

+STOMP

SUMMER 2025

AGAZINE

ISSUE 66



THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD



MEDITATION

My Dear Child

I am your Holy Father. Perhaps you are in pain
because you think that I am refusing to answer your prayer.

But you see, no prayer is ever wasted

because I will answer it in My own way,

Just place your prayer in My hands and trustfully wait for the outcome.

Though all seems wrong, unanswered and unheard,

There are forces at work that you know nothing about.

But be at peace my child, you go on caring,

You go on doing what I want you to do,

And I will do what I am going to do.

Just leave everything to me

I will give you all you need

Just trust in me, because I am your Father

And I will never let you down.

*Submitted to St Luke's Parish Magazine,
Holmes Chapel, by the late Mr Brian Shreeve*

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FROM THE EDITOR

CHURCH, HIGH STREET, PARK, AND COMMUNITY



This is a reflection on Monday 25 August as Art in The Nave at St Mary's Church came to an end.

In recent years we have been concerned to bring more events and people into St Mary's. Some years earlier a matriarch of St Mary's chatting to me mentioned her sense of an alienation between what had been established nearly 900 hundred years ago as a symbol of Norman power, in her words 'a Norman fortress', and the town.

Sitting outside the West Door on this gorgeous sunny day I saw the Park full of life, activity and gaiety, and remembered opposition from some quarters on the Council in the late 1960s to developing Gadebridge Park in this way for the community.

Looking to the right I saw in the corner of our grounds the people and the yellow and blue bunting and the celebration of the declaration of the independence of the Ukraine on this day in 1991.

Behind me in the church was the wonderful exhibition of local arts led by Brian Doran, with a steady flow of admirers all serviced by volunteers from our church, led by great efforts at the refreshment stall, the home-made cakes and scones all selling out fast.

All is well I concluded, the church St Mary's, the park, the High Street and the community are all here together and with an even a wider perspective to include the Ukraine at this poignant time for the country.

GG Monday 25/08/2025

A LETTER FROM CANON JOHN

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you and all parishioners regarding a number of things which are important to our parish going forward.

The first of these is the difficult financial situation that we face in the parish of St Mary and St Paul which mirrors the situation of many families across the country. With increasing bills and other challenges, it looks like we will be about £12,000 over budget by the end of this year. This is concerning for all of us, but we do have plans in place to reduce this deficit and move closer to balancing the books next year.

One of the ways we can improve our finances is by asking you if you are able to review your financial support. If you are new to church, you may not be aware that we offer a Parish Giving Scheme which helps people to contribute to the cost of running our church buildings and ministry, as well as helping us budget by giving us a predictable level of income. This giving, along with income from the hire of our halls, runs all that we do and we are most grateful to everyone who supports the work of the parish in this way.

Many people in our country believe that the Church has some sort of state subsidy or that we have many investments that we can draw upon in difficult times but in most cases this is not true and we rely on the generosity of those who attend church and use our facilities in the present day.

We have been working over recent years to shift the financial burden of the parish to those in the community who are able to contribute to the life of our town as well as to the support of our churches.

In the Old Town particularly this has worked well with the Market, Art in the Nave, Vintage Fair and The Beer Festival. This type of event will be increasingly important in balancing our accounts and helping us to reach new people, often those who have never attended church before.



As a parish we have benefited amazingly in the last few years from some major legacies which have allowed us to improve our churches and halls, much of this will be obvious to you from the work and activity that has gone on, especially this year at St Mary's, but also in previous years at both our churches. So I am asking you - whether you are able to help us this year by increasing your financial



support or not - that you might consider benefiting the church in the long term by leaving us a legacy in your Will. The Salisbury and Batchelor bequests have allowed us to upgrade our churches for the demands of the present day and as we think ahead to a time when we will not be here, it would be wonderful if our work could continue and benefit Christians as yet unborn.

If you are interested in discussing this or any aspect of our finances, please do speak to the Clergy, Churchwardens or to Brian Crawley and Andrew Williams, part of our treasury team.

Our difficulties are not limited to financial ones, over the next year we will face many new challenges as we have departures and changes happening throughout the Hemel Hempstead Team Ministry. Norma Howie - our long serving Parish and Team Administrator will retire at the end of this year along with her very able assistant, Sheila Neep. With the current financial situation, we will not be able to fully replace Norma; instead we will have to reduce the paid administrative support that we have available and rely on volunteers to do more. I know that you are all busy people and many of you give much time to the church already, but if you are able to offer some time helping with some of the office duties, with looking after the hall bookings for example, or with a variety of other roles that Norma carries out, working some hours in the office or from your home, then please speak to me or one of the Churchwardens.

The second big change will be the departure of one of our Team Vicars at some stage during 2026. This Hemel Team Reorganisation has been in the pipeline for several years and will mean that there is one less member of clergy running the same 5 church buildings and their services and other needs. We will do our best to keep everything running but it is inevitable that there will be changes to the quantity and times of our services as well as to other things that the clergy do. We are working closer as a Team and this is good for us all and will benefit all of the

Church of England churches in Hemel Hempstead, however this also means an added administrative burden as we attend one another's meetings which may be a benefit but is also another time commitment.

So, the committees of our parish, such as fabric and finance, will need to function without the guiding hand of the clergy. Surely the clergy can rely on able lay people to chair and administer these and other matters. It does seem sometimes that some people work against one another rather than together, and going forward we will need to rely on everyone in our church community to act with compassion and encouragement in their dealings with those with whom they disagree. After all we are all trying to build the kingdom and maintain our challenging but beautiful buildings.

The PCC will be having an away day to look at these and other matters and to draw up a new Mission Action Plan for the coming years. When we meet in October Bishop Rob Wickham will facilitate the meeting so that we can plan a way to deal with all the challenges I've been mentioning. We will then communicate the way forward to all of you.

Personally, the last year has been a tough one when it has been hard to achieve many of the things in the parish that I would liked to have done. My wife's illness and the time that has been spent dealing with it and supporting her recovery has not allowed me the opportunity to do many of the things that need doing. It's very pleasing that Penny is much better and your support along with that of Bishop Jane and Archdeacon Charles has been much valued.

Added to all this, at a time when I was expecting my ministry to be drawing to a close, I have been invited by the National Church onto a leadership training programme looking at intergenerational churches. This course coordinated by my old college, Ridley Hall, in Cambridge, consists of residential modules, learning away days and online working. It also calls for a group of our young people and their parents to work with me in transforming our church from the perspective of an intergenerational model.



This will be challenging over the next year both on my time and possibly on your patience, but we hope it will help us to continue to build on recent additions to our church congregations as well as helping the wider church to learn from our situation. One of the things to come out of this training so far is the need for all of us in positions of responsibility to operate a mentor system looking at bringing on new people – not necessarily younger - who can cover the jobs that we currently do. It will be obvious to you that the volunteer base in both churches is not as broad or as young as it once was and our volunteers are mostly over committed. This, along with the other changes I've already outlined, will greatly challenge us next year. This needn't be bad and indeed it should be good for us all as we acknowledge the need to pass the burden from a small group of overcommitted volunteers to the wider Church base.

As we move forward, we want to put Safeguarding, Health and Safety, and the care of all our people at the top of the agenda. It's wonderful that Julie Pollard – as Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) – has taken over the coordination of our safeguarding this year supported by Clare Debenham and Robyn Ryan. However, safeguarding is the responsibility of all of us and I would ask you to support them in continuing to keep our church safe for all who use our facilities and attend our events. If you have been asked to carry out training or vetting by the PSO then please do your best to complete this in a timely fashion so that we can demonstrate by our actions that it is important to protect our children and vulnerable adults.

This letter has been an unusually long one and I'm expecting there will be several more early next year to follow up much of what is happening. Whatever else you take from this it is important that you realise that across our Team Ministry in Hemel Hempstead things cannot remain the same as they have been in the recent past however much we would like that. This is partly due to finance and to personnel changes but also because when we seek to follow Jesus and build the kingdom that always leads to some pain which in turn allows us to thrive and grow.

With my prayers for you in your own vocation and ministry,

John

The Revd Canon John Williams, Team Rector

IT WENT LIKE THE CLAPPERS AT ST MARY'S

Episode 1 – crash!

There we were, ringing for Sunday morning service, ten minutes to go, when there was a crash from upstairs. Of course we immediately stopped ringing to investigate. The noise clearly came from the 2nd bell, and it was rapidly rung “down” to its safe position. Tower Captain Brian was absent on family duty so Peter and David retrieved the key to the locked gate to the bell chamber, unlocked it and hurried up the stairs to the bell chamber. Rapidly confirming that the clapper had detached itself but all else was safe, it was decided we should finish ringing for the service before any further action, so we continued ringing on bells 3 to 8 for the final minutes. (What dedication!)

After service ringing and to ensure safe investigation, the adjacent bell was rung down to the safe position before we went further. Then we squeezed along the bell frame to the 2nd and inspected further. It turned out that the nuts holding the clapper had been vibrated loose, eventually losing hold and it dived downwards. On the way down it crashed into the wooden “slider” an essential piece of kit used to hold the bell in the inverted position, which broke into two pieces

Crawling on the floor underneath the steel bell frame we retrieved the clapper and its nuts & washers from the floor of the bell chamber, and reinstalled it firmly. There are two sturdy wooden floors between the bells and the ringers, so there's precious little danger of anything coming down to hurt us.



Here is the slider (right) broken into two and clamped together having been glued. You can see that it's curved, and that would be a problem if we had to replace it – cutting a piece that shape would be rather difficult. There are bell-maintenance companies that would do it but at a pretty price.

Next step was to buy two plates and some bolts then drill and brace the joint. Any strain on the slider is only sideways, so that was considered a viable and safe solution.

– CRISIS IN THE BELL CHAMBER

We left that bit to Tower Captain Brian on return from his travels, and on Wednesday (only 3 days after the break) we reinstalled it. Job done.

We regularly inspect the bells, checking for loose nuts particularly, but this one snuck past us in between inspections. We're taking steps to rectify the possibility of it happening again, and that is the subject of the next episode .

Episode 2 – the solution

Following the clapper incident in episode 1 it was decided to take drastic action. Two reasons – 1) to fix all the clappers firmly and unshakeably in place, and 2) to ensure that in future we could easily adjust the swing of the clappers to be exactly equal when rotating in clockwise and anticlockwise directions, a source of difficulty in striking accurately for some time.

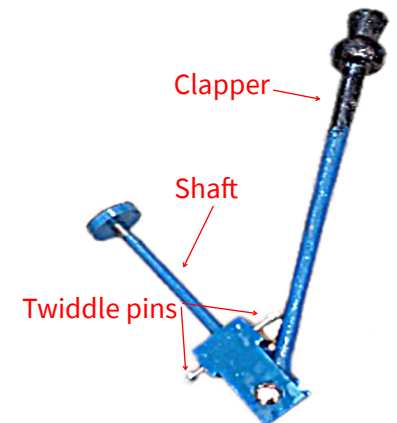
The remedy required professional attention so we commissioned Whites of Appleton to provide it. The exercise consisted of the removal of the clappers, transportation to their Oxfordshire premises, collection and refitting them. After refitting they would be timed precisely to strike the bell evenly in both directions, to an accuracy of a fraction of a second.

Removal and transportation would be undertaken by the ringers as that saved several hundred pounds of professional attendance. The problem part of each was the shaft (example arrowed) that goes through the top of the bell to be fixed on the headstock, impossible to adjust except by having tapered washers, and lucky guesses and repeated tests when fixing it.

Here is the amended version, two “twiddle pins” being the adjusters.

A whole day was spent in taking the clappers (30lb each) up to the bell chamber, fixing each one and then ringing it while attached to a very precise timer to ensure equal timing in each direction. If not correct, the twiddle pins were adjusted and the exercise repeated. Eight bells, eight clappers, eight repeated adjustments.

One hurdle was that several of the holes in the top of the bells through which the shaft passed were too large and the clapper could shift or wobble,



so the bellhangers went away and manufactured nylon bushes to make the holes wobble-proof, and we completed the task another day.

The helpers (with the old clapper fittings) The £4,800 cost was met by means of grants from the local ringing organisation, the county bell restoration fund, and the ringers themselves.

Now we have “perfectly struck” bells the only reason for bad ringing is bad ringers!

Footnote: we entered two teams in the local striking competitions in May and both teams won their divisions!

David Gambling



The helpers (with the old clapper fittings)



RANDOM SMILES



...and the theme of this morning's service is... Preaching a Gospel of Simplicity

Choice

Why do Americans choose from just two people to run for president, and 50 for Miss America?

Wear out

Three little boys were bragging about how tough they were. "I'm so tough," said the first boy, "that I can wear out a pair of shoes in a week."

"Well," said the second little boy, "I'm so tough, I can wear out a pair of jeans in a day."

"That's nothing," said the third boy. "When my parents take me to see my grandma and grandpa, I can wear them out in just one hour."

All Angels?

The slightly harassed minister stood on the railway station platform with a number of lively Sunday School children, while the two Sunday School teachers went off to buy tickets. A porter came up to him and asked: "Excuse me, are you St Michael and all the Angels?"

Oddest

The parish magazine was reporting on a recent parish away-day at the seaside. It said: 'The results of our competition for the oddest item found on the beach were: First prize: Mrs Wainwright; second prize: The Vicar; and third prize, Mr Simpson.'

An irresistible bargain

A little boy was pestering his parents for a baby brother or sister. They kept telling him 'maybe one day, but we can't afford one yet.' Then one Sunday the little boy dragged his parents over to the noticeboard at the back of church. It was advertising a coming sale at the church and announced: 'Children: free'.

Truths about children

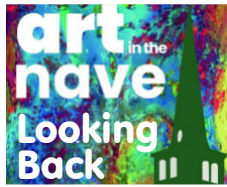
- A young child is a noise with dirt on it.
- A child will not spill on a dirty floor.
- Having children is like having a bowling alley installed in your brain.
- Having children will turn you into your parents.
- If you have trouble getting your children's attention, just sit down and look comfortable.
- Avenge yourself; live long enough to be a problem to your children.

Dear Lord,

So far today, I am doing all right. I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or self-indulgent. I have not whined, complained, or cursed. I have not charged on my credit card or eaten any chocolate. However, I am going to get out of bed in a few minutes, and I will need a lot more help after that! Amen.

If you understand it

When you get to the point where you really understand your computer, it's probably obsolete.



THE GRAND DRAW

I have been 'the promoter' for the Parish Grand Draw for quarter of a century or so, mainly at St Paul's towards Christmas but latterly for the Summer St Mary's Art in The Nave Exhibition. To be the promoter, named as such on the Draw tickets, is a legal requirement. Running the Draw is something else.

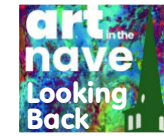
One needs to find the prizes, to get the tickets sold, to set up for the event, to keep selling, to make the Draw and to make sure that all the prizes reach the winners.

Happily, generous donors from our Parish always give around 20 prizes, one of which is always the well-filled St Mary's Hamper. An anxiety approaching the opening day of the exhibition is the number of tickets already sold in advance.

This year the figure at 330 was a record low, so you will imagine I was worried about this. Well, 140 more tickets were sold on the Friday evening and a further 470 by 3.30pm on the following Monday. This was staggering; in total 940 tickets were sold, the record having been 942.

The good range of prizes was attractively displayed and more prominently than hitherto and there was some very active selling to make sure that my target of 850 sales would be met and indeed it was well beaten. Thank you very much everybody for giving, buying and selling.

Gordon Gaddes



It is easy to underestimate the importance of Art in the Nave to the funding of our parish of St Mary's and St Paul's. The rising cost of living, both for all the parishioners in terms of giving and for the day to day costs of running of our buildings and services, means we could not make ends meet if it weren't for fundraisers like AIN and the Grand Draw.

These events happen because a relatively small band of volunteers work tirelessly both during the event and, in many cases, for days, weeks and even months before - and after. We cannot express how grateful we are for your efforts and achievements. The two other very deserving charities will also benefit from what you have done. You should be proud of yourselves, and we are very grateful to you all.

Norma Podmore

Please pass on my great thanks to you and the team at St Mary's for your incredible work at Art in the Nave: setting up, stewarding, selling, making cakes, and all round stirring good eggs!

What team work! It was lovely to be back with you again this year, see you next May!

Mary Casserly - Artist

And a huge thank you to you both Brian and Yvonne. It is your hard work and organisational skills that make this event run so smoothly.

It is a fantastic weekend and always a pleasure to help at.

Lynne Sygrave

THANK YOU to everyone who helped in any way to make this year's Art in the Nave so successful.

We needed you ALL

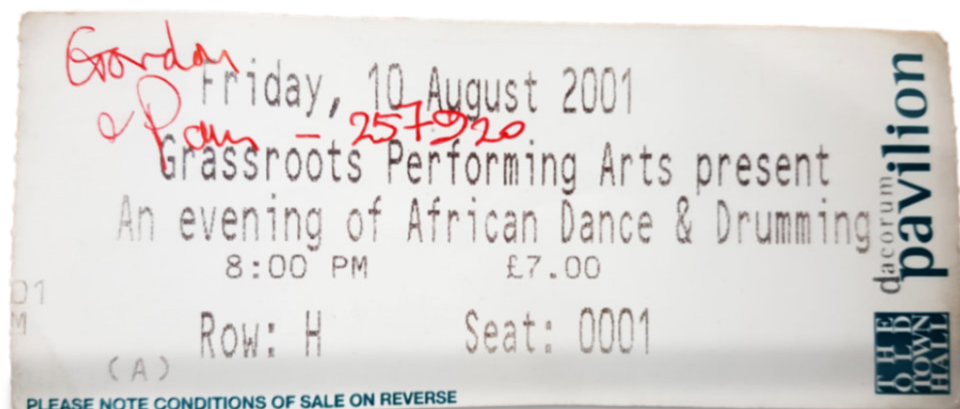
Final clearing up this morning and last of the posters to be taken down around the town, Leverstock Green, and Apsley and then on to accounting before letting you all know how much for our charities and St Mary's church.

We hope you can be a part of our next AIN in May 2026 (yes, it's earlier next year)

Yvonne Doran

ALFRED AND MARTHA 24 YEARS ON

Following Morning Prayer at St Paul's on 28 August during our refreshments break Alfred brought me a keepsake going back 24 years. It was a ticket for a performance at the Old Town Hall on Friday 10 August 2001. The Grassroots Performing Arts were presenting an evening of African Dance & Drumming by a group of Zimbabweans who were visiting the UK, as I remember it very much under the auspices of the Revd Peter Cotton, Team Rector at the time. A number of us, including Pam and I, supported Peter by hosting the group for several days. The ticket was personally interesting because on it written in red ink was, 'Gordon and Pam, 257920'.



So, what is the story? Alfred with others from Montserrat had been evacuated because of a series of disastrous volcanic eruptions, which had covered almost two thirds of the island with lava and ash. Leaving USA in 2000 he has since been living in Hemel Hempstead and his visit to the Old Town Hall was his first outing in the town. Half way up the steps to the theatre, conscious that Alfred was behind us, we turned round for a chat. Alfred told us about what had happened to bring him to the UK and said he had some interesting videos about the disaster and wondered whether we would like to see them.



Of course, the answer was 'yes', but going further we arranged a get together and a film show in St Paul's Church several weeks later.

There were around 40 people present including Alfred, and also Martha from Montserrat. Martha knew Alfred as boy, 'always smart and well behaved', she has said several times.

The evening was a great success and, happily for St Paul's, Alfred and Martha have been with us regularly most weeks since then worshipping with us, contributing unstintingly to the weekly collection and other fund - raising happenings, joining us for events at St Mary's and other social events, even three test matches at Lords, when England have faced the West Indies. They have brought to us a sense of deep spiritual commitment and continuing joyfulness and we all love them to be part of our congregation.

DEVELOPMENT CAN ARRIVE IN STAGES

It is always good to share something encouraging, so I hope you will celebrate the bit of good news that Gill and I received recently.

Those of you who have been reading SToMP Magazine for a while may remember that Gill and I enjoyed a spell of bridge building in rural South Africa between 2003 and 2008. (see Issue 13 Nov 2012). During those 5 years we responded to requests from 4 priests in the Diocese of Umzimvubu to help them to achieve bridges for their communities. The first of these bridges was in a village called Welakabini, about 20 miles into the Transkei rural countryside west of Kokstad, and was intended as an improvement on the 'box' that provided the only way to cross the river when it was in spate for some 20 miles in either direction. These pictures of the 'box' show that it was a wooden crate suspended from a pulley wheel and pulled across the river by an endless cord.



Quite an exciting way to cross the river when you are young and fit, but less so when clambering up and into the box becomes less easy!

Hence the wish for a bridge, and even the person who operated the toll 'box' was in favour because of his fear of his 'box' having an accident. We had so much excitement and satisfaction over planning and fund raising so as to be able to help the community to build their own bridge, which was why there were others.

– THE UNFNISHED (?) STORY OF A BRIDGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The next stage in the story was that the Kwazulu Natal Government built a road to allow the local taxi buses to drop passengers at one end of the bridge, along with their shopping which they could then transport home on a wheel barrow, with or without a barrow boy to help.

The taxi road was quite a satisfying development but there was more to come.

Over the years we have heard that the local TV have highlighted the importance of the bridge at times of extreme river flooding; and then at every election time we have heard that there has been talk of building a 'proper' bridge, but as you might expect after the Election nothing happened.



But that was until this year, when a friend sent us pictures of the new bridge that has been built next door, transforming the lives of the community on the remote side of the river – the school is on the remote side along with a community of around 4,000 people we are told!

Inevitably the landscape looks devastated, but I am sure that nature will make sure it recovers with time. However we remember with amusement the fraught negotiations that we had with the person who owned the field on the roadside end of the first bridge. He was concerned that people would cut the corner and walk across his field coming off the footbridge, so insisted on it being fenced. He was right of course the fencing didn't last long and the path across his field was soon well established.

So well done the person who first saw a need and constructed the 'box' crossing, because they started the stages of development and I wonder how long it will now be before the road is tarred and then becomes a dual carriageway!!



Robin Woodd

LANGA TRUST CHRISTMAS CARD



LTPPT Trustee, Aimee Luther, linking with designer Joe Towsey has produced this very original card at her own expense. It expresses the theme of Christmas in an African milieu, a mother and her young child heading for a pre-school early in the morning with the emphasis on learning and food.

The card will be A6 in size and will be available in multiples of 10. The cost will be £5 for 10, postage and package included.

Profits made from this Christmas card will be set aside in LTPPT and included in the account being set up for the Olivia Lindh-Llusia project described elsewhere in this newsletter.

If you wish to order please e-mail gordon.gaddes@btinternet.com or phone or message

GOD IN THE SCIENCES

Jewish Festival of Tabernacles

On 6th-13th October this year many people around the world will be celebrating the Jewish festival of Tabernacles, or Sukkot. They will celebrate the Harvest, and also remember God bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and through 40 years in the desert.

The biblical book of Deuteronomy contains a description of what Tabernacles should have been like back then. “Celebrate... for seven days. Be joyful... you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns.”

These festivals were not just a celebration, but also an expression of gratitude to God: “celebrate the festival to the Lord your God...For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.” Tabernacles was a proper holiday, with two whole days off normal work and seven days of feasting.

Farming looks very different today. Very few of us have had to sweat long hours over crops, so we’re not as ready for (or deserving of) a rest and a party as our ancestors were at this time of year. That might be even more the case in future, as the agri-tech revolution unfolds. For example, small autonomous tractors are already becoming available that do less damage to the soil and make better use of steep or oddly shaped fields.

Many arable farms already hire contractors to do the routine work with large specialist GPS-equipped machinery. In future years those people might find themselves using very different kinds of high-tech kit, acting more as land-management advisors, helping farmers to gather data and to find ways of improving soil quality, biodiversity and the water cycle.

I’m very grateful for the food that arrives on my shelves. Instead of worrying about whether or not we earned it, our modern-day Tabernacles or Harvest celebration could include ways of encouraging those involved in agriculture and developing new agricultural technologies, as well as enjoying how we can learn about and benefit from God’s creation through Science.

This series is written by Dr Ruth Bancewicz, who is based at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

So, after you celebrate Harvest at church, why not follow it up with a trip to a local farm this month? Why not learn from the ancient Israelites, and follow it up with a meal together? It stands to reason that those of us who live in countries where food is plentiful and cheap could do with being proportionately more generous in our gratitude and giving. Should we throw better parties? Probably!



Modern tractors are lighter and cause less compaction of the soil; their movements across the field are pre-planned and accurately controlled by global positioning satellites (GPS). They don’t even need a driver.

ROGER SYGRAVE



Just as we were about to go to print with our previous issue of SToMP we received the very sad news of Roger's death. We managed to include an announcement in that edition and promised a fuller tribute in this one.

Roger had been an active member of our congregation since boyhood and continued throughout his life serving in many roles.

As a tribute to him we are repeating here the interview he gave to Gordon for our edition for Autumn 2020 which acknowledged his skills and the breadth of his career apart from his church activities of which we've had many examples. Thank you Roger - may you Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory!

Roger is well known to us within our churches. His life-long journey in St Mary's has taken him at the age of six from afternoon Sunday School in the former St Mary's Hall, to choir boy, to marriage to Lynne at the age of 22, to Debbie and Jonathon being baptised there, and all the way on to his decades of support and leadership, as Church Warden and Chairman of the Fabric Committee and his work on the buildings and in the grounds.

What is little or only known partly was revealed in my latest interview. The story relates to a person who at the age of ten knew what he wanted to do with his life, something which he has followed through for the rest of his life.

Born in Hemel Hempstead in 1945 to a very long-standing local family, Roger lived with his parents in Bury Hill. This was a part of 'old Hemel' later almost obliterated to make way for the College, a large roundabout and feeder roads. In the Summer 2018 issue of SToMP Roger described in detail 'the secret garden' on Bury Hill, $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre of walled garden in the grounds of his godmother, Miss Turner's house. Here he spent many years learning about flowers, bushes and trees, this garden being part of his life as he grew up. His dad bought him his first greenhouse, an 8' x 6' at the age of nine, and a couple of years later it was extended by 8'. Schooling involved the Heath Brow Preparatory School followed by senior years at Stanborough Park School in Watford.

Whilst his Mum wanted him to go into banking Roger was fixed on horticulture and he worked for over a year for the Borough Council, first in Gadebridge Park and then at the Council's Churchill nursery. This was followed by a one-year residential course in commercial horticulture at Secret's training centre in Milford, Surrey.



Then he attended a one-year specialist residential course at Oaklands College in St Albans. This led to the final examination of the Royal Horticultural Society, of ten three-hour examination papers over a week's period! With these Certificates and his Fellowship of the Society, Roger was ready to move on and it is no wonder that then he was to spend a lifetime working in horticulture.

In 1965 he became the Foreman for a plant nursery and garden design business on the Leighton Buzzard Road, on

the site of Hilliers. When that business was sold in 1968, he worked for the new owners in developing a garden centre. Ten years later he decided to move on and was offered a post to set up a new garden centre just beyond Leverstock Green. Difficulties there led to a nadir in his career, and a month or so before Christmas to his resignation and unemployment.

That was a time when the support of his family and his Christian faith saw him through.

He remembers particularly the help of David Clarke in preparing a CV, and them later sharing together their model railway hobby. In succession within a month he was offered three jobs to manage garden centres, which in retrospect happily he turned down. In the event this period was pivotal for him because the next employment was to take him into the educational field and was to last for over 30 years. He could not believe how free he was to become with such a weight taken from his shoulders.

An advert in Horticultural Week interested Roger, he applied for and was employed at Oaklands College, St Albans, involving supervision of the gardens and tuition with the students.

After five years this was a stepping stone to his final full-time employer, Capel Manor Horticultural College, Enfield, this lasting for 25 years, from 1987 to 2012. First working as a horticultural instructor for three

years, he then was promoted. Becoming the Gardens Manager, he found himself in a demanding managerial job with some very interesting extras! It is fascinating to list what the extras included; planning and preparation for many displays at the Chelsea Flower Show over the years and, towards the event, 19 hour working days; helping with the conversion of a church in Lambeth to become the Museum of Garden History; variously showing Princess Anne, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh round the gardens; at the 2001 Chelsea Show, the show-stopping Salis research project, describing the reach of the willow tree from Siberia to New Zealand and its use ranging from cricket bats to aspirins, one of the two projects for which Roger won a gold medal; and planning for the Queen Mother's Centenary Garden at the College, involving links with the Head Gardeners at all HRH's properties, and later showing the centenarian Queen Mother round her tribute garden. A charming story arose from this concerning a special pink rhododendron planted on the advice of the Head Gardener at the Royal Lodge Windsor. Being shown this the Queen Mother said, 'my late husband and I planted a bed of these at the Royal Lodge and each year it gives me great pleasure when they flower.' Also, a special memory was the lunch he and Lynne had with Her Grace, the Duchess of Devonshire,

at Chatsworth, following a visit to the opening of the new sensory garden designed by her grandson.

Life moved on and in a reorganisation of the College Roger's responsibilities changed and he became an Assessor of the work of students, later reducing to three days weekly. This opened another door for him – to the Royal Parks, as he was an assessor for the Three - Year Apprenticeship course for employees in the Inner and Outer Royal Parks. Roger taking the Inner Royal Parks. Finally, still in demand in retirement, and as a volunteer he continues to help by serving as Board member for the Royal Parks Guild.



A tour of the gardens at Capel Manor by Roger for Prince Charles.



Lunch party at Chatsworth House after the opening of the new Sensory Garden designed by the grandson of the Duchess.

(R to L) Principal of Capel College, Lynne and Roger, Andrew Parker-Bowles, Her Grace The Duchess of Devonshire, with her grandson standing between the estates manager of Capel Manor and his wife.

This is a life stretching for nearly 70 years from one secret garden to another secret garden at the house on the ¾ acre plot of 14 Leverstock Green Road. Roger and Lynne have lived in this house, built by his grandfather in 1930, since 1969. The garden at the rear is a magical, colourful area of plants, bushes and trees, and birds and insects, a place of great joy for his family, Lynne, Debbie and Jonathon and friends. This story goes back 120 years at least, however. Miss Turner's father, before coming to Hemel Hempstead to take over the Six Bells Public House at the turn of the 20th Century, had worked for the Royal Horticultural Society in Chiswick Gardens, now Chiswick House and well worth a visit. Here, in Hemel Hempstead, he set up the first secret garden, which so greatly interested and enthused Roger as a boy.

I do not know how you, the reader, reflect on your life, what you have done and what you wish you could have done. For me I would like to have played cricket like Ted Dexter or played the violin like Yehudi Menuhin or gardened like Roger.

GG

WORKING WITH PEOPLE SETTLING IN FROM ABROAD

I began working with refugees and Asylum seekers helping them learn English before Covid came to England UK. I started helping a friend Chris, out at St Paul's church in St. Albans and then out at a church near Luton Train Station helping people learn English.

It was during this time I was recommended to join as a volunteer, Hert's Welcome Refugees. I was already working as a helper unpaid alongside a retired GP and a retired science teacher

I am now working online with people who have very little English and also people at a hotel in Hatfield one afternoon a week.

The work has involved helping them learn the basics of our alphabet, and counting, we then move on to very simple words and tenses. I am able with some of them to have simple conversations such as how to make an appointment with a doctor, visiting a chemist, joining the Library or local swimming pool. I have helped some with reading a map and planning a route to the shops and other venues from the hotel.

My wife Hazel and I have also taken workshops in the use of puppets, juggling and fun games in the park local to the hotel for some of the children. The last two years has also given me the chance to share the message of Christmas with the families and has led to the volunteers collecting items to give gifts to the refugees, at this time who have very little money to live on. The hotel does provide a shared room for people and provides meals as well, but not much variety.

St Albans Cathedral has also started running a support group for refugees wanting to learn English on Monday afternoons, this has led to refugees who are skilled cooks cooking a meal at the cathedral on occasions. I was asked by one of my students to try her cooking at the Cathedral and what a wonderful meal from Turkey I had.



Neil and his wife, Hazel

The students seem to enjoy our company, mainly I feel because we make time for them and take them out of a boring routine and a chance to meet people interested in helping them.

One interesting point, the refugees are surprised when they have asked "Are you well paid for what you do and our reply is " We do this as volunteers". I have often heard this would not happen in their own countries if we English were refugees.

Herts Welcome Refugees has only 2 part time paid helpers who do admin and about 150 volunteer helpers, some helping families in their homes, some in hotels and others online. Herts Welcome refugees have collected clothes and shoes, toys, bikes, and even school uniforms for children. we have helped them find doctors, hospitals, courses at Oakland's College in St. Albans college for English classes, but you must have a basic level of English to join. The collage is more writing, grammar based and reading, not conversation based.

For me personally I have become a better teacher and it has helped me in my other role as a storyteller and clown using puppets and juggling.

We are one of the most diverse counties in England and one of the two most popular for refugees wanting to settle in the UK.

Neil Wilkin, member of Ashley Church in St.Albans

FALCONS AT THE ABBEY

Early this Summer, a pair of Peregrine Falcons nested at the top of the tower at St Albans Abbey and became local celebrities—and rightly so. Since first nesting there in 2022, the same pair has returned each spring, making the cathedral one of just five known breeding sites in Hertfordshire.

They've successfully raised chicks for several years, including a trio of males in 2025.

A live webcam installed high on the cathedral offered a stunning view of their nesting tray, attracting hundreds of thousands of viewers.

The nesting tray was designed to mimic their natural cliff-top habitat, helping ensure a safe and familiar environment.

Peregrine falcon fledglings typically reach full maturity around 13 months of age, when they shed juvenile feathers and grow adult plumage.



Dinner from Dad. These chicks are just two-week old . Four weeks later they had shed their 'cotton wool' and were flying. In around two years time they will be capable of achieving flight speeds of over 200mph - the fastest moving creatures on earth.

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