith or not, kindness and care towards others is never wasted or futile. What motivates us to kindness needs careful examination. It can be a purely humane act of charity, a religious impulse or a calculated grand gesture to draw attention to ourselves. Every day, countless acts of kindness are being acted out. They will mostly go unnoticed and unrewarded. It is the way of human solidarity which has kept us going as a species despite our seemingly endless capacity to be destructive, violent and evil towards each other. The darker forces of the world will always be with us but must not define us.

William Wordsworth, in his poem written above Tintern Abbey, meditated upon life's purpose and meaning when he wrote of,

"...that best portion of a good person's life,

*The little, nameless,
unremembered, acts*

Of kindness and of love."

National Health



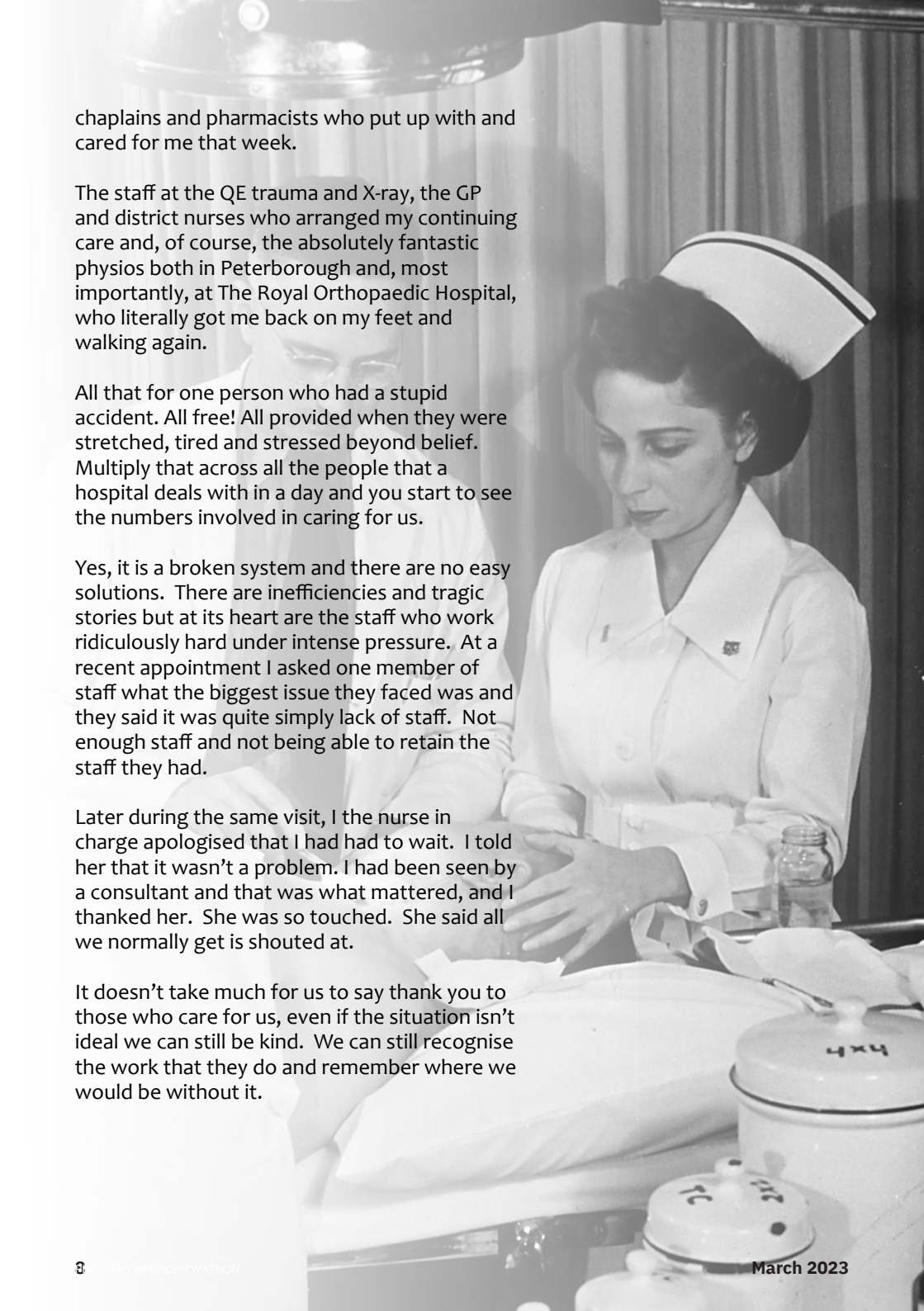
PAULINE IS THE
LAY MINISTER AT
ST NICOLAS'
CHURCH, KINGS
NORTON

My mum was a nurse. She started her training in the years before the creation of the NHS and was a huge advocate for it. She had seen the effects of poverty on health and the lack of prevention and health care. She was also a staunch believer in immunisation. The NHS which she knew was very different from the NHS today but, at its core, the provision of free health care is still the same. It has changed beyond recognition, initially employing 360,000 staff, now over 1.7 million.

All of us have reasons to be grateful to the NHS for the care it has given us and our loved ones and, despite the fact that the system is broken and exhausted beyond belief, it is still a system we should support and believe in. I've been thinking a lot about the NHS recently in light of the various strikes taking place. Mine is just one story and I'm sure you have your own; but just think about the number and variety of people who look after us when something happens and we need their services.

When I had my accident back in the summer, I was tended to by a fantastic paramedic who assessed me, splinted my leg and provided pain relief when he couldn't reach me properly as I was stranded in a large bouncy air bag. I was rescued from the air bag by the fire service who put up with a barrage of quite a lot from their patient who was in pain, struggling with the effects of gas and air and not being very pleasant, I'm ashamed to say.

Then the staff of ED and X-ray who sorted me out on arrival at hospital in Peterborough, the porters, theatre and recovery staff who treated me with such kindness (my demeanour had improved by this stage, thankfully). The ward staff, from cleaners to consultants, the nurses, the catering staff, the



chaplains and pharmacists who put up with and cared for me that week.

The staff at the QE trauma and X-ray, the GP and district nurses who arranged my continuing care and, of course, the absolutely fantastic physios both in Peterborough and, most importantly, at The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, who literally got me back on my feet and walking again.

All that for one person who had a stupid accident. All free! All provided when they were stretched, tired and stressed beyond belief. Multiply that across all the people that a hospital deals with in a day and you start to see the numbers involved in caring for us.

Yes, it is a broken system and there are no easy solutions. There are inefficiencies and tragic stories but at its heart are the staff who work ridiculously hard under intense pressure. At a recent appointment I asked one member of staff what the biggest issue they faced was and they said it was quite simply lack of staff. Not enough staff and not being able to retain the staff they had.

Later during the same visit, I the nurse in charge apologised that I had had to wait. I told her that it wasn't a problem. I had been seen by a consultant and that was what mattered, and I thanked her. She was so touched. She said all we normally get is shouted at.

It doesn't take much for us to say thank you to those who care for us, even if the situation isn't ideal we can still be kind. We can still recognise the work that they do and remember where we would be without it.

Adam the Gardener tries to answer the question

The question I posed in our our January edition was “What is a garden?”. The answer is, I am afraid, more difficult. After the Second World War, gardens would be for growing vegetables and fruit with bedding plants grown from seed with a border of Alyssum and blue Lobelia in front and a carefully mown lawn behind. There were enthusiasts who would grow a single species to perfection and they carefully selected outstanding specimens to create new named varieties.

The Chelsea Flower Show with its designer gardens would show the way. We went through a period of concrete and rusty girders followed by stonework, usually accompanied by a water feature. Plants started re-appearing, often unusual perennials in neat rows, and then the rows were done away with and a more relaxed arrangement was used. The next stage was to imitate nature with wild flowers in front of an old boat or a very small water mill.

Wild flower meadows started to appear around the time of the

Liverpool flower festival, the brain-child of Michael Heseltine, as I remember, and intended as a diversion, I think. Hobbyist gardeners would continue to do their own thing. I remember that, during the sixties, we lived near the end of the Piccadilly Line on an avenue with the Tube station at one end and a park at the other. Between the two were beautiful cherry trees which people would travel specially to see. The Betjeman-style houses had well-tended gardens and one in particular had a carpet bed in place of the usual small lawn. This was created by close planting of small succulents and other coloured leaf plants to create the effect of a Persian carpet. The plants would be carefully over-wintered in a greenhouse and, in the spring, the bed would be carefully replanted by the gardener lying on a decorator's plank supported by a brick at each end. Subsequent weeding would be carried out in the same manner. I was able to visit this avenue recently and the front gardens had been replaced by hard-standing for the two family cars. Ah well!



Seaside holidaymakers may remember the ultimate development of the carpet bed, the creation of the Parks and Gardens Department. The Floral Clock! This pride of the promenade was about twelve feet in diameter and the long hands would circle above the tiny plants and keep fairly good time. I wonder if any still exist?

You can see that the definition of a garden is in constant flux. My attempted definition might be "An area of land maintained so that plants you want to grow there will thrive, seemingly without effort."

Wilding is all the rage now, but leaving your acres to get on with it will result in a scruffy area of grass full of ragweed to be followed by brambles and later scrub trees. Not very attractive and likely to become rat-infested.

A garden is what you make it. Enjoy the journey.

Now is the time to plant those tiny seeds in a greenhouse if you have one, perhaps in a conservatory or even on a window sill facing north (with plenty of light but no direct sunlight). I have been browsing some seed catalogues and two plants have two pages each of wondrous new varieties, Cosmos and Zinnias.

Cosmos (above left) is easy to raise from seed and will be very floriferous if you do not over-fertilise. Zinnias are becoming a better bet this summer as the National Trust, no less, has forecast another hot drought year. They are best sown where they are to grow (they dislike being moved) and can wait until April. Growth should be rapid and my experience is that a variety listed with a height of two feet can often reach three feet (1 metre). Look out for varieties with an RHS symbol denoting excellent garden qualities.

Wild flower meadow enthusiasts will know that Yellow Rattle is a must as it will slow up grass growth without affecting your flowering gems because it is a parasite on grass roots. Another is the old favourite Mistletoe which parasitizes old trees. If you want some Mistletoe in your orchard you must gather some berries from a plant growing on the same tree as your own and squash them in

to cracks in the bark. Eventually, baby Mistletoes may appear

There is another plant parasite you might like to try and that is the Broomrape. You might not know this one but it sends up pinky-yellow spikes of flowers in the Spring. There are no leaves and, even if there were, they would have no green chlorophyll because it gets all its nutrients from the host plant. We are interested in the Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*). Other Broomrapes are available but not in any seed catalogue that I know of. Seek out a neglected corner of your garden where the ivy grows. Loosen the soil around the roots and add your seeds to a cupful of dry sand, mix and scatter around the disturbed soil, then water in. Wait around for at least a year and you just might get the first spike of flowers appearing. More are certain to follow. That corner of the garden will be much more interesting and you might cause a sensation at the gardening club ("Have you seen my *Orobanche*?")

You can obtain seed of *Orobanche* from Chiltern Seeds and Tropical Britain seeds who have a very interesting website full of sub-tropical plant seeds which we all may be raising soon.

Next month, we will be looking at the best of the new varieties just in time to be ahead of the field in propagating these beauties.

Should I weed the lawn or say it's a garden?



Lent & Springtime

What a combination we have each year. Just as nature is waking up from its winter hibernation and life is blossoming all around us the Christian churches begin their 40 days of self-denial and self-examination known as the season of Lent. It was actually in January this year that someone first mentioned that there was an early start to Lent in 2023. They were preparing themselves to give up chocolate again.

Because Lent is dated according to when Easter Sunday falls, its start date can vary by more than two weeks. The earliest projected date for Ash Wednesday is February 11th in the year of our Lord 2032. This year, Lent begins on Wednesday 22nd February, Ash Wednesday.

The ashes represent the left-overs of our wrongdoings once they've been metaphorically purged in the heat of God's love and mercy. The tradition of making the sign of the cross in ashes on the foreheads of believers is ancient and enduring, a mark of our human frailty and also a symbol of our divine hope. During the 40 days of Lent, churches mirror the time Jesus spent alone in the wilderness discerning how he would begin his ministry. The ashes are accompanied by the words, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." A reminder of our mortality amidst the busyness and fever of life.

Our modern culture is not at ease with talking about death, especially our own. People of faith have the wisdom of the ages to help them to ponder questions of life and death in the greater story of human progress and understanding. Each death, like each life, is unique and is ours alone. Being reminded of our human limitations need not be a cause for sadness, rather a spur to live to the full the life we have left.

Perhaps we should think of Lent as preparation for our own inner, spiritual springtime, a time when we pay close attention to ourselves and how we are living. What are our core values?

What do we believe and trust in? How are we approaching the prospect of our own death, whenever it comes? There was a trend in the early 2000s for people to write their own obituary or eulogy as an exercise of the imagination. If we did so now, what would we say about ourselves to sum up our life? Maybe this is an exercise we could consider doing during Lent this year.

Any inner springtime of our spirit needs nourishment just as nature's springtime needs water, light, feeding, pruning. How we attend to our inner life mirrors nature's growth. We need the nourishment and enlightenment which comes from the nurturing teachings of our faith and prayer life. We need to prune away old habits or attitudes which hold us back from living the fullness of life which Jesus promised us in St John's Gospel, chapter 10.

The season of Lent has extra opportunities for worship, fellowship and study. All worship services in Lent have their own particular focus on our human nature and its capacities for good or ill. Attending more services during Lent can be a fruitful discipline, especially if they are services you may not normally attend. Allow God to speak to you through other forms of worship.

Even in a secular culture such as ours, Lent is still acknowledged in some parts of the media and popular culture. BBC Radio Four

▼ASHES ON
THE FOREHEAD
ON ASH
WEDNESDAY.
AN ANCIENT
MARK OF
HUMAN FRAILTY
& DIVINE HOPE

PHOTO BY THAYS ORRICO





PHOTO BY ANDREA PIACQUADIO

usually has a series of Lent talks. If they are unavailable this year, it is still possible to hear last year's series. Christian social media sites, including the Church of England's national website and our own Diocesan website, will have Lent offerings. With the magic of the internet, it's possible to dip into Lent services from around the world, if one is so inclined. How about listening to a Lent podcast while doing the housework or walking the dog?

Whatever extra disciplines we take on for Lent, may they be done with a sense of enjoyment and curiosity as we use these six weeks to foster a sense of inner renewal, a springtime for our soul.

I recently came across a poem by John P Reid (right), a person whose life had more than its share of suffering over a number of years but which captures something of the spirit of hope we can find through perseverance. It begins with words suitable for Lent.

It's only through mistakes we make
We learn where we went wrong.
It's only when we're far from home
We realise where we belong.

It's only when we close our eyes
Our dreams seem clear and bright.
It's only in our darkest hours
We truly see the light.

It's only when we lose our way
We pray to the stars above.
It's only through times of grief
We learn the true meaning of love.

It's only when all hope seems lost
And our weary journey seems so far,
When all the world's against you,
We learn how strong we really are.

All things are sent to try us.
We must strive and give our best.
I believe God is watching over us,
And he guides us in our quest.

Lent, Holy Week & Easter 2023



Ash Wednesday (22 Feb)	Midday	Holy Communion (at St Nicolas' and Hawkesley Churches)
	7.30 pm	Holy Communion
Wed 1 March	Midday	Holy Communion
Wed 8 March	Midday	Holy Communion
Wed 15 March	Midday	Midday Prayer
Wed 22 March	Midday	Holy Communion
Wed 29 March	Midday	Holy Communion
Palm Sunday (2 April)	9.00 am	Holy Communion
	10.30 am	Morning Praise
	6.00 pm	Taizé Prayer
Monday of Holy Week	7.30 pm	Compline
Tuesday of Holy Week	7.30 pm	Compline
Wednesday of Holy Week	7.30 pm	Compline
Maundy Thursday (6 April)	7.30 pm	Holy Communion with foot washing
Good Friday (7 April)	10.30 am	Worship for All
	Midday	Good Friday Meditation
	2.00 pm	The Seven Last Words
Easter Sunday (9 April)	9.00 am	Holy Communion
	10.30 am	Holy Communion
	6.00 pm	Holy Communion with Anointing

New Readers' Big Day



Two new Readers have joined the Ministry Team in Kings Norton following their Licensing at Birmingham Cathedral on Saturday 4th February 2023.

From left to right: The Revd Larry Wright, Rector of Kings Norton; Cate Bennett, Reader; The Venerable Jenny Tomlinson, Archdeacon of Birmingham; Chisom Ikechukwu, Reader; The Revd Eliakim Ikechukwu, Assistant Rector of Kings Norton.



Journeying through Lent
with **New Daylight**

Daily Bible readings
and group study material

Journeying through Lent is the work of five writers: Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York; Helen Julian, a Franciscan sister; Tony Horsfall, a spiritual retreat leader and trainer; the late Rachel Boulding, who was Deputy Editor of Church Times; and the late Brother Ramon, who was a Franciscan friar. The themes of these writers' contributions are, according to Sally Welch, the book's editor, 'some of the most important elements of our faith': feasting and fasting, the Beatitudes, the wisdom of Christ, the love poem of 1 Corinthians 13 and Holy Week. The book is a small one, with the text and reflection taking up no more than two pages each day. At the end of each week's reflections there is a page of questions for group study.

Copies are on sale in St Nicolas' Church this Lent at the discounted price of £2.50 while stocks last.

They Do Not Need Your Woe

Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919) was an author and poet who is little known outside her native America except, perhaps, for this poem, "**Solitude**", written in 1883. Even then, most people will only be familiar with the two opening lines, which are sometimes quoted to the melancholy, perhaps a little unkindly, as an encouragement to pull themselves together and adopt a more cheerful demeanour.

Ella penned these verses thirty years before the death of her husband, Robert Wilcox, plunged her into inconsolable grief. But they show that, by her mid-thirties, she had already acquired some insight into our tendency to shy away from the suffering of fellow human beings.

The question which Ella's poignant poem poses is this. Do we want to live in a society where the grief-stricken, the sad and the lonely are left to weep alone? And if not, what can we do about it? One day, it will be our turn to cry. What do we hope for from others on that day?



Solitude

*Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone.
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
But has trouble enough of its own.
Sigh, and the hills will answer;
Sigh, it is lost on the air.
The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
But shrink from voicing care.*

*Rejoice, and men will seek you;
Grieve, and they turn and go.
They want full measure of all your pleasure,
But they do not need your woe.
Be glad, and your friends are many;
Be sad, and you lose them all.
There are none to decline your nectared wine,
But alone you must drink life's gall.*

*Feast, and your halls are crowded;
Fast, and the world goes by.
Succeed and give, and it helps you live,
But no man can help you die.
There is room in the halls of pleasure
For a long and lordly train,
But one by one we must all file on
Through the narrow aisles of pain.*

"REJOICE WITH THOSE
WHO REJOICE, WEEP
WITH THOSE WHO
WEEP." (ROMANS 12:15).

Amazing!



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

Where would we be in the UK without the exclamation "Amazing!"? Whether we use it as a response to a child's proudly presented work of art, or to the restorations on "The Repair Shop", or the cries from the celebrity models to the efforts of artists on "Portrait Artist of the Year", it's a quite invaluable word and usually accompanied by "Wow!"

Many years ago, I spent a few months studying some aspects of religions practised in India at Dharmaram College in Bangalore (now Bengaluru). We spent a tough few weeks beforehand travelling round India by train, visiting religious and other famous sites. The journey began in Calcutta (Kolkata) on the river Ganges. We visited the temple dedicated to the Hindu goddess Kali and later met Mother Teresa at the orphanage run by the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity. Then it was on to polluted, crowded Delhi (though it's great for shopping!) and clean, organised New Delhi, the capital designed by Lutyens. From there we took the train to the Red Fort at Agra. Nearby is the city of Fatehpur Sikri, built by the Moghul Emperor Akbar in 1571 and abandoned suddenly in 1610. Of course, we could not miss the breathtaking splendours of that marble monument to grief, the Taj Mahal. I have revisited it a number of times since, and it always takes your breath away.

On to the deserts of Rajasthan and the beautiful, mainly Muslim, cities of Jodhpur and Jaipur, as well as the lake palace and museum of the Maharajahs of Udaipur. I was particularly impressed by the magnificent Jain Temple at Sadri. We travelled on, down to Bhopal to visit the holy Buddhist Great Stupa at Sanchi. On to Hyderabad, where the influence of the Mughal Empire ended, and to the coast at Madras (Chennai). Our final stop before we reached



Bangalore was to the stunning, sixth century rock-cut Buddhist caves near Aurangabad (photo above).

It was here that I met my nemesis. We were tired, disorientated and longing to stop moving. We were staying in a crowded hostel. As a result of a mosquito bite (advice, never sleep where there are mosquitos without a net over the bed, well tucked in!) I became very ill with dengue fever and an infected foot after we arrived at Bangalore.

We were staying for the duration of the course the relative peace of a monastery-cum-seminary which was located located across the campus parkland. As I lay on the plank, which passed as my bed, my friend Dawn who was studying with me, produced a copy of the song book "Mission

Praise". (Don't ask! I don't know why she had it with her, but I am very glad that she did.) We began singing together the various hymns we remembered. What we didn't know, perhaps mercifully, was that the Brothers, and some of the students, used to gather on the stairs to listen to us. Apparently, they enjoyed our nightly rendition of hymns, many of which were new to them.

When we got to number 31, "Amazing Grace", I felt that the words were written for me, especially the verse "Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come, 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home." Whenever life's vicissitudes show their unwanted face, I sing it again. This hymn has held

a very special place in my heart and life ever since.

I did recover fairly quickly, thanks in part to a daily flask of fresh limes and sugar dissolved in water which one of the Brothers made for me each day. I found out later than one in four people die of dengue. I'm glad I didn't know that at the time.

This year marks the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the composition of "Amazing Grace". In 1773, the Reverend John Newton was the curate of St. Peter and St. Paul, Olney, a market town in Buckinghamshire. Newton had been a ship's captain. He was born in Wapping where his mother died when he was six years old. After very little schooling, at eleven years old the rebellious John ran away to sea. He ended up in West Africa as a sea captain and slave trader. As a captain he was responsible for the forced repatriation and enslavement of 511 Africans.

On 1st January 1773, Newton preached a sermon to the young people of Olney in which he told them of the faith of his childhood, rediscovered during a severe storm off the coast of Brazil. It was so severe that the ship nearly broke apart and many of the crew members fell into the sea. He started to pray again, and thus began his long redemptive journey back to God. He wrote this hymn to accompany the sermon.

It took Newton six more years to renounce the slave trade and apologise for his part in it. He became an encourager of, and major influence on, William Wilberforce, who was

attempting to force a vote in parliament to have the slave trade abolished. The trading westwards of human beings into slavery from the African continent created much of the wealth of many countries. Included are Great Britain, the USA and Brazil in particular, and major cities such as London, Bristol and Liverpool; and, of course, as is just now being acknowledged, the Church of England. Slavery was abolished in Britain in 1834. The slave owners were compensated subsequently, but not those Africans who had been enslaved.

As Newton's faith grew, this hymn, so personal, so poignant, so pointed ("that saved a wretch like me") reflects his growing discernment of the Christian teaching about the grace of God, which is at the heart of the Christian message. The love of God is not earned and it is not deserved. At Sunday School, I was taught that we could think of grace as "God's Riches At Christ's Expense" which is one way of putting it.

This hymn speaks to the core of Christian experience and has held a precious place in the hearts of so many down the intervening 250 years. It is used at times of national mourning and is the anthem of the civil rights movement. It is estimated that more cover versions have been made of this wonderful hymn – I nearly said amazing! – by a wide variety of recording artists than of any other song. The US Library of Congress holds 3,000 published recorded performances by different individual musicians or musical ensembles. These include Aretha

Franklin, Judy Collins, Elvis Presley, Diana Ross, Andrea Bocelli, Whitney Houston, Celine Dion, and my personal favourite, Mahalia Jackson. Another well known version was by the Pipes and Drums of the Military Royal Scots Dragoon Guard in 1971, played entirely on the bagpipes.

The tune, which we know so well, known as "New Britain", was composed by the American Baptist William Walker in 1835 and came later. It emerged from the USA early in the nineteenth century, only really becoming popular here about sixty years ago. It is a powerful yet simple tune which carries the weight of the words, emphasising the ideas expounded within it, of grace, hope and redemption. As a hymn it provides solace in times of stress, as I found, hope for the downcast and the promise of salvation for the needy.

Churches across the world were invited to celebrate its creation by singing it on 1st January this year. I think that John Newton, the author, would have been, well, amazed! He would have had no idea how far his words would reach out so effectively across time and continents. It has had an impact and a reach perhaps greater than any other hymn. It had 13 verses originally with some taken away and some added over the years. To close I have chosen my favourite verses.

(Right: a painting of John Newton as he appeared in 1807, the year of his death)

Amazing Grace (John Newton)

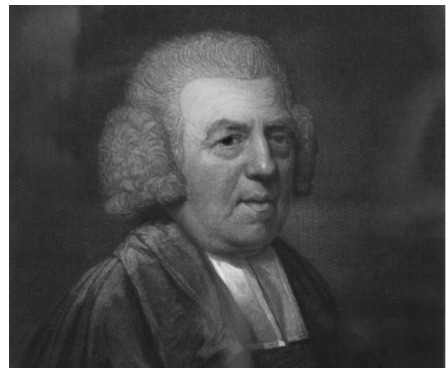
Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found;
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there 10,000 years,
Bright shining as the sun;
We've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first began.



YOUR PARISH CHURCH

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

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

THE MINISTRY TEAM

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

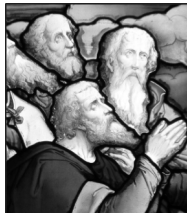
THE CHURCH WARDENS

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

OTHER CONTACTS

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 pm	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 pm	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

Edward J Mason

Kings Norton's BBC pioneer

As regular readers will know, the history of our parish is packed with the names of significant, and in some cases, famous residents who have enhanced the world in a wide spectrum of ways. One of these is a man who made a substantial contribution to the development of the BBC as national broadcaster in its post-war years, leaving a legacy which is still current and includes the longest-running radio serial in the world, *The Archers*, of course! Some of our most senior readers will also recall with fondness one of his even earlier legacies, the thrilling radio series called *Dick Barton*, *Special Agent*.

He is Edward John Mason, always known professionally as Edward J Mason, who was born here on 8 May 1912. The earliest details I can establish about him are that he attended Kings Norton Boys School for most of the 1920's. Strangely, for one whose writing talents, inventiveness and imagination were to earn him tributes from high quarters, one of his reports towards the end of his time there said "could do better". He certainly did so.

From the immediate post war period onwards, Edward became established as a leading scriptwriter for the BBC and other broadcasting outlets. Remember *Radio Luxembourg*? *Dick Barton* was the first of his achievements,

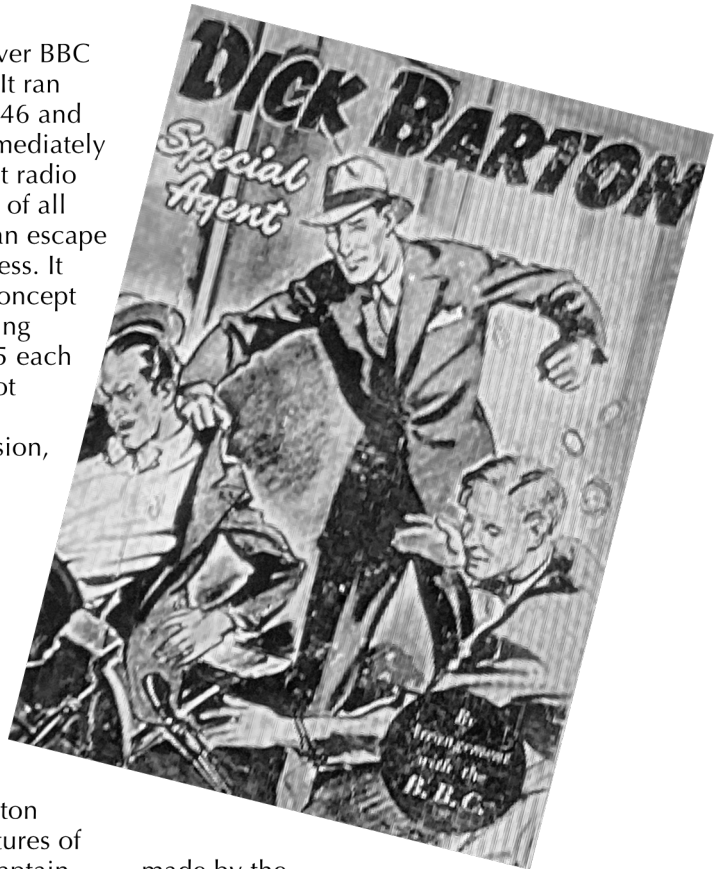


MICHAEL
WRITES
REGULARLY
ON LOCAL
HISTORY

effectively the first-ever BBC Radio thriller series. It ran between October 1946 and March 1951 and immediately attracted a significant radio audience of listeners of all ages, all hungry for an escape from post-war drabness. It also pioneered the concept of a 15-minute evening slot, normally at 6.45 each weekday. It was a slot which, without the distractions of television, became a not-to-be-missed daily appointment for the family. Within months, an omnibus edition was being broadcast every Saturday morning.

Developed and scripted primarily by Edward, Dick Barton described the adventures of the ex-commando Captain Richard Barton and his friends Jock Anderson and Snowy White, routinely overcoming unimaginably dangerous situations, bringing to book every sort of dastardly criminal, and often saving the country itself from catastrophe. Dick always escaped from even the most frightening cliff-hanger, epitomised by the immortal phrase "With one bound, Dick was free!"

In its heyday, the series generated three feature films,



made by the famous Hammer company, and even a stage play. The radio series had a peak audience of no less than 20 million breathless listeners and ran for a total of 711 episodes.

It would be difficult to imagine today how that 6.45 radio slot should be fixed so firmly in the schedule of families all around the country, were it not for the fact that Dick Barton's successor, The Archers, is still a fixture every

weekday for several million listeners.

Edward could have been significantly disadvantaged, professionally and financially when, in 1951, the BBC decided that Dick Barton had run its course and that a new radio series was needed which would attract a more broadly based audience. But astonishingly, it was Edward himself who made a key contribution to the development of The Archers and was its primary scriptwriter for many years.

The BBC had apparently never been completely comfortable with the concept of a serial based on exotic adventurers such as Dick, Jock and Snowy, seeking something more stable to which the audience could relate directly. "An everyday story of country folk", the sub-title of The Archers, was the answer. Ambridge was, and is, the fictional location, thought by many to be based on Inkberrow.

All this happened in and around the Midlands, indeed in our part of the region. The original creator of the Archers concept, Godfrey Baseley, was born in Alvechurch, the son of the local butcher. He himself drafted an initial script, but was not happy with it. What could be more natural, then, for him to turn

for help to Edward, a local man with a proven scriptwriting record?

So within a few weeks of knowing he was going to lose Dick Barton, Edward found himself effectively leading the creative team that was to see The Archers taking over that evening radio slot, a slot it still retains more than 70 years later?

Edward had other strings to his bow, writing other successful radio series including "Red for Danger", broadcast in 1955, and another adventure series, called "Shadow Man", for the BBC's only real broadcasting competitor Radio Luxembourg, a station which, by being located abroad, was able to attract the commercial sponsorship which the BBC was not permitted to accept. Edward continued to write radio and television scripts throughout the 1960s.

Even while he was heavily committed to The Archers, Edward began to make another pioneering contribution to the BBC's output, effectively instigating the radio panel game. He devised and scripted questions for a number of game shows, including most notably My Word (from 1957) and its successor My Music (from 1967). Both programmes generated a

worldwide audience through the BBC World Service.

Readers who remember My Word will recall that it featured the celebrated TV scriptwriters Frank Muir and Denis Norden, famous for many comedy shows such as Take It From Here. They were in every one of the 38 series broadcast from the 1950s to the 1980s. My Word was a very witty programme, and the platform for that wit came from the pen of Edward J Mason, clearly a man of exceptional erudition who nevertheless had a remarkable ability to craft words that appealed to the listening audience. Frank Muir wrote: "One thing which Denis and I learned, and appreciated, during those early years of My Word! was how much the success of the show depended on the inconspicuous skill of the man who compiled it, Edward J. Mason. He had a gift for the common touch which is rare in areas like literary quizzes. He worked within the general awareness of listeners who had been to school; most of his poetic questions were to do with poems in Palgrave's Golden Treasury, most quotations were semi-familiar and in most books of quotations. We reckoned that 80 per cent of listeners felt that, given a bit of time for thought, they

could answer almost 80 per cent of the questions."

For such a colossus in the broadcasting world, Edward J seems to have shunned the limelight. There seem to be no existing pictures of him. Unfortunately, he was not destined to enjoy the long-lasting success that his achievements merited. He died in Birmingham on 3 February 1971 at the age of only 58.

His creativity, however, lived on in the achievements of his children. His son Jeremy was an actor who was the youngest ever director of the Birmingham Rep and actually played the major role of Roger Travers-Macy in The Archers for several years. Edward's other son Laurence, or 'Lol', was a very successful musician and song writer, the inspiration and lead singer of two prominent rock bands, City Boy and Maisonette.

Interestingly, despite their national successes, Edward and his sons never moved from South Birmingham. Hopefully, readers are now aware that some of their fondest radio memories, and the listening habits that they have developed and maintained throughout their lives, were influenced to a great extent by a local man!

Foodbank News

I recently led an information-sharing session about the Foodbank with Hawkesley Girl Guides. The two things which have stayed with me from that meeting were just how engaged all the girls were, and also the fact that we have been in existence for the entire lives of the four youngest Guides, who were 10 years old.

We were supposed to be a temporary solution and are now regarded as an essential part of society, on a par with the main emergency services (the central three, plus mountain, moorland, care and coast). The reasons for our continued existence are complex, but the basic factor is that, for a sizeable section of the population, outgoings equal or exceed income on a regular basis. It is also most likely that these are the same people who have limited or no access to bank accounts, low tariffs for services, insurance, low APR loans or the financial ability to purchase “quality items” in the first place, which will last much longer than cheaper versions. Something as simple as the sudden need for a new pair of school trousers or shoes mid-term can be the tipping point. It is food OR trousers, not both.



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

Our operation has developed from six cupboards of food in the large downstairs activity room at Cotteridge Church into a large outfit using two commercial warehouses (back-to-back and interconnected) with additional off-site storage for infrastructure and Harvest or Christmas stock overspill, and two vans. Over the intervening 10 years we have passed through an unused vicarage, an empty classroom and various smaller commercial warehouses. When we began, we were the only foodbank in the neighbourhood. Now we share the task of ensuring South Birmingham residents do not go hungry with several others, including community pantries, school schemes and pay-as-you-can shops. Not the least of

these is our own immediate neighbour, the Northfield Community Partnership, based at Saint Nicolas' Place.

Those referred to us still have the same basic problems as those who came 10 years ago. For the vast majority, it is either insufficient basic income or delays in the benefit system. If the latter were fixed, and the “5 week wait” for Universal Credit were to be abolished, much of the need for foodbanks would vanish overnight. Far from creating a society dependent upon benefits, it would provide the stop-gap required to help individuals and families get back in control of outgoings and income. It would also have the knock-on effect of reducing the need for clothing banks and warm-hubs. Ensuring that wages are realistic is the other major factor which could spell the end of long-term foodbanks.

Those of us on the management team of the B30 and South Birmingham Foodbank come from a wide background of faith and none, but all are very appreciative of your prayers and your long-term support in donations of food and finance.

A very different foodbank is to be found in Ifakara, a large village in Tanzania. The bakery there was founded in 2001 and it is now fully independent and run by the local nuns. The Ifakara Bakery Fund has been running for 22 years and, after helping to fund the initial set-up and early years of the bakery, it then turned its finances to providing free bread for the most vulnerable members of the Ifakara population (those in kindergarten, in hospital or leprosarium). It continues to do this to this day, and also assists in the funding of other projects which help the whole community to be come more self sufficient.

During Lent at St Nicolas' Church, there will be an opportunity for us to continue our support of this charity, which goes back to its inception with Eugene and Margaret Schellenberg at the helm. It continues now with the leadership of a group of very committed trustees under the watchful eye of Margaret Schellenberg.

THE HUNGRY GARDENER

Cold & Flu Remedies

My friends and family seem to have had a recent flurry of cold, flu and Covid lately so it feels timely to share a few things I make to help boost our immune systems at this time of year.

Fire Cider

Last year, I made it my routine to take a little fire cider daily and the one time I got a really horrible infection was when I slipped. It gets its name from apple cider vinegar that is infused with herbs, spices and fruits with immune boosting properties. Fire cider was originally made by a herbalist Rosemary Gladstar in 1981. Here's the recipe I use and I've



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

◀ FIRE CIDER IS A FAIRLY RECENT INVENTION.

added to it with garden herbs that I turn to when I'm under the weather.

Ingredients:

100g grated fresh ginger
50g grated fresh horseradish
1 onion
1 garlic bulb
2 birdseye chillis
2 lemons
2 oranges
A few rosemary sprigs
A few sage sprigs
A few thyme sprigs
1 tablespoon turmeric powder
Apple cider vinegar
Honey to taste (you may use the best part of the jar)

Chop up and prepare all your ingredients. Hint: use the food processor to grate your horseradish unless you want to wear swimming goggles in the kitchen. This is something really fun to do with a friend as the chopping takes a while. Pack your ingredients into a large sterilised jar. I use a 2 litre Kilner jar.

Pour the apple cider vinegar so that it completely covers all the ingredients and up to the top of the jar. Seal the jar and leave it for 6 weeks.

After 6 weeks, strain the liquid and pour into a bottle or a clean jar. Add the honey until you are happy with the taste. This takes the best part of jar of honey for my taste buds and I

like the honey from the Kings Norton Farmers' Market.

Fire Cider can be taken daily as a tonic when you are under the weather. It will help you breathe more easily. Or it can be added to salad dressings and when cooking.

Water Kefir with Tangerine, Turmeric and Ginger

Water kefir is a fermented fizzy drink which I've really come to enjoy. Water kefir starts with a culture of bobbly translucent pink grains. I got mine from "Freshly Fermented" (shorturl.at/dAINV) which gives you instructions on how to wake up your grains. I am always looking for new things to flavour my water kefir and, over a conversation on a Facebook fermenting group, a fellow member shared this idea of using citrus fruit, turmeric and ginger. All three ingredients will boost your immune system.

Ingredients:

5g - 15g water kefir grains
60g sugar
Pinch salt
A few raisins
1 tangerine
Pinch turmeric
Small chunk of ginger (or a pinch of ground ginger)

Place your water kefir grains in a clean jar. I use a 1 litre jar filled to 800ml. Add 60g sugar, a pinch of salt and a few raisins and fill the jar with unchlorinated water. (You can dechlorinate water by leaving it

overnight and using it in the morning). Place a piece of cloth over the top of the jar and secure it. Leave for 2 days. The raisins will rise to the surface when it is ready to use.

Strain the water kefir, reserving the grains for your next batch, and pour the liquid into a flip-top bottle. Chop the tangerine and chunk of ginger into small enough pieces to fit through the opening of the bottle. I add the turmeric using the tip of the handle from a teaspoon.

Leave the bottle for another day or so to get fizzy.

This has a really nice, fizzy, citrus, sour flavour. Not quite as sour as real lemonade, but very close. It's a slightly more mellow version bursting with probiotic goodness. It really is a very pleasant way to boost your immune system.

Kimchi

I am a big fan of the Korean fermented vegetable method known as kimchi. It sounds exotic but you can use any vegetable that is happy when fermented with a specific set of ingredients to accompany it. This is the latest food that I have become addicted to. I am not sure what I enjoy more, the ginger or the chilli. I just can't put my finger on it. However, it finds its way into or onto the side of at least one of my meals each day. If you like something spicy, this will be for you. The classic recipe uses cabbage and I've also tried it with

Jerusalem artichoke, which was really delicious.

Ingredients:

Pointed cabbage (1 cabbage for a 1 litre jar, 2 cabbages for a 2 litre jar)
2 teaspoons chilli flakes or 2 chillis (I use homegrown birdseye chillis)
Handful radishes grated (UK radishes are perfect)
1 carrot grated
1 garlic bulb grated
1 thumb size piece of ginger grated
6 salad onions chopped

Roughly chop the cabbage and put it in a big bowl. Make a solution of 60g salt to 1 litre water and pour it over the cabbage so that it covers the cabbage. Put a plate on top of the cabbage to weigh it down and a tea cloth over the bowl. Leave overnight.

On the next day, put the chillis, radishes, carrot, garlic and peeled ginger into a food processor and pulse it until it starts to look well combined and chopped very finely.

Take your pre-soaked cabbage and remove the salt water. Save some of the water. Take your very finely chopped chillis, radish, carrot, garlic and ginger mix and massage it into the cabbage.

Pack your chopped salad onions and cabbage into the jar. I like to layer them. Pack them down tightly. I use the pestle from the pestle and mortar for this. You should see some fluid from the soaked cabbage. If the cabbage isn't fully covered by fluid, use some of the saved salt water to

cover the cabbage fully. You will need a weight for the top of the jar. The weight I use for a 2 litre Kilner jar is a ramekin. It is the perfect size and weight to submerge all the vegetables below the fluid. I remove the rubber seal from the top of the Kilner jar so that air can escape and I place the jar inside a bowl to catch any fluid that might escape.

The next stage is the fermentation. I store the jar in a cupboard so that it isn't exposed to light (or you can cover it with a tea cloth). The initial fermentation is around 5-7 days. After the fermentation slows (when it is less fizzy and there are not many bubbles) you can put the rubber seal back on the jar and either store it where you fermented it or place it in the fridge. If you place it in the fridge, it will keep its current flavour. If you leave it in the cupboard or on a work surface it will carry on fermenting and the flavour will continue to develop towards a deeper sour flavour.

The ideal temperature for fermenting is 18°-22° C. However, if your kitchen is slightly cooler it will still ferment but at a slower pace. The warmer it is the faster the fermentation. I store mine in a dark cupboard and enjoy the way in which the flavour improves through the month. It never lasts more than a month and I always follow with another batch of kimchi when I have about a week's supply left.

I really hope you manage to avoid the many cold, flu and Covid infections which are doing their rounds and that you have fun preparing some immune-boosting preserves and meals.

김치



BRITAIN'S FIRST WETLAND SUPER RESERVE

Wetlands are the superheroes of the natural world. They are crammed with wildlife, protect our coastlines, keep our rivers clean, and store climate-changing amounts of carbon.

Yet through much of history they have been at best ignored and at worst vilified and destroyed. In recent years public campaigns and money have been thrown at tree planting and reforestation, yet hardly a mention was given to restoring the UK's bogs, swamps and marshes. But a quick scan through famous literature, paintings and even films and TV series will show you how often wetlands feature as the unpleasant, sinister backdrop of dark storylines.

Fortunately, things are now changing. This was highlighted with the recent announcement of a 15,000-acre Somerset Wetlands national nature reserve. This is the UK's second so-called "super reserve" after Purbeck Heaths in Dorset. These reserves take in a mosaic of different habitats, and by linking



CHRISTIAN DUNN IS A SENIOR LECTURER IN NATURAL SCIENCES AT BANGOR UNIVERSITY.

them all together as part of an entire landscape management plan, it is hoped the region as a whole will benefit.

In this case, the new super reserve will encompass existing reserves on Somerset's levels and moors, a region of coastal plains, fens, reedbeds and saltmarshes, which make up the heart of the county.

These areas are estimated to contain around 11 million tonnes of carbon, in the form of peat: semi-decomposed dead plant material. When peatlands dry out, perhaps because they are drained to make farmland or when peat is extracted for compost, the vegetation decomposes a lot faster, releasing carbon into the atmosphere.

Much of Somerset's peat deposits have been damaged over the centuries, and continue to be so, releasing hundreds of thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gasses every year. Their protection as carbon sequestering powerhouses is

essential if the UK is to hit its net zero goals in the coming decades.

The salt marshes on the edge of the new reserve are also carbon-dense habitats and can protect the coastline during storms and sea level rises. Then there is the wildlife that teems in this area, from otters and kingfishers to eels and marsh fritillaries (one of Britain's rarest butterflies).

It's not just the environmental and natural benefits provided by the wetlands of the new super reserve that make the project so special. Britain's history and heritage is tied up in this area and the acidic, waterlogged peatland conditions means it is uniquely preserved for us to discover. For instance the UK's oldest wooden walkway, the

Sweet Track, was built 6,000 years ago to help Neolithic people cross the marshes. Since it was uncovered in the 1970s it has helped archaeologists understand how these people lived.

It may also only be a touch melodramatic to state that England as we know it would not exist if it hadn't been for the Somerset levels and moors "fen-fastness" (as described in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle), offering King Alfred the refuge and battleground his small force needed when fighting the Vikings in the 800s. (Though whether he burnt some cakes in the process is up for historical debate).

It's not just the Somerset region that will see the benefits of the proposed landscape-scale

▼THE
SOMERSET
LEVELS



management plans. The entire country will be richer. Of course, some of the area is already under the supervision of conservation organisations and they are doing a great job. But this project goes beyond those individual sites and brings them all together on a larger scale.

Properly managed individual nature reserves, no matter what the size, can be fantastic. But it's when we join-up these pockets and expand them that we can really start to control water flows, maximise biodiversity, reduce carbon emissions and enhance our own wellbeing. Indeed, research is showing it's at this scale that we can have a real impact and harness the potential of "nature-based solutions" which allow natural

ecosystems to help address the climate and biodiversity crisis.

When these areas are large enough and dominated by coastal and freshwater wetlands then the benefits are magnified, as it's not just a landscape-scale being looked at, or even the seascape, but the "wholescape".

This "wholescape" approach must be the way forward if we are serious about the use of nature-based solutions this century. And nature's superheroes, our wetlands, need super nature reserves like the one in Somerset to show us just what they can do.

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PHOTO BY TYLER BUTLER



Funerals Nov 2022 - Jan 2023

25th November	John Henry Clarke	82	In.CY
7th December	Vera Wilkes	85	In.CY
8th December	Mary Janette Lloyd	94	Cr.RD
13th December	Susan Angela Gumbley	83	Cr.LH
14th December	Robert Edward Wall	64	SN.Bu.KN
15th December	Patricia Lee	93	Cr.RH
5th January	John Richard Jelfs	88	Cr.WH.SN
6th January	Marion Devey	71	SN.Bu.CY
7th January	Ian Liddle Johnstone	88	In.CY
9th January	Josephine Anne Davies	90	SN.Bu.CY
17th January	Patricia Catherine Fahy	86	Bu.CY
27th January	Jill Christine Kershaw	87	SN.Bu.CY

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, RH : Robin Hood,
WH : Waseley Hills Crematorium



Accidents

While I was serving on the P&O liner SS Canberra for seven years all sorts of events happened, some amusing and some sad. Here's one of them.

Canberra was moored for several days before loading passengers for the maiden voyage to Australia in 1961. We were berthed in Southampton. P&O invited our families to visit the new ship. A special train was available and a meal would be served to our visitors.

My parents arrived with my little brother and one of my sisters. One of the public rooms they visited was called the Meridian passenger lounge. My father spotted a grand piano and said that it would be wonderful if he could have a "tinkle". He played for about 20 minutes and has a small audience of visitors and some fitters who were working on the final additions to the ship. My father received quite loud applause from all.

I said, "Dad, you have a claim to fame as the first entertainer in the first class lounge." He shrugged his shoulders and smiled, but he never forgot this moment. Nor did I. It was a really nice day for everyone.

That same evening I was awakened by a loud knocking on the cabin door at about 11.30 pm. In an earlier story, I mentioned a chap called Willy, who was known as the "born loser" on board. On this occasion, he stood wide-eyed



Who would have guessed that Eddie can waterski?

with some cuts on his face and holding a crash helmet, which was cracked on one side. He told me that he had come off his moped near the ship. He explained that he lived in Southampton and had been popping to and fro' to home. My cabin mate contacted the night watchman and an ambulance took poor Willy to hospital. Luckily, he had just a few cuts and bruises.

A few of the lads went ashore and found his motor scooter. It was a complete write-off and we removed it from the railway tracks near the ship. We supposed that, in the dark, he had not seen the exposed rails. We felt rather sorry for him, but word soon spread ship-wide, aided by Vera, the telephone boss, and her girls in the exchange. On later voyages, Willy seemed to get involved in other small calamities in the first class restaurant where he was the deputy manager.

Some years later, another sad event occurred, again when the ship was in port in Southampton. I have mentioned Penny, the Social Hostess, before. Once, when we were at sea, an impromptu party arose in the main restaurant bar and office where I worked. It was Christmas Eve and Jimmy, the Chief Barman, said to the other Assistant Barman and me that he thought we would open a bottle of champagne. A party ensued and various people joined in.

Jimmy phoned Penny and invited her to drop in. She arrived in a beautiful dress with tinsel in her hair. She opened the door and said, "I am the

Christmas Fairy", at which point she tripped over the step and fell flat on her face. As she tottered to her feet, not hurt at all, she said "Oh dear, I seem to have broken my wand!" Well, we collapsed in laughter. I kept tabs on the bottles of champagne signed for that night. We got through more than twelve!

I'm sad to say that there could not be smiles at what transpired later when the ship was between voyages in Southampton. It was a common practice by quite a few of the ship's company, including me, to hire cars to drive home for perhaps five days' leave. On the evening of the day when I took my hire car back to Hertz, our Social Hostess drove up to the Canberra late at night and her car went over the edge of the wharf into the river, which is tidal and never less than 50 feet deep. Sadly, she did not survive.

We sailed the next day while the police and fire brigade attempted to retrieve the car. We heard later that the funeral had been a big one at a local village church, attended by the Director of P&O. At the first Sunday service held on board for passengers, the Captain mentioned her loss to many on board the ship and prayers were said.

In this troubled world, I think, shared thoughts and prayers are important to us all.

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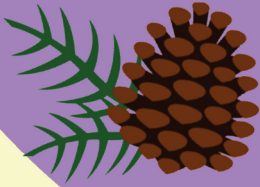
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