

Parish News

St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden

St John, Little Walden and St James, Swards End

Part of Saffron Walden & Villages Team Ministry



July 2026

FREE



Repairing the lightning conductor on St Mary's steeple—May 2026. Picture—John Mumford

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Front cover photograph by Gilly Hayes

PARISH NEWS - EDITORIAL DEADLINE

The deadline for contributions for each issue is the 1st Sunday of the previous month. Hence, the deadline for the **August-September** issue is **Sunday 5th July**.

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Links also at the bottom of our website pages

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Rev'd Jeremy Trew is taking a sabbatical from 27th April to 27th July

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A Reflection for the Month

The Saint, the Sausages and the Storm

From Rev'd Ella Harris



Dear Friends,

July is wedding season, which means flowers, readings, rings, confetti and of course, for us Brits, an anxious eye on the forecast. One of my brides last week told me she had buried sausages in the garden to keep the rain away! I cannot vouch for this theologically, meteorologically or culinarily, but I understand the impulse; on my wedding day, it rained so torrentially that I ended up barefoot, because my heels were sinking into six inches of mud. Not quite the look I had imagined, but certainly memorable! Perhaps that is why this time of year, brides and vicars alike become amateur meteorologists.

So it is fitting that, in the middle of the wedding season, the Church remembers St Swithun on 15 July. As the rhyme goes: *St Swithun's Day, if thou dost rain, for forty days it will remain.* Swithun was Bishop of Winchester from 852 to 862, remembered as a humble man, caring for the poor and building churches. When he died, he asked to be buried outside the Old Minster, where worshippers would pass by and where his grave would be open to the "sweet rain of heaven." More than a century later, his remains were moved into a grand indoor shrine. According to legend, Swithun was not pleased. The heavens opened, and the rain continued for forty days and nights. From this came the old rhyme. There is a local thread too. St Swithun's Church in Great Chishill bears his name, and in 1136 that church was given to the monastery of Walden.

Of course, Christian faith is not a guarantee that the skies will clear just because we have prayed hard enough, planned carefully enough, or buried enough sausages in the right flowerbed! And yet Christians do believe in a Lord who has authority over wind and waves. Jesus could rebuke a storm and walk on water. Yet here is the wonder: the one with power over even the

weather chose to give up control over his own life. In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but yours be done." At the cross, he was mocked, "Save yourself." But he did not. He stayed. He gave himself. That is why the Song of Songs is so powerful at weddings: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it." Rain may fall. Plans may change. Mud may rise. But the costly, self-giving love of God in Christ is stronger than the storm.

With Blessings, Rev'd Ella – Team Vicar

A Prayer For Rest and Renewal

Father, as we move towards the time when children, students, and their teachers will be starting the long summer break, we pray for all involved in education, that they may find this a time for rest and renewal, that the beauty of nature in all its summer glory may speak to them of Your amazing love and generosity, and that they, and the rest of us, may be strengthened and prepared for whatever lies ahead.

We ask this in the name of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ

AMEN

Provided by the Prayer Team



YOU in the **PEW** interviewed by Chris Bishop**Susan and Stewart Hodgson**

Susan (born Susan Pratt) was born and raised in Swaffham Bulbeck, between Newmarket and Cambridge, where her father was a corn merchant. She went to school at St Louis Convent in Newmarket, leaving at 17 to join Barclays Bank in Cambridge. Stewart was born in

Blackburn, Lancashire, but, when young, his father, a printer, moved with the family to Wolverton in Buckinghamshire. However, his parents both wanted to provide care for the elderly, so his family moved around, living and working in geriatric hospitals. Stewart was educated, and boarded at, the Royal Grammar School in High Wycombe, leaving school at the age of 16 to work for Barclays Bank in Huntingdon. After various moves within the bank, he found himself in Cambridge, where he met Susan. Christianity was important to both families, and they had both been regular church attendees from early childhood. They married in 1968 at St Mary's Church in Swaffham Bulbeck, and the celebrant, Donald Aird, was delighted to include a Nuptial Mass at their marriage ceremony.

Stewart's career with Barclays Bank progressed well, and after several moves, they arrived in Saffron Walden in 1981. By then, Ian (1972) and Andrew (1974) had arrived, and Susan had become the homemaker, caring for the various family needs. They quickly became regulars at St Mary's, and both boys were confirmed in 1985, one of the highlights of their time in Saffron Walden. They attended St Mary's Primary School, under the headmastership of Mark Ferland, who has continued to take an interest in their progress through life. Both boys moved on to the County High School, with Ian progressing to the University of Glamorgan and a career in estate management, while Andrew, after studying at the University of Warwick and then at Cambridge, has enjoyed a career with Shell. He married in St Mary's in 2019, another fond memory.

Since retiring from Barclays Bank, Stewart has had various part-time jobs in Saffron Walden, including looking after the grounds of the Almshouses and various book-keeping jobs. A heart attack and bypass operation in 1990 has left him feeling lucky to be reasonably fit and able 35 years later, but he has the example of Susan's father (still going strong at 104) to inspire him.

Neither of them like to let the grass grow under their feet, and they have enjoyed helping the Cubs, Scouts and Venture Scouts, as well as the town bowling club and indoor bowls. Susan loves gardening, and Stewart takes understandable pride in the vegetables they have grown. His beloved (albeit ancient) narrowboat has provided them with several memorable holidays, and enabled them to explore a large number of the canals and rivers, encouraging their love of the outdoors and the countryside.

Other highlights of their association with St Mary's revolve around Stewart's membership of the Servers Rota (usually with Hamish Walker, Laurence Gooderham and Peter Taylor) at the 8am Holy Communion services for almost 40 years before stepping back during the Covid years.

There is a Hodgson family crest and motto, which is entirely appropriate for Susan and Stewart. The crest is a blue dove with gold wings holding an olive branch to symbolise peace and endurance. The motto is "*Miseris Succurrere Disco*", or "I learn to succour the distressed". Most appropriate!

Gelio's Anthology of Obscure Proverbs



No doubt you may have thought, why hasn't Gelio referred to Proverbs from the Old Testament, as there is a whole Book of them? Well, here are two (from the NRSV).

'Those who heed admonition gain understanding'. (Chapter 15 verse 32)

'One who forgives an affront fosters friendship, but one who dwells on disputes will alienate a friend' (Chapter 17. verse 9)



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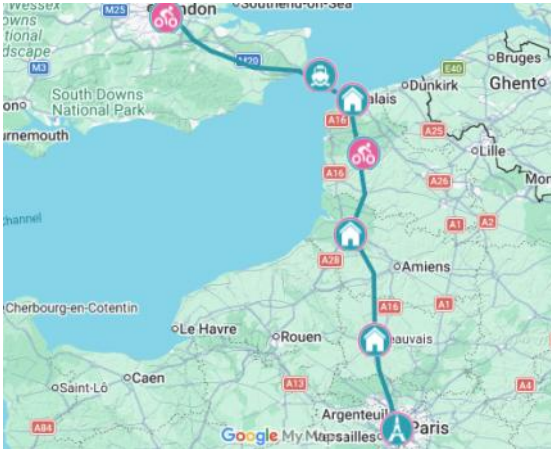
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Steve Hasler: London to Paris by Bicycle

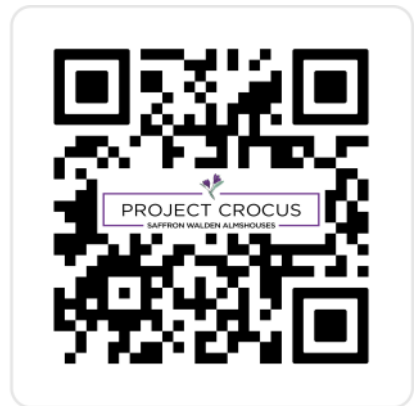
I'm off cycling again, this time from Greenwich to the Eiffel Tower from 22nd to 25th July. 270 miles, just under 12,000 feet to be climbed, arriving in Paris a day ahead of the Tour de France – why would they take so long?! I'm riding with an organised group and my bags are taken from start to finish each day. My bicycle is taken back to London so that we can stay to see the Tour arrive on Sunday 26th July. There will be at least 30 of us riding, including a certain former Rector of this Parish! Overnight stops are in Calais, Abbeville and Beauvais, see map.



Why? Many of you may know that I'm the overall lead trustee for the project at the almshouses in Saffron Walden to

replace the Primes Close bungalows, 7 homes, with a new two-storey building in the same location with 16 homes. There is a shortage of affordable homes for those with little income and savings in Saffron Walden and the almshouses can contribute new, highly energy efficient homes. The stories of our residents who come to us having been sofa surfing or living on one of the local allotments or being bounced nightly between shelters show that homelessness is a very much a problem in the town.

The overall project will cost £5.8m and we're now just a few hundred thousand from our target and work on site will start in April 2027. The project is supported by the Bishop of Chelmsford who is the lead bishop for housing for the Church of England. If you'd like to support me or the project and help get us over the line, scan the QR code which will take you to my Just Giving page where you can find links to more information too. Courtesy of a donor to the project, every donation will be matched £ for £.



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Lend me your ears

“Should have gone to Specsavers”, says the advert, or you may miss something important. Even if there is nothing wrong with our hearing, we can still miss that something important if we are not listening.

Listening is the bedrock of counselling training, where a few old habits need a tweak. It was easier for me to see the faults in others than myself. I remember screaming at my husband in frustration, “You’re not listening!”. He replied, “I am. I am just waiting for you to finish.” Exactly. It’s the same in a group, most of us don’t listen to the others as we wait our turn to say our bit so we can look clever, or awake.

I did some training years ago with Cruse Bereavement Care and we practised reflecting what people had said. I mentioned to my fellow trainee that I been shocked by the heartbreak I felt when my dog died. “Oh yes”, she responded. “I felt the same when my cat died”. If only she had given me a moment. Instead the moment had gone, buried back inside and never spoken of again. Her cat and her sadness became the issue, not my dog and my sadness.

In couples counselling it can be useful to suggest one person speaks for an allotted time, while the other listens without interruption. The partner then repeats what has been said. This can be revealing - protests, seeing it differently, emotional outbursts not allowed - very hard to put ourselves in the shoes of another and hear what they are actually saying, not what we think they are saying or presume they are thinking. It is extraordinarily helpful to know you have been heard.

One of the things I had to learn was to keep me, myself, my experiences out of the way. I had blithely assumed that to join in was showing encouragement. A client had to write a story to get me to shut up. She said it was as if she was singing ‘Row Row Row Your Boat’ and I came in with ‘Early One Morning’ and changed the tune. Another lesson was when a friend spoke of how someone always topped her story. If she’d done something, they had too, only bigger and better.

How easy it is to shut someone down unintentionally. I mentioned I’d had an interesting dream to a friend. “Oh I can never remember my dreams” was the response. I was longing to share how a dream of my childhood home might be connected to the current family crisis. The conversation had been cut dead and I felt rejected. That would not have been her intention.

The more my counselling training progressed, the more we were encouraged to just be there, present, and “there”. “Ah ha”, “Um” with space, even just a pause or a moment can make the difference to someone feeling they are heard and seen, or invisible, a whiner. So wonderful when you feel someone gets you

or your situation.

There's a lovely story of a young girl. She is supposed to have said that after sitting next to Mr Gladstone she felt he was the cleverest man in England, but after sitting next to Mr Disraeli she felt she was the cleverest woman in England.

Articles and research are warning us that conversation, connection and community are being upstaged and lost by scrolling, social media, even the dreaded AI. We are not talking to each other. We graze on the hoof or watch television as we eat. Could something so little, so unsung as listening reverse the trend?

Margaret Collingwood



Do you enjoy Art, Music, Dance, History or Literature?

We are the Saffron Walden Arts Society and invite you to join us for a talk on the third Wednesday of every month on different subjects from the Arts.

We meet at the Quaker Meeting Hall in the High Street. You can choose to come in the morning and enjoy a chat and a coffee or in the afternoon for tea and biscuits, before the lecture. The Arts Society offers you an excellent way to follow your interests, travel to interesting places, visit historical sites and make new acquaintances.

Please have a look at our website to find out more; see previous talks and special lecture days and our outreach activities, visits and travel. Please contact us via our website.

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What's in a Name (18)?

Museum Street

Last month we looked at a street in Saffron Walden that has changed its name, Cuckingstool End Street to High Street, this month we go one better and look at a street in central Walden that now uses its third recorded name – Museum Street.

As most people will know, Museum Street contains the entrance to Saffron Walden Museum. However, the Museum was not built until 1833 and the street existed long before that, marking the eastern end of the churchyard. Its first recorded name was Pudding Lane, but no one seems to know why. By 1758 Eyre's Map of Saffron Walden shows the street name as Little Church Street, presumably to distinguish it from the much larger Church Street. The actual age of the street is hard to say, but the age of some of the properties along it suggest that it is of mediaeval origin, perhaps marking the division between powers ecclesiastical, the church, and the powers temporal, the castle.

Although it is only a relatively short street, Museum Street has seen some interesting events over time. Near the Church Street end is a house bearing a blue plaque referring to a previous house on the site which was the birthplace of Henry Winstanley who was responsible not just for the first Eddystone lighthouse, but also for the lantern which graced St Mary's before the spire was built in 1831.

A little further down Museum Street, just on the right through the gates



of the Museum, stands the building which has been used as the conservation lab of the Museum, but which had a former life as the first National School in Saffron Walden. It was built in 1817 and absorbed the former charity school. It was probably the girls' school and was

later used as the Infants School when the new St Mary's School was built in Castle Street.

The Museum deserves an article to itself, another time. On the other side of the entrance to the Museum stands Museum Yard, an example of the many yards which used to stand along Castle Street. Museum Yard's houses date to the latter part of the eighteenth century. Opposite the entrance to Museum Yard stand three three storeyed gault brick houses whose appearance suggest that they may once have been weavers' cottages.

Nearly the last houses on the east side of Museum Street, numbers 11, 13 and 15, date from the fifteenth century. Jean Gumbrell suggests that these were once one house, the property of a prosperous dyer since dye works were then to be found in the Castle Bailey using water from the deep well in the precincts of the castle keep. The last house on the west side is the former rectory, a large building of late Georgian date. The last Rector to live there was Rev'd Peter Harlow, who left in the mid 1980s.

Museum Street may only be a small one, but it is full of history.

Hilary Walker

AFTERNOON TEA

ST MARY'S CHURCH, SAFFRON WALDEN

SATURDAY 11TH JULY

2 pm - 4.30pm

In aid of

The logo for 'HOPE into ACTION' features the word 'HOPE' in large, bold, white capital letters on a red, rounded rectangular background. Below 'HOPE', the word 'into' is written in a smaller, white, lowercase font. Below 'into', the word 'ACTION' is written in large, bold, white capital letters on the same red background.

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The Friends of the Parish Church is a very active group and has been so for over 90 years. We are able to help financially with minor and major projects ranging from a Flower Pedestal to a major contribution to the Lighting Project.

Almost 40% of our members have active and varied roles in the Church. We have a bookstand with an assortment of items on sale to our many visitors as well as our own congregation. Next to that is a noticeboard which keeps everyone up to date on our various activities. We are also on the Church website under Groups, check us out and see more photos. On the social side, twice a year we travel around the country to visit different towns and cities to tour Cathedrals.

If you would like to learn more, pick up a leaflet from the bookstand which also includes an application form to join us, only £10 per year. Should you wish to help the Friends further by leaving a Legacy there are leaflets to assist you in that process, also to be found on the bookstand.

Chairman: Denis Tindley, Secretary: Pamela Mugliston, Treasurer: Sandra Marsh

Friends of St Mary's: Dates for Your Diary

The **Recipe Book** has gone to the printers so as soon as we get prices, any additions etc it will be on sale on the Friends' bookstall. I will send all Friends an email too.

Don't forget the **Bring & Share lunch** on 12th July. John and Alison will send you reminders very soon. Do come along to support this event and to take the opportunity to socialise with some other Friends members.

The visit to the **Cambridge Central Mosque** is 21st July, if you have not signed up yet then please do so now. It will be a really interesting visit.

The **AGM** this year will be on 6th September, after the Patronal service.

There will be plenty of time at the end of the formal agenda for you to bring along your thoughts and ideas.

The **Autumn Talk** will be "Of Penguins, Whales and Icebergs by Edward Gildea on 14th September in the Parish Rooms. His talk captures a month spent sailing in the Antarctic. Further details closer to the date. Exciting!!

The **Autumn Cathedral Trip** will be to Coventry Cathedral. Date to be announced once I hear available dates from the Cathedral itself. This will be an informative day.

Lots to look forward to, so please join in.

Pamela Mugliston Secretary

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No job too small or too odd!

The Calendar

St Mary's, Saffron Walden

One service in church each Sunday is streamed on YouTube [Y]: details on the church website. Coffee is served after the Sunday 10.30am services.



Wednesday 1 July

1.10pm Lunchtime Recital: Mitchison Ensemble

Thursday 2 July

10.0am Silent Prayer in North Chapel

7.30pm Archdeacon's Visitation, with Declarations of Churchwardens

Sunday 5 July

8.00am BCP Holy Communion

10.30am Holy Communion [Y] with Sunday Club at 10.25am

Setting: Mass of the Quiet Hour—Oldroyd (Gloria - Rawsthorne)

Motet: *Cantique de Jean Racine* - Fauré

Wednesday 8 July

1.10pm Lunchtime Recital: Anna Le Hair *piano* & Arwen Newband *violin*

Saturday 11 July

2pm - 4.30pm Afternoon Tea in St Mary's in aid of Hope into Action

Sunday 12 July

8.00am BCP Holy Communion

10.30am Second Sunday Holy Communion [Y] with Sunday Club at 10.25am

Setting: Mass of St Thomas—Thorne

Motet: *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace* - Wesley

6.30pm Choral Evensong

Canticles: Moeran in D

Anthem: *Blessed be the God and Father* - Wesley

Wednesday 15 July

1.10pm Lunchtime Recital: Curlew String Quartet

Sunday 19 July

- 8.00am BCP Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion [Y] led by Rt Rev'd Roger Morris, Bishop of Colchester, with Sunday Club at 10.25am
Setting: Rawsthorne (Gloria—Jones)
Motet: *Be thou my vision & Irish Blessing* – Chilcott

Wednesday 22 July

- 1.10pm Lunchtime Recital: Veronica Henderson *cello* & Liz Mucha *piano*

Sunday 26 July

- 8.00am BCP Holy Communion [Y]
10.30am Family Service
6.30pm Taizé service

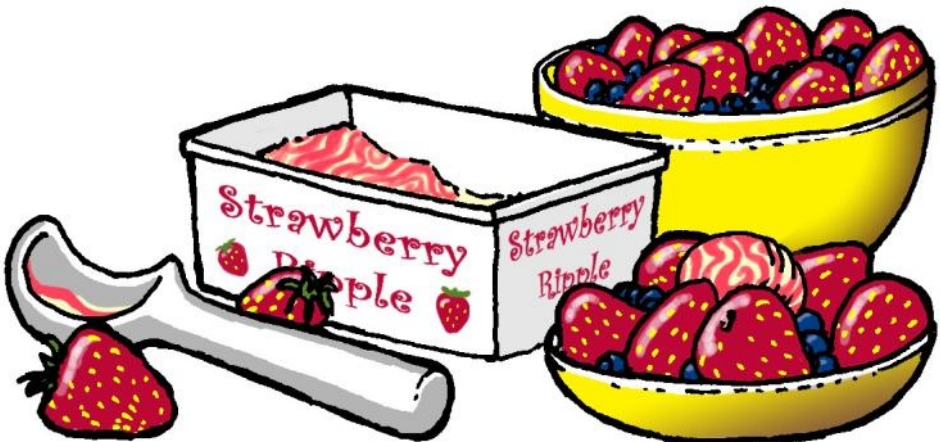
Regular weekday services at St Mary's

Tuesdays

- 5.00pm Evening Prayer by Zoom, see weekly bulletin for login details

Wednesdays

- 8.00am Morning Prayer
9.30am Holy Communion (with Prayers for Wholeness and Healing on the 1st Wednesday of the month)



St James', Swards End

Sunday 5 July

10.30am Holy Communion

Sunday 19 July

10.30am Morning Praise



St John's, Little Walden

Sunday 12 July

10.30am Family Service

Sunday 26 July

10.30am Holy Communion



Radwinter Road Cemetery Saffron Walden

Radwinter Road Cemetery is a peaceful space which offers a natural environment for all types of wildlife and is an important nature conservation resource. There are spaces set aside which are allowed to grow naturally and which provide a habitat where insects and wildlife thrive.

Daily maintenance and gardening are carried out to ensure the space is a welcoming and peaceful place for visitors.

The Cemetery is predominantly laid to lawn, but there is also a Traditional Area, Garden of Remembrance, an area for scattering ashes and a designated section for children. There is a separate section for war graves which are cared for by The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

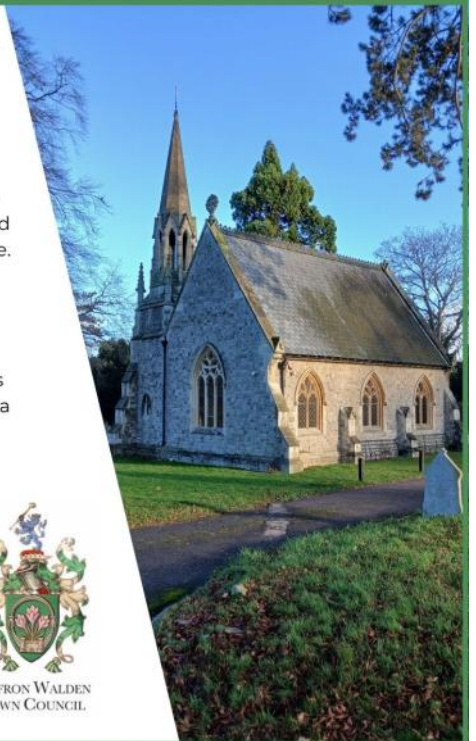
The small, refurbished Victorian Chapel is non-denominational and available to hire for both religious and secular services.



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News from the Younger members of the Church



Our May Family service fell on Pentecost, so it was filled with wind! The scene was set concentrating on the power of language as Hilary, leading the service, used her language skills to quiz some of the congregation over which languages she was using. Being the 'birth of the Church' we also sang happy birthday to our church. During breakout time the children were invited to make a wind streamer, a pinwheel, or a flame crown. Colourings of flames and 'peace be with you' cards were also available.

The month ended with Trinity Sunday and children's activities at the back of the church where a decorated lolly stick triangle hanging decoration, was created; a three-sided pyramid was coloured and formed, and a collage of a trefoil using colours inspired by the 'Rublev' painting on the cover of the service sheet.

Sunday club

During May Sunday club talked about the church itself, and built a structure using giant Jenga, as well as decorating rocks as creatures to go into a box labelled 'this church rocks'. We also talked about how having faith, also gives us hope, and makes us brave, then made lion masks to remind us of the story of how Daniel's faith kept him safe, and sun catchers of the word Hope. On the third Sunday we talked about Jesus's ascension and looked at a prayer by St Teresa of Avila, which inspired us to create prayer hands to take home.



Tinies

Tinies started May hearing about and doing crafts around two of the parables, both stories that highlight how important each of us is to God, the lost coin and the prodigal son. The last week before half term, the children heard about how much Jesus loved

everyone especially children and decorated heart shaped biscuits with icing and love heart sprinkles. The children have been loving being back in the church especially zooming around on little tricycles. All have enjoyed having the dedicated area at the head of the nave, to move to for the service just after 11, making the service a bit more special.

Other activities

The Swards End Youth Club, supported by St James church, started the month off, as they meet on the first Friday of the month, which was the first of May. The attendees were able to use the garden at the village hall for the first time this year, and they all enjoyed a lovely session.

Julie Lester

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St Mary's Music News

One of the great achievements of our Director of Music and SMMA Chairman, is the ongoing education of the young people in the church music groups. Junior Choristers receive training each week and have been rewarded for successful completion of their ribbon training by being given their medals at the RSCM Evensong on 14th June. New choral scholars were also admitted into the choir following their probationary period. It is a tribute to Oli's vision that many of the choral scholars and members of the adult choir started their training with Joyful Noise and have continued through the ranks with a commendable commitment and dedication to music at the church.

July offers some musical highlights. At the morning Communion on the 5th July, the anthem is the *Cantique de Jean Racine*, a competition-winning composition by the nineteen year-old Gabriel Fauré. On the 12th at Evensong there is a chance to hear the anthem *Blessed be the God and Father*, by Samuel Sebastian Wesley, grandson of Charles Wesley. His middle name derived from his father's lifelong admiration for the music of Bach. At communion on the 19th, the anthem is *Irish Blessing* by the cherished living composer Bob Chilcott, a chorister at King's and a former member of the King's Singers.

Lunchtime concerts on Wednesdays are again in full swing. The Mitchinson Ensemble perform on the 1st, Anna Le Hair (piano) and Arwen Newband (violin) on the 8th, and Veronica Henderson (cello) and Liz Mucha (piano) on the 22nd. These artists have all returned by popular demand and on the 15th we have a new ensemble, the Curlew String Quartet. Please do come to these wonderful recitals. Refreshments are available from 12.30am – and make sure that you sample the cakes, sandwiches and scones, baked to a standard to make Mary Berry happy.

Friday 10th July at 4.30 pm is also an important date. Joyful Noise have been working extremely hard all term and will be performing the Saffron Walden World Premiere of *The Princess and the Pea* in the Parish Rooms. It promises to be another significant event in the development of music at St Mary's.

Philip Sunderland



Gardens

Last year's Royal Horticultural Society's State of Gardening Report revealed that gardens cover three times the size of the UK's National Nature Reserves. They support over 50 million trees and thousands of species, providing habitats for over half of the UK's butterflies, amphibians and reptiles, and more than 40% of birds.

Many of the listed buildings within the Hundred Parishes are surrounded by a private garden which enhances their setting, reinforcing their sense of place. They support a great variety of trees, shrubs and flowers - some native, others introduced - providing havens for assorted wildlife.

Gardens associated with such older properties will have been tended by many generations of residents, evolving over time as owners were influenced by fashionable trends.



Initially, they were stocked with native trees and shrubs, selected for their ability to provide fuel, timber, fence posts or fruits, while vegetables helped feed the family.

From the mid-17th century onwards, non-native tree species began to appear such as Cedars and Horse Chestnuts, these being planted initially within the estates of trend-setting wealthy landowners. By the mid-19th century,



gardeners were able to source an increasing number of exotic species as diligent plant hunters discovered them in various parts of the globe and the precious seeds or small saplings were grown on in nurseries and then released for sale.

Engaging with a garden improves mental, physical and social wellbeing, with 77% of gardeners reporting positive impacts on their mental health. Local residents have access to wonderful, extensive gardens such as Easton Lodge, Audley End House or Saffron Walden’s Bridge End Gardens, but enjoying a private garden brings a great deal of pleasure too.

Tricia Moxey, Trustee
Photographs—current page: Audley End
Previous page: Bridge End Gardens.



Muniments
Room

From the Archives

A monthly record of pieces of interest from our past
Parish Magazines

Compiled by our Archivist, the Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop

July 1984

The 23rd Psalm - A Japanese Version.

*(From the front of an Order of Service of Toorak Presbyterian Church,
Melbourne, Australia)*

The Lord is my pacesetter; I shall not rush.

He makes me pause and rest for quiet intervals; He provides me with images of stillness which restore my serenity.

He leads me in ways of efficiency through calmness of spirit and His guidance is peace.

Even though I have many things to do each day, I will not fret; for his presence is here, His timelessness, His all importance to keep me balanced.

He prepares refreshment and renewal in the midst of my activity by anointing my mind with his oils of tranquillity; my cup of joyous energy overflows.

Surely harmony and usefulness shall be the fruits of my hours; for I shall walk at the pace of the Lord my Lord and dwell in his House for ever.

From the Registers

Weddings

15th May

Frederick Ball and Alanna Moss

30th May

Nicholas Goodwin and Harriet Smales

Funerals

18 May

Derek Evans

21 May

Nigel Ackerman

27 May

Patricia Banks

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Churching of the Town Mayor



A service Saturday

took place on 16th May for

the Mayor of Saffron Walden, Councillor Jeanette Curtis. The service was conducted by Rev'd Dr Hilary Walker and included a Mayor Making Poem read by pupils at St Mary's C of E Primary School, concluding "With voices joined, we proudly say, We welcome you as Mayor today."

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Hearing from Bishop Guli at the Chelmsford Diocesan Synod

Bishop Guli is Bishop for our diocese and one of the main ways of communication and decision making is a meeting that takes place in Chelmsford Cathedral four times a year, the Diocesan Synod. On Saturday 6th May approximately 100 elected representatives from different areas (deaneries) in our region met together to be greeted by her introductory address. She had chosen to commemorate the 100th birthday of Sir David Attenborough by talking about ecological issues. We were told that there had been a National Emergency Briefing at Westminster on the subject of Climate Change and that a film to raise awareness of this has been produced by campaigners, called the *People's Emergency Briefing*. Some churches are holding showings of the movie. With some Essex elected officials reportedly denying the existence of climate change, how should churches respond? Our table discussed the Eco churches scheme and the A Rocha organisation. Chelmsford Diocese have had difficulty recruiting a project manager to work on such issues. The themes of the 100 days do correspond well to issues facing our region at the moment- the financial difficulties that churches find to pay their parish share, a deficit in the Diocesan budget, and theological difficulties concerning the role of women and sexual diversity issues which some churches have cited in their decision to not pay their Parish share and/or to participate in fellowship with other churches. I found myself wondering whether, as some have suggested, our financial difficulties are simply a reflection of a certain spiritual barrenness in modern society. The Bishop suggested in her address that the problems of Climate Change are not so much difficulties that require scientific research and increasing awareness, but rather problems of selfishness, greed and apathy.

During the Synod, we were asked how our churches had responded to the Bishop's call for *100 days of prayer*. She had called for all our churches to pray for change, church growth, discipleship and nurture, vocations, well-being and sustaining healthy rhythms for both laity and clergy, our buildings and PCC governance, and about stewardship, both of finances and of time and talents. Now it was time for 100 days of listening. Fortunately, there was still time to pray, while we listened to discern what it was best to do about these things. Despite messages about the 100 days of prayer being put in the View (Chelmsford's online weekly publication,) and publicized by the clergy, actual participation across the region seemed to have been sketchy: we debated this in our tables. Would church meetings to discuss the 100 days be more effective than expecting people to participate individually?

The stated mission of the Cathedral is to help people discern who God has called us to be. One questioner mentioned the late John Stott's concept of

double listening, “the faculty of listening to two voices at the same time, the voice of God through Scripture and the voices of men and women around us.” This is similar to Karl Barth’s idea that we should “take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both”. Participants in the Synod, I should explain, are not allowed to say much except by asking a very specific form of question. The Diocese Board of Finance controls the money taken from the Parish Share of all the churches, and spends 80% on clergy salaries. The rest is spent on schools as well as on training the aspiring future clergy. The board is also responsible for many church buildings, sometimes needing to sell them. So there are often questions about how they, and Church Commissioners, choose to allocate resources.

Vocations are also a concern. Fewer people are volunteering for training in the region which probably means that there will be a smaller pool available for ordination in the future. Applications dropped from 35 in 2018 to 11 this year.

We also learned about various interesting schemes,. For example, in Canning Town the church school has partnered with E.On electricity to create a solar generator that sells cheap electricity to households in the locality. There is also a Racial Justice initiative: “Why had the recommendations not yet been addressed?”, one questioner asked.

I was attending because I had been chosen as a representative by the Saffron Walden Deanery Synod. The first time I attended, I was surprised that, rather than sitting around in a big circle or in rows, the Cathedral lays out chairs around tables so that those at the back are a very long way from the front, but you can chat to your table and prop up your computer. I was given croissants and coffee for breakfast and mid-morning break and sandwiches and fruit for lunch, and enjoyed chatting to other delegates in the lunch queue and during recesses.

Talking to others there, I learned various things about the diocese. I was encouraged to attend the centenary of the Mother’s Union, in November, and the Bradwell pilgrimage. I was astonished and inspired to learn that Henham church has no fewer than 15 bible study groups. A lady on my table recommended for “Bruised reeds and Mustard Seeds: the Gift of the Small Church.” I was asked how our Mothers Union members are getting on, and we were encouraged to share lifts, so I investigated travelling next time with a contact I had not seen for years.

I hope this article helps me fulfil part of my roles, which is communicating between the Bishop, the Deanery and the PCC, and will help towards helping us all discern who God wants us to be!

Anna Martin

Refugee Week 2026 - a reflection from the Bishop of Chelmsford

The theme of Refugee Week this year invites us to reflect on what it means to welcome those who have sought sanctuary among us. Given the recent division and vitriol we have seen expressed, notably on the streets of Belfast, it is a timely and bold reminder that we must stand firm against forces who seek to exploit tension and difference and even question the right of particular communities to belong in the UK.

The theme of courage is deeply woven throughout scripture as God's people are repeatedly called to choose courage over fear. Courage is not the absence of anxiety or uncertainty; rather it is about the decision to trust God and act with compassion even when the path ahead is unknown. The words "Do not be afraid" are spoken to Abraham as he journeys into unfamiliar land, to Moses as he confronts oppression, to Joshua as he leads his people into a new future and to a young pregnant Mary, as she accepts God's unexpected call on her life. Jesus himself, entering a world marked by displacement and insecurity, chose to live not by fear but to identify with those on the margins and bridge societal divides.

The bible is clear, we must resist narratives of fear and distrust. When tensions rise, the answer is not to withdraw or hold others at arms length, but to seek deeper connection as Jesus did. Christians are called to see people not as problems but as neighbours to love. We must resist the temptation to single out any particular group, scapegoating them because of our wider anxieties, but have the courage to listen to unfamiliar stories, build relationships across differences, speak up for justice and create communities where all can belong.

A healthy and, indeed, a democratic society, depends on our ability to bridge differences, to find common ground and move forward together rather than apart. But too often we see disagreements framed as binary moral conflicts that demand people choose a side. This kind of polarisation pushes us into opposing camps, making it harder to recognise our shared values and aspirations. Community cohesion is developed and sustained by habits of respect and a posture of inclusion; by legal protections, mutual support and engagement, and by a shared sense of belonging.

Hope is not passive. It is something we build, courageously and intentionally through action, service, and our commitment to one another. I was reminded of this also when meeting with a group of Rabbis from across Essex and East London recently. We listened to one another and committed to building stronger relationships of mutual trust and support.

The word for courage comes from the Latin, *cor*, meaning heart. Fear tends to close the heart - fear of difference, of scarcity, change, or vulnerability. But courage is the practice of keeping the heart open - to God, to neighbour, and especially to the stranger. Courage allows us to encounter another person not as a threat but as a fellow human being created in God's image. In a world where suspicion can harden hearts and difference can create distance, welcoming the stranger therefore becomes an act of courage. It allows us to respond not out of anxiety but from the deepest centre of our being, where God's love dwells. "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!" (Psalm 31:24) May we move beyond fear, prejudice and indifference to become communities of generous welcome, reflecting the heart of God.

Rt Rev'd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani

Derby Cathedral Visit

The Friends had an interesting visit to Derby Cathedral on Tuesday 19th May 2026. Worship has been offered to God on the site for over a thousand years. The first thing that strikes you as you enter the Cathedral is the wrought-iron screen spanning the width of the Cathedral. You can see part of that on our group photo.

The Cathedral has a memorial to Florence Nightingale who was born to a Derbyshire family.

After our tour we headed to the Joiners Arms for a splendid lunch where we were seated in the Garden Room, bedecked with tiny white lights over numerous trees.

Then on to Kedleston Hall for the afternoon. This is an 18th Century mansion with Robert Adams interiors, colonial history and vast parklands.

The house was designed for entertaining starting with the huge columned entrance hall setting the scene. The rooms are filled with a lavish collection of paintings, sculpture and furnishings. It was inherited by George Nathaniel Curzon who became Viceroy of India between 1899 and 1905 which is reflected in the collection of objects from during his time in South Asia and the Middle East.

The Church, in the grounds was first mentioned in a document dated 1198 and it was the village Church of Kedleston.

After a packed day we headed home in the rain.

Pamela Mugliston



Music

at St Mary's Parish Church
Saffron Walden

Lunchtime Recitals 2026

*All the following recitals start at 1.10pm
and last approximately 40 minutes
Refreshments available from 12.30pm*

Wednesday 27 May

Derek Scurll *piano* & Sarah Lamont *soprano*

Wednesday 3 June

Krassimira Jeliazkova *violin* & Liz Mucha *piano*

Wednesday 10 June

Oliver King *organ*

Wednesday 17 June

SWCHS Students

Wednesday 24 June

Ivan Linford *organ*

Wednesday 1 July

Mitchison Ensemble

Wednesday 8 July

Anna Le Hair *piano* & Arwen Newband *violin*

Wednesday 15 July

Curlew String Quartet

Wednesday 22 July

Veronica Henderson *cello* & Liz Mucha *piano*



Celebrity
Organ Recital

Jonathan Scott

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Saturday 24 October 5.00pm

All recitals listed are free with a retiring collection