

Parish News

St Mary the Virgin, Saffron Walden

St John, Little Walden and

St James, Sewards End

Part of Saffron Walden & Villages Team Ministry



May 2020

FREE

Rachel starts her maternity leave

On the 1st April our curate, The Revd Rachel Prior, started her maternity leave, but because of the current restrictions we were unable to give her the send off we had wished. However, many in our congregations contributed towards gifts for the mum-to-be, together with a cheque towards whatever is needed. One of the gifts in the bag was a copy of a Victorian book giving advice to new mums, such as, don't give beer to babies as it could lead to bad habits!



The following note from Rachel appeared in The Grapevine: -

‘Through the appropriate social distancing measures (!) I have received your gifts. Thank you ever so much for your extraordinary generosity, as well as for your prayers and best wishes. Sam and I are really looking forward to welcoming the new addition to our family and we can't wait to introduce our baby, which is due on 19th April, to their church family in due course.’

We will, of course, miss Rachel very much. We are very grateful for all Rachel has contributed to our worship and parish life. She has led us during the Rector's sabbatical, the start of the interregnum and more recently the coronavirus outbreak. She took on these challenges superbly and we thank God for her ministry with us. As she and Sam embark upon this next adventure in their lives we send them our warmest good wishes and prayers for a safe delivery.

Denis and Gill

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PARISH NEWS - EDITORIAL DEADLINE

The deadline for contributions for each issue is the 1st Sunday of the month. Hence, the deadline for the **June** issue is **Sunday 3rd May** and for the **July** issue **Sunday 7th June**.

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PARISH NEWS IS A FREE PUBLICATION and can also be viewed (**in full colour**) online at our parish website:

www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/parishnews

Front Cover: *Audley End House*

Photograph by Andy Colebrooke

During the lockdown...

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ASSISTANT CURATE: On maternity leave

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Pastoral Letter

From The Rev'd Paula Griffiths

Dear friends,

Last summer I picked up at the Hadstock Fete (do you remember those happy social activities ...?) Terry Waite's account of his captivity in Beirut – *Taken on Trust*. I started reading it this February. With coronavirus spreading, it felt increasingly resonant with our present situation.

His gruelling experience eclipsed any frustration we may feel about lockdown. For much of his nearly four years' imprisonment he was completely isolated; often chained to the wall; could leave his room only for a daily visit to the bathroom: never saw even his captors, because he had to be blindfolded whenever they entered the room; could not even see outside, because the window was covered with metal sheeting.

How did he keep sane? Eventually, they brought him books, one at a time – anything from a child's story book; a Mills and Boon romance; a volume of an encyclopaedia; or Dostoevsky. He begged for a Bible and Prayer Book: and eventually received them.

He developed a daily structure: morning prayers; exercise, when he wasn't chained, pacing round the small room; reading; then composing in his head the book which he wrote after his release.

He clung to the person and teachings of Jesus. Often he prayed through Holy Communion from memory: one Christmas Eve, he saved a scrap of bread and a drop of water in his plastic beaker for his own Midnight Mass.

In these strange days, we, like him, feel anxious for ourselves and our families; we too are cut off from meeting in church. Even if (a huge if, as I write) March's tight restrictions have been relaxed by the time you read this, life may not be normal for some time. But we are learning to worship together as a Christian community while physically separated. Our own prayers and Bible reading unite us in faith and hope. Praying at different times, using different words, we form part of the Church's great voice of prayer all round the world, which is never silent.

Technology helps us worship in new ways: emails, St Mary's website, Zoom packages, and written resources. I'm deeply grateful to our technical and musical experts supporting these packages, to yourselves embracing new ideas so positively, and to the many volunteers providing pastoral and practical support.

We are blessed to join in this way as the body of Christ, sharing his love in this troubled world. Sharing the Eucharist from my home through Zoom is a



special privilege for me: and I, and my ministerial colleagues, are at the end of a phone, always ready to talk.

This month we celebrate Christ's ascension to heaven as Lord and King, and the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost to guide and sustain us. May the knowledge that we on earth are only part of the eternal company of God's people give us strength to stand together, confident that, whatever befalls us, nothing can separate us from his love and care.

With my prayers and love to you all,

Paula

Update on the Vacancy for Saffron Walden and Villages Team Rector and Area Dean

Our appointment process for a new Team Rector has been paused. We have set up a new provisional timetable which puts the interviews in late June. We are very aware that this may be too soon, but at least we have some new dates in the diary which can be reviewed early in May at the point when we need to commit to the cost of a new advertisement in the Church Times.

Our provisional timetable is now as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Advertisement in the Church Times | 15 th & 22 nd May |
| Closing date | 7 th June |
| Visits to the parishes by the Lord Chancellor's Ecclesiastical Sec'tary | 18 th June |
| Visits by candidates | 24 th June |
| Interviews | 25 th June |

Please continue to pray for the success of this process, the candidates and those involved in the selection.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

The APCM which was due to take place on 26th April has been postponed until later in the year. A new date will be advised as soon as circumstances allow.

Denis Tindley

Calendar for May 2020

For information about online Services and resources see our Church at Home page at www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/churchathome

Major Festivals

Thursday 21st May: ASCENSION DAY

O God, we give you thanks that your Son Jesus Christ, who has shared our earthly life, has now ascended to prepare our heavenly life. Grant that, through coming to know Him by faith on earth, we may come to know Him by sight in heaven.

Sunday 31st May: PENTECOST

We beseech you, O Lord, to ignite our souls with love, faith and hope by the fire of your Holy Spirit. And may the wind of your Spirit so inspire our minds, that we may proclaim your gospel to others in words which they can understand.



Be our hope

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or
in isolation.
In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through Him who suffered alone
on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Caring for the sick

For hospital staff and medical researchers

Gracious God,
give skill, sympathy and resilience
to all who are caring for the sick,
and your wisdom to those searching
for a cure.
Strengthen them with your Spirit,
that through their work many will be
restored to health;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



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Memories of RAB Butler at Trinity



Here are some of the rather odd things that happened at Trinity College, Cambridge when RAB Butler and my mother lived there when he was Master of the college in the sixties. I hope these will prove fairly amusing as we all need to be diverted from the difficult times we are going through at the moment.

The first party my mother gave when she and RAB arrived at Trinity was for some of the dons to meet them both so that they should get to know them, as it had not been a totally popular appointment. Two of the oldest members of the faculty had lived in college for a great many years and cordially disliked each other. On this occasion, however, they were united in trying to give the Butlers an uncomfortable time.

The statutes of the college made it clear that no dogs were allowed to reside in Trinity so I am afraid that RAB had signed a document stating that their beloved Jack Russell was a cat. So at this party, one of the old dons (I cannot remember which one) tottered over to my mother and said 'I heard your cat barking last night.'

On another occasion, the Butlers had to give a dinner in honour of the French Ambassador who was to open an exhibition of pictures by Poussin at the Fitzwilliam Museum. I was lucky enough to be placed beside Sir Anthony Blunt who was the great expert on Poussin. The main course was Boeuf en Croustade and, when the dish was handed to him, he took masses of pastry but hardly any meat. I felt sorry for Sir Anthony as he was obviously very poor-sighted, but he did not appreciate me trying to help him having the delicious beef. It was extraordinary that this art expert was hardly able to see the food offered to him. I found him extremely difficult to talk to but I tried my best, realizing he would, of course, have vastly preferred to have a young man next to him. However, shortly after this, he was to be unmasked as the notorious spy.

Just before they left Trinity, I stayed with my mother and RAB at the Lodge. They had a charming Jack Russell, who I have mentioned before, who was allowed to do exactly as he pleased. When I went to bed on the Saturday night, Jack crept into the room, jumped on the bed, snuggled down between the sheets and proceeded to bite my toes all night. Sometime later, in his capacity as Chancellor of Cambridge University, Prince Philip came to stay with the Butlers and was given the same room. During the evening, naughty Jack somehow managed to get into the room and was just about to jump on the bed when he was caught. It is not known with what furious commands he was made to leave the Royal Bedchamber. I am sure my mother said the next morning 'Oh Sir, I'm so sorry - he's never done that before!' Robin (Lord Braybrooke) used to laugh at this a lot.

Lady Braybrooke



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Interesting Times

There is an old Chinese proverb about living in interesting times. Well, for us in Saffron Walden, in England, in much of the world, spring 2020 are certainly interesting times. The more so because they are so unexpected.

Only a couple of weeks ago Margaret and I were still expecting to go on holiday in April, to see our family in the USA later in the summer and go to my God-Daughter's wedding in Germany in July. Well now it is likely that none of these things will happen and instead we are confined to the house, self-isolating, for probably at least 12 weeks. We have the prospect of searching for things to do within the confines of our home and garden. Indeed our garden is likely to have more attention than at any time since we moved here 14 years ago. Maybe a St Mary's 'Best Kept Garden' competition is in order!

So far as 'Church' is concerned we are learning to think of it in different ways. We no longer gather together on a Sunday morning in the Church building, but, of course that isn't really 'Church' anyway. We are all looking out for and after the people who make up the Body of Christ. I am amazed that in my late 60s I have to rely on others to do some of the things that I have always taken for granted that I will be doing for years to come, but since Margaret is doubly at risk because of age and a health issue, I have to avoid catching the virus and passing it on to her. I have had to adjust to accepting help when I would prefer to be giving it.

Our house group has shown the benefits of using new technology. We are holding virtual meetings using Zoom enabling us to see and hear each other from the comfort and safety of our homes. Getting connected can take a bit of time, but it is great to be able to meet up as usual and to pray for and encourage each other. I thought an encouraging scripture sent out to the group by WhatsApp might be a good idea. It certainly was – it was very well received - and I'm now committed to sending one out to the group and others every day (help, that could be + or – 84 encouraging scriptures!).



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Rachel agreed that the scripture should reach a wider audience and it now also appears on the St Mary's Facebook page.

My experience after about one week is that we seem to be in closer touch with friends and family than we've been for a long time. I notice the kindnesses that people undertake, but seem less tolerant of what seem to be selfish actions of a minority of people, who just don't get why we have to accept the restrictions on our lives for the benefit of all.

How will I feel in 6, 9 and 12 weeks time? I don't know, but I hope by then we might see a light at the end of the tunnel and that we might all find ourselves closer to each other and be members of a stronger, more caring society, giving thanks to God for the contributions that each and every one of us has played during these very interesting times.

Rufus Barnes

Prayer for the Month *provided by the Prayer Committee*

A prayer in difficult times

Help our fear Lord,
and our unbelief.
Help us to learn
Your goodness
by heart.
Help us Lord in the midst of our doubts
and worries
to begin to see
what You see
when You look
at our world.
Imprint that vision
somewhere deep within
where it can stay,
and speak,
and live.

Taken from Celtic Daily Prayer

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The recent visit of Lynn Treanery to St Mary's on 15th March Our CMS Partner in Maridi, South Sudan



Lynn is a mother to two daughters and has one grandson, Noah, now one year old. She went to Maridi in 2011 to assess if it was the right place and right time to do what God wanted her to do. At the age of 40 she had become a committed Christian and through serving with the children's ministry in Aberdeenshire, attending Alpha and New Wine courses, her experience and closeness to God grew.

Her time in Maridi from 2013 made her feel called to service and when meeting with the CMS family in Oxford she felt at home and offered to be a short term missionary in Maridi. Some training in the wealth of wisdom and knowledge of cross cultural life sent her to South Sudan; after the short term there and the onset of civil war she became a long term partner, when she was enabled to encourage the Church, attend the wounded and distribute aid. She has now served in Maridi for 9 years and has been ordained deacon by the Bishop there. She still teaches English in the Chaima Christian Institute and encourages home bible study groups, and works with evangelist teams and the Mothers' Union.

Her story was shared with us as she responded to questions at the morning service on Sunday March 15th when the agonies of Coronavirus (COV19) were becoming evident in the United Kingdom. She was honest and brave in all her answers about her work and how she had managed through difficult times of war, hunger, illness and concerns about the Nodding Syndrome in children. She knew that it was the prayer and support of her mission links which had helped her to carry on with faith and courage through many difficulties.

After the service about 25 of us met with Lynn in the Parish Rooms. We brought our own lunch as sharing was not possible with the danger of receiving the virus from each other. We shared together around tables about how the future might not only affect us in Saffron Walden but how Lynn might have to wait for a new light to guide her future. After being with her for an hour we gathered around her and prayed for her as she moved on in God's path.

On the same evening at 7pm a meeting had been arranged for Lynn to meet with the Aftershock youth group in the Parish Rooms again. Matt Williamson, their youth leader has forwarded the following message about what happened: -

It was great to welcome Lynn to Aftershock. Lynn gave a brief rundown about her work in South Sudan and she then opened the floor for questions from the young people. She was then inundated with loads of questions from the young people about where she lives, what it is like to be a young person in South Sudan and the schools there. Lynn's passion for her work shone through and the young people really enjoyed listening to her. One parent emailed me afterwards saying how her young person came home inspired by Lynn and described her as fascinating and captivating. Before we finished Lynn prayed for us as a youth group and community.

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Reflection from week 1 of self-isolation

My initial reaction on hearing we were all going to have to self-quarantine was one of excitement with a sense of liberation. This was going to give me a chance to live the simpler life giving me time to be more contemplative and less rushed, which would include more gardening, writing, praying and time to contemplate. To my surprise I found myself struggling with time pressures and deadlines in the first week; they were not for the same reasons as before, but nevertheless still present! As we start Week 2, I need to revise my idea of what this isolation is really calling me to be: to drop my expectations and plans of what I would like, then to listen and be alert by noticing what is coming my way.



Several things are emerging from this exercise, leaving me with more questions than answers at this stage. One that has persistently occupied a lot of my thinking space is, when people talk about 'getting back to normal' I wonder what normal looks like. Do we really want to carry on living with the pressure and stresses of our busy lives that we consider normal? I have to admit to hoping we don't 'go back to our normal', but we spend this time of isolation considering differing pathways that might open up to us.

On my walk this morning I found myself being occupied by this question again, and on my return savouring the silence and quietness of the garden wrapping her arms around me. It was proving to be a haven so that, as I was hanging out the washing, I sent an arrow prayer up to God asking how others could share in this haven. I came back in to get my breakfast and as I was waiting for the toast to be done watched the washing hanging on the line being blown gently in the breeze. I suddenly felt a peace and contentment realizing this was part of my normal. Normal has not disappeared then. All the things I label chores, including sorting the computer glitch, finding a home delivery slot for my groceries, which has proved stressful, are part of 'my normal'. With Ignatius of Loyola's words ringing in my ears about 'Finding God in all things', my hope is that the next 11 weeks will not just be about developing more times of prayer and contemplation, as vital as that is, but will slow me down enough to notice God in the very mundane and ordinary things of my life. All these come under the label of chores, which I try and get through as fast as possible, but by so doing I suspect I miss out on the intricacies and details with which God has created us and this world.

Sue Walker

Sharing a platform with Bishop Stephen

At the start of Lent, before the coronavirus put paid to everything, I was invited to speak at St John's church, Colchester, alongside Bishop Stephen, the next Archbishop of York, and the Rev'd James Gilder. It was part of the diocesan Lent talks on the Environment and the theme on this occasion was Water.



The Bishop spoke most powerfully and movingly of his experiences in our sister diocese in Kenya; of the drought there: the failing crops, the dead and dying animals and the children holding out plastic bottles, begging for water. He asked: 'Have you ever been thirsty? I mean, REALLY thirsty?' The nearest he had come to it was walking with his wife in southern Spain. They had set off on a six hour walk, each thinking that the other had packed the water bottle. At a point of no return they realized that neither had, and after 'a bit of a matrimonial' reconciled themselves to completing the walk without water.

They were comforted, of course, by the knowledge that there would be fresh, cold water – even beer – at the end of their walk. But what must it feel like if there was no such prospect day after day, and any water there was would be stagnant and disease ridden? It was a sobering thought.

James Gilder spoke of his aquaponics project: of how fish and crops can be grown in an enclosed system in which water and waste is circulated in a condensed 'circle of life' to ensure food while using minimal supplies of water and fertilizer. He is taking his project out to Africa to help alleviate the lives of those who are suffering the worst effects of climate change.

My own contribution was very different: it was about salt water and vast oceans of it! The trouble with it, though, is that it is too hot! Having sailed across almost all the oceans of the world, I have ended with a paradoxical sense of how very small the planet is, even though it feels huge and frightening at times; and how very delicate it is, even though its power is quite awesome.

At first hand, I have felt the heat of the oceans. Once, hitting a big wave in the Coral Sea while waiting on the foredeck to bring down a sail, I braced myself for the vast deluge of water and found that it was....Hot! Comfortably hot enough for a bath! And then, heading up toward the equator through the zone where hurricanes are born, witnessing the vast, threatening cloud formations that rise miles into the air from these warm seas and then start to spin...

It is these clouds and hurricanes which, thousands of miles later, cool down and gave us the storms and floods that we experienced this winter: Dennis, Ciara

and Jorge. Our small world is very much interconnected: from our climate to the way that a virus in a Chinese market we had never heard of, brings all our lives and economies to a crashing standstill.

Bishop Stephen, offered some closing thoughts, interpreting the lines of the Lord's Prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread' as meaning 'give us what we need for today, but no more... no more than we actually need.' He was thinking of the importance of not squandering the world's resources through ego or vanity, but he could not have been more prophetic about the panic stricken bulk buying that was about to hit our supermarkets!

Archdeacon Robin ended the meeting with prayers and then invited me to offer one of the poems I had written while sailing down the Pacific coast of Central America nearly 6 years ago. It was an enormous privilege:

Doldrum Wind

Woken by jerking bunks
And renewed gush of our hull homesong
We exchange thick, saturated air
For the warm rush of doldrum wind.

Cradling two pale stars between mast and shroud
I nurse the tilting of our sail,
Head lifted to the masthead
Wind on throat and cheek,
Gentle roar in my ear,
We surge.
Foam rushes on our beam,
Welling gush behind
Responding to each gust.
Our limp, hopeless hours of tortured daylight fade,
Futile tacks forgiven,
Memories of sweat coursing down temple and back
Evaporate in the dry caress.

A breathing splash!
Two dolphins grab a slice of air
And plaits of phosphorescence
Streak to our bows.
We heel, rush, star led. . .
Blessed.

A Donkey's Day

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times – an opening of Dickens from the Tale of Two Cities. The city that I have in mind, that this donkey lived in, is the city of Jerusalem, the city on a hill.

This donkey had his best time on Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, it was on that day when he walked steadily into the city in front of noisy crowds that were throwing palm branches down on the road in front of him. He probably wondered what all the fuss was about. In those days these branches symbolised peace, victory and eternal life. The people hoped that this Jesus would be their Saviour and lead them to peace and victory. In the East the donkey was considered an animal of peace, and often used for ceremonial situations. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, he was considered to be the Prince of Peace. Zechariah Ch 9 vs 9 (Amplified) 'See your king comes to you righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey...'

Our young donkey, also known as a colt, would have had soft hair that was a greyish brown in colour, for his markings he has two lines in dark hair one across his shoulders and the other in a straight line right down his back, making the shape of a cross. The gown of his rider would have been flapping about as he grabbed the donkey's mane when they moved along. Perhaps the donkey would have hesitated, as donkeys do, wondering if it was safe to go forward in all this noise. After all this was the first time he had been ridden by anybody. (Luke 19 v30) Then with his long ears listening to the singing of the people he would have walked gently forward, enjoying the happy friendship of the crowds surrounding him, treading onto the palm branches spread on the path before him. How proud that donkey must have been, what an honour to have a Prince as his first rider.



Photo by Leroy Huckett from Pexels

A few days later he stood silently, his head drooping down, near to a group of weeping women. This was his worst of times. The person he remembered carrying into the city so proudly now appeared to be hanging on a wooden structure nearby, which was shaped in fact just like the cross marked on his own back. What had happened, he could see there were three wooden structures, the middle one had a notice on it. ('The King of the Jews' Matthew 27 Vs 32 – 56 Amplified)

Later as he was led away into the darkness the donkey considered these matters. Firstly, he had been tied up, waiting for something to happen. Eventually two men arrived and loosened his bonds, carefully untying the knots. It is said his owner ran out of the house shouting at them, 'Why are you untying my donkey?' The men's answer was, 'The Lord has need of him.' Fancy using someone like me the donkey thought. I have a big head, long pointy ears and a noisy voice, and I can be stubborn but, He chose me!

Think about that, this donkey, tied up and unable to move very far, was picked for Jesus to use. When the donkey had been set free, he was able to do his job.

Can you let Jesus untie you from your worries and problems, then maybe you too will be able live a new life and praise the Lord, without being tied up like the donkey.

Margaret Barnes

The Paperboy

Ben was a paperboy and he had been one for quite a long time. Ben was also a thinker, well, he had time to think as he delivered papers before going off to school.

He was very much aware of the fact that every morning, rain or shine, July or December people received their daily news and periodicals without seeing him. In fact the only time there was any real kind of interaction between him and the recipients of his work was when he either missed delivering the papers or they were put through the door wet because of the weather. Then the newsagent would pass on their complaints.

Ben and his family went to church on Sundays, not to every service, but usually to the Family Service. He didn't always take in what the Vicar had to say, but one Sunday a penny really dropped when the Vicar quoted a French Proverb, ***God often visits us, but most of the time we are not at home*** and suddenly that made sense to him and his paper round. He felt a sympathy with God, for the more he thought about it the more he realised that that was very much what life was like. Every morning, like his papers, life was delivered but people complained if the weather was bad or things they wanted delivered were not delivered, yes, he thought, **God often visits us, but most of the time we are not at home!**

Chris Bishop

Paddy McKeown



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From the Registers

Baptisms

We welcome into the family of the Church and pray for:

15th March

Stanley Michael Palmieri



Funerals

We send our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of:

3rd March

Malcolm Smith

5th March

Ethel McCallum

12th March

Cecil Casbolt

13th March

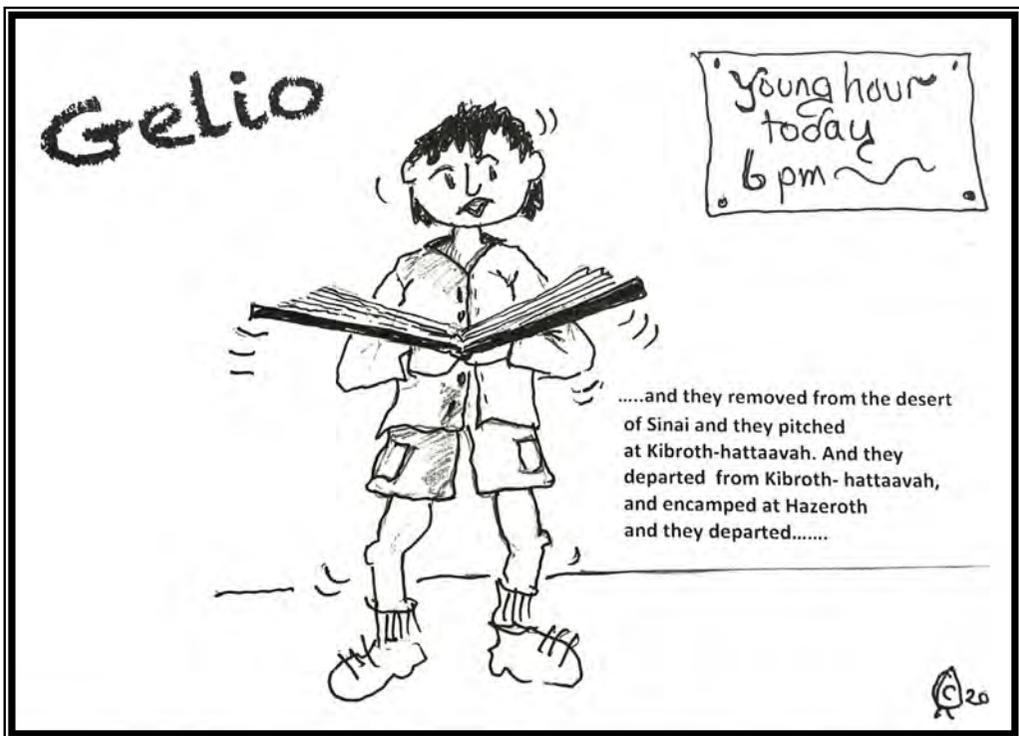
Alan Dawson

24th March

Mary Knight

Praying for them and for those who mourn

"May they rest in peace"



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interviewed by Chris Bishop

Gillian Brace

Gillian is the Advertising Organiser for the Parish News and her roots are completely embedded in Saffron Walden.

She was born in a house in Borough Lane where her Dad still lives and she stayed in Saffron Walden when she married her husband Geoff in 1994. She went to school at the RA Butler School and then progressed to the County High. When she left school, she started work at the Co-Op in the town centre (on the corner of Park Lane - now houses) before working at the Saffron Walden Laundry.



After her son Jonny was born she concentrated on being a mum in his early years but got a job as a member of the lunch staff at his nursery school up Shire Hill before moving to do lunchtimes at Katherine Semar. She can now be found working in the Nisa shop in Cromwell Road. She doesn't know if she is a rarity in this day and age as she has never lived or worked anywhere else!

She was not really brought to St Mary's as she has been involved with the church all her life. She remembers times during school holidays going into church with her mother and helping or maybe hindering her cleaning work. She remembers the Sunday School run by Millie Birch and recalls this being in St Mary's School and they would walk across to the church to join services occasionally.

During that time, she also attended VBS which was held on the Anglo American Playing Fields in front of Bridge End Gardens. She vividly remembers Ray Mitson holding the assemblies in the open air. When she was 12 she was confirmed in St Mary's and was also married in St Mary's Church.

After her son was born she took him to what was then called the Pram Service and eventually became a helper, and she is still involved with the renamed Tinies. In particular, she has really enjoyed being involved with 'Godly Play' which is a memorable way of presenting bible stories using props and small figures. She is also now part of the SWAT group which goes out to schools delivering assemblies, which she feels is an important way to reach out to children who may not have the same opportunities to share worship and learn about God. Gillian is also part of the church welcoming team. She has enjoyed many of the events the church organises including reflection days, the Christmas fair and, of course, the Parish Weekends. It has also been a particular pleasure to see her son Jonny also become part of the church community and was delighted that he was confirmed at St Mary's and is still involved on the rare occasions when he returns home from university.



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One event which really stands out for her in Saffron Walden was when the town and St Mary's Church hosted a royal wedding. She remembers standing in Church Street watching the royal cars sweep the wrong way up the street to enter the church. It was so exciting to identify everyone including the Queen.

Her father always used to tell her 'An Agnew never gives up!' so she guesses that this is the closest to a motto she has had in her life, Agnew being her maiden name.

Gardening Notes

It is the last day of March today, and I'm sitting in the conservatory, looking at my brightly sunlit garden, and feeling good: only one wee dark cloud on the horizon—reappearance of the muntjac. Even after all fencing checked and last possible entry point blocked, we nonetheless had an early morning sighting last week. So, I've bought two electronic scarers and they're now in and fired up, producing light and ultrasonic sound when triggered. We wait!



A Muntjac

Image by Frauke Feind from Pixabay

My greenhouse is, of course, now 'at work' warming and germinating several pots and seed trays for my flowers. I've so far set two lots of sweet peas and one of mesembryanthemum: the broad beans have been transplanted, and covered against muntjac depredation. I've also pot sown some French Runner beans—this to allow proper root growth—also an early sowing of tomatoes and courgettes in half trays.

The spring pots looked really good, this year filled with hyacinths; both Stella and I smile when we see them; tall, stately and beautifully formed! When they've finished our summer replacement will be geraniums, both upright and trailing in pots and baskets: since I have 70 of each, leftovers will gap fill in various beds.

And, of course, the grass keeps growing, needing frequent cutting!

Charles White



St Mary's Music News

In these worrying and uncertain times, 3 pieces of good cheer from the St Mary's Music Association: -

First, a view of his experiences over the past nearly 2 years from our first ever organ scholar, Elliot Randall.

'I began my organ scholarship in September 2018, after having had just two formal organ lessons. I'm not sure what I expected the scholarship to entail, but the very first thing I did was attend the Friday evening choir practice, when Christmas rehearsals were already under way. As the term progressed, I soon settled into the rhythm of practices, lessons and services at St Mary's. The community at St Mary's is very welcoming and friendly, and I really enjoy feeling as though I make a contribution through church music, as well as the various scholars' concerts and social events.

I am also involved in the wider parish music and from very early on, I was the organist once a month at St Mary's in Wendens Ambo. This was initially very daunting, however as time has gone on I came to really enjoy the opportunity to help lead the music there. I progressed to organising last year's Christmas concert, which was a real challenge but very rewarding.

I passed the Grade 5 Organ exam last July, with Merit, and I am currently working towards Grade 7 which I would like to sit later this year. My scholarship comes to an end this July, and although I shall be sad to finish, I still shall continue to sing in the choir. I have made some fantastic friends and feel very fortunate to have been given such a rewarding opportunity. Oli, Bron and the SMMA team have been amazing, I could not have done this without their support and commitment.'

Elliot has joined in fully with the life of the choir and the churches, playing the organ and conducting the choir with increasing expertise and confidence. The organ scholarship has been an excellent innovation, and one which we hope will continue to thrive.

The second piece of good news is that George Cass was awarded a distinction in his grade 8 singing exam. We shall miss hearing his solos in Bob Chilcott's St John Passion, which has of course had to be postponed from the choir's planned devotional Good Friday offering, but I am sure there will be future opportunities.

Finally, the Director of Music, Oli King, has conducted the first virtual choir practice by Zoom with more than 20 choristers attempting to learn a new piece without the benefit of listening to each other. It was somewhat

surreal to sit at home (in the kitchen in my case with the washing up fully on view as I spotted too late) poring over unfamiliar music while trying to watch Oli and coping with the time lag. A work in progress, but if Gareth Malone can do it, I am sure that the choir of St Mary's is more than equal to the task.

So much to be thankful for, despite the virus. And the choir WhatsApp group is both a real support, and a source of constant amusement. You would be surprised how many music related jokes are shared on a regular basis. It is wonderful to be part of such a community, which is of course in turn part of the wider St Mary's community.

Otilie Lefever

Archive Group *findings...*

May 1940

Senior Guild

The Social in the Town Hall was one of the most enjoyable that has been held. The short programme went with a swing, one of the most appreciated items being the brilliant performance of the Rev. M.E. Garner and Douglas Harris on two pianos.

Refreshments and prize giving followed for the tournaments played during the season, the prizes being presented by Miss Clayden who received a bunch of daffodils. She thanked the members for contributing 5 Guineas by a Whist Drive to the Local Soldiers Comforts Fund, and also three collections on club nights.

The Vicar made a short speech in which he said we had welcomed some of the evacuees to the club and had had 85 members in spite of all difficulties caused by the war.

(A note from M. Eden Garner)

I wish to thank members of the Senior Guild for their great kindness in giving me a most attractive wallet. Not only is it ornamental but also most practical. There is a special compartment for my Identity Card and also for my petrol coupons. And I always seem to be mislaying both! I do think it most generous of you to spend money on me at such a time as this.



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MU Meeting Report 12 March 2020

Rev'd John Saxon was the speaker at the Mothers' Union meeting on 12th March. His subject was his visit to Kenya and how this might give us something to ponder about during Lent. Just over a year ago, as a curate, John travelled to Kenya with a party of clergy and curates from the Diocese of Chelmsford. He described it as 'this hot land that straddles the equator'. Arriving in Nairobi as the city stirred into action, John observed the main road busy with vehicles. There were lorries carrying huge loads, modern cars, well laden mopeds – some carrying 3 people, donkeys and carts laden with firewood, motorbikes, taxis and even camels being driven to market. Many people were walking to work along a dusty track beside the busy road.

A great many people work in modern offices with up to date technology, but many are poor. It is a country of contrasts having wealth, but also primitive and under-resourced. Smallholdings are tended by hand providing crops to sell at market. Some earn a living from reclaimed debris. The Church in Kenya is active in social need and the Mothers' Union has a part to play, being concerned with family life. The state pays for education up to about 14. Choices for girls are governed by family pressures and African customs, but things are gradually changing. The visiting clergy group were able to look at a hostel being built for girls wanting to go on to further education, but observed that the scaffolding looked dangerous and would not meet our safety standards!

The group also visited a very basic mother and toddler group with no toys in sight. Also, a school for the blind and deaf with special table arrangement to facilitate lip reading. They also saw a wedding shop where garments could be hired and reused and a co-operative grain mill. John was interested in the very basic healthcare. An intensive care unit was being built. It was very expensive and extremely basic to us, but people are willing to share what is offered.

Marsabit is a very poor region in the north west of Kenya. An Anglican vicar who has been assigned to work in this area originally came from the slums in Nairobi and travels back there every weekend to keep in contact with his extended family. He won a further education scholarship and eventually was ordained.

Our Chaplain Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop responded to Bishop Stephen's Lent Appeal for Marsabit by organising a Quiz night. Thanks to all those who attended - over £300 was raised.

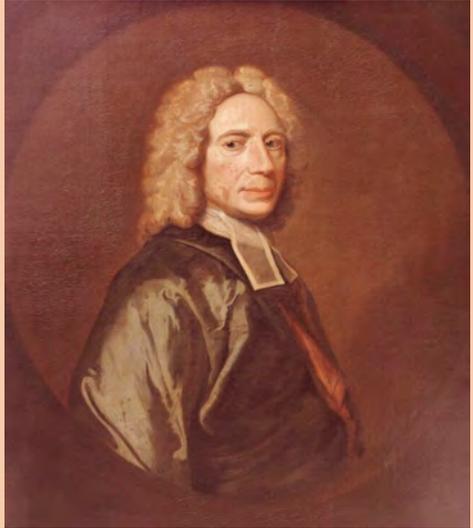
John stayed with a clergy family during his visit. Before he shared a meal with them they thanked God for what they had. The people have so little compared with us but their need of God, their trust in Him and their dependency on Him is so much greater. John asked our members to reflect on this during Lent.

Helen Eyles & Brenda Sheath

This month Clifford Want begins an occasional series on Hymn writers

Isaac Watts

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) grew up in a dissenting home: his father was twice imprisoned for his non-conformist views. Watts received a classical education, but in 1690 refused a scholarship to Oxford or Cambridge because entry required allegiance to the articles of the Church of England; he attended instead a Dissenting Academy. Following university, Watts became pastor of a large independent chapel in London and subsequently took work as a private tutor. After a breakdown in health (1712) he went to stay, intending a week's visit, with Sir Thomas Abney in Hertfordshire; he remained with the Abneys for the rest of his life.



Isaac Watts

Reproduced by courtesy of The National Portrait Gallery

Watts wrote books on geography, astronomy, grammar, and philosophy. His textbook on logic, in twenty editions, became the standard text on logic at Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Yale, being used at Oxford for well over 100 years.

Although German Lutherans had been singing hymns for 100 years, John Calvin had urged his followers to sing only metrical psalms; English Protestants had followed Calvin's lead. Watts allegedly complained about singing in church: 'To see the dull indifference, the negligent and thoughtless air that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly, while the psalm is upon their lips, might even tempt a charitable observer to suspect the fervency of their inward religion.'

Watts didn't reject metrical psalms; he simply wanted to see them more impassioned and his prolific hymn writing helped usher in a new era of English worship. Watts introduced a new way of rendering the Psalms in verse, adapting them for hymns with a specifically Christian perspective.

His 750 hymns include 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross'; 'Our God, Our Help in Ages Past' (Psalm 90), 'Jesus Shall Reign' (Psalm 72) and 'Joy to the World' (Psalm 98). Some are not straightforward translations of Psalms or other

songs taken from Scripture, and for this Watts was criticized by those who thought it wrong to sing 'uninspired hymns.' He replied that, if we can pray to God in sentences that we have made up ourselves (instead of confining ourselves to prayers taken directly from Scripture), then, surely, we can sing to God in sentences that we have made up ourselves.

On a lighter note, one of Watts' poems, 'How doth the Little Busy Bee,' an admonition against idleness in 'Divine Songs for Children,' was parodied by Lewis Carroll in the poem 'How Doth the Little Crocodile,' in 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'!

Clifford Want

LOOKING FOR WORK?



The Transition Project provides a free, service to help those who are looking for work. **Our Weekly Clinic is currently cancelled** but we can still provide support by volunteers who have first-hand experience of job hunting and can provide practical support with internet searching, CV writing and interview technique. Advice also available on the website: -

www.transitionproject.co.uk

Friends of Saffron Walden Parish Church

A Revised Date for your Diary

Due to the current situation the trip to Lincoln Cathedral planned for 8th June has been postponed until 10th September when we hope that life will be back to normal, or at least getting that way. If you were not on the first list to attend but feel that you would like to join us then please let me know as we could arrange a larger coach.

Best wishes to you all, stay safe and keep well.

Pamela Mugliston, Secretary of the Friends

Vulnerability

At our Course in Christian Studies meetings students take it in turn to lead an opening act of worship. **Lesley Lancaster** was due to lead it when our meeting was cancelled. Here is an edited version on the theme of vulnerability.

My starting point is Jesus' vulnerability in the Wilderness and especially in Gethsemane. But faith in the love of his Father meant he did not waiver. Then I thought about St Paul's vulnerability (e.g. leaving Thessalonica for his own safety, or imprisonment in Philippi, and then going to Corinth in fear and trembling.) In 2Corinthians 12:9-10 we read:

'But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.'

And then there is NOW, when to lesser or greater degree we must all feel vulnerable. But listen to this verse from Job 12 .10: 'The life of every living thing is in his hand, and the breath of every human being.'

I love these comforting words in this poem too (slightly adapted):

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
When I see the moon and the stars that you have established,
What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
ordinary people that you care for them?*

*When I look at the snow-smear'd mountains, massive and imposing,
When I see the raging oceans and the depths still waiting to be discovered,
What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
ordinary people that you care for them?*

*When I wonder at the intricate science of creation,
And the fragile features of this world,
What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
ordinary people that you care for them?*

*When I hear about the news, about a planet so often at war with itself,
When I see how our world has been turned upside down in a matter of weeks
What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
ordinary people that you care for them?...*

Dear heavenly Father, We are so thankful that you, quite literally, have the whole world in your hand. That frees us to acknowledge the obvious - we don't have control over a lot of things. But as we come to you this evening with empty hands, we do so, not to grab what isn't ours to control, but to raise our hands in praise and surrender to you. In Jesus' glorious name we pray. Amen.



‘He gave us eyes to see them’ An early Persian painting of Jonah and whale

The prophet Jonah is mentioned three times in the Gospels when Jesus refers to ‘the sign of Jonah.’ In the Old Testament he was swallowed by a large fish, traditionally a whale, and in its belly for three days and three nights. It is easy to see in that sign a reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus, but the book is also a powerful allegory of life. The prophet runs away from God, only to encounter a storm and possible shipwreck. He is thrown overboard and swallowed by the whale.

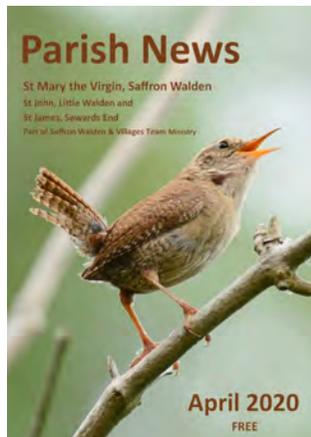
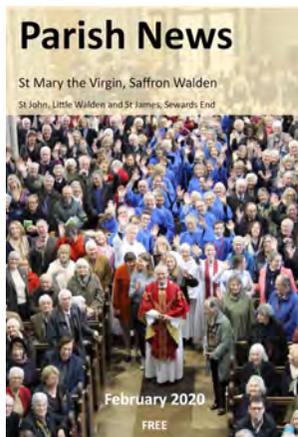
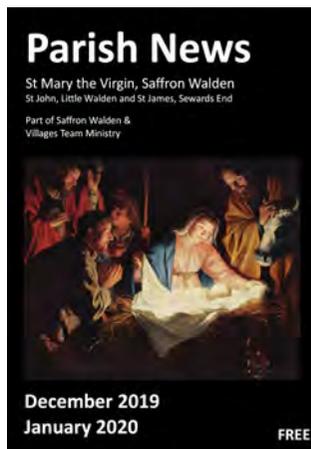
We are living through difficult and anxious days with the coronavirus: we seem to be surrounded by fear and danger, like Jonah. Where, we ask, is our hope and safety amid the storm and threat of breakdown? In his distress Jonah prays to the Lord and places his trust in God. The psalm he utters ends with the words, ‘Deliverance belongs to the Lord.’ As he speaks, the whale spews him on to the safety of dry land.

The story of Jonah is depicted here in this beautiful painting from a 14th century manuscript from Persia. The whale is friendly and smiling, basking in the expanse of blue sea. Jonah is safe: his hope has triumphed, and God has delivered him from danger and possible death. In 1988 Heathcote Williams wrote a long poem called ‘Whale Nation’ in praise of these mysterious, gifted and intelligent creatures. We hunt them, we plunder the seas for them. But they are also our friends and guides, and it is easy to neglect those truths. The book ends with examples of whales and dolphins guiding ships and saving human lives. So, we, in the midst of all that worries and perplexes us, can give thanks to God our guide and Saviour, and pray that He will bring us safely through life.

The Rev’d Michael Burgess (Parish Pump)

Parish News - online since October 2019

Back copies can be viewed at www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/parishnews



Missing the printed version?

When the Covid-19 shutdown is relaxed and the Diocesan Print Unit is up and running again, a limited number of this and any subsequent issues will be available in printed form.