

St Helen's Magazine

April 2022

50p



St Helen's Church

Ashby-de-la-Zouch



Loving God, loving others, loving the world

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Giving

You can make donations to the work of St Helen's via our website - <https://www.sthelensashby.net/Groups/327469/Giving.aspx>

Editor Writes ...

The popular phrase 'Does *exactly what it says on the tin*' was developed to advertise Ronseal almost 30 years ago, and how ubiquitous it's become in all our every day lives since then. Well, it's so useful. Some of us who went to see



Mary installed had a Ronseal moment when we discovered that being 'installed' literally means you actually have your very own stall? Here is Reverend Mary occupying hers at Coventry Cathedral. And there is more on this story on pages 24 and 25.

I'm all in favour of things which do 'exactly what it says on the tin', so it works well to have our regular updates from the Mothers' Union on a page titled ... Mothers' Union (page 23) and our insight into the work of Ashby Youth for Christ (page 29) called ... Ashby Youth for Christ.

Our 'Revd Mary Writes' articles may have disappeared from the monthly magazine as we head off into an interregnum but I'm very pleased to say that the Mission and Ministry Team members are stepping up for us, and our first contribution is called 'Andy Smith Writes'. It may be clear to you who it has been written by!

An article came to me from Julie Starkey in a computer file entitled Prior John, but it turns out it wasn't about a superior in some religious order whose name was John. It was another of Julie Starkey's fascinating articles about previous incumbents of St Helen's, and this one was called ... John Prior. I think he'd been alphabetised. See page 10.

On page 16, you'll find April Gardening Tips. It might be something we're starting new in the magazine, but I'm sure its honest to goodness Ronseal type title lets you know what to expect.

Coming up with a clear as Ronseal name for a new venture is proving much more tricky and we need your help. Read all about it on page 19.

Jill Chapman



Andy Smith Writes ...

“Spring is in the air”

As I write this, the clocks have just gone forward, an occasion marked in our household by a tradition of having a drink in the garden as the sun goes down; given the unpredictability of British weather, it's a “tradition” that's more popular with some members of the household than others!

But last night, sitting out together as the sun set, listening to the birds chattering away was a good time, a chance to be in God's creation and really sense nature's energy getting ready to spring into life as we move into April and the last weeks of Spring.

Spring into life is such an appropriate phrase, as Spring is the season of new life. In nature we see the snowdrops – early harbingers of the new life to come, followed by daffodils, fritillaries, tulips and other late spring and early summer flowers. Meanwhile the birds become increasingly active, as they call to one another, build their nests and “do what birds do,” and the mighty trees begin to leaf up and prepare to blossom. After a season of rest and renewal, there is so much energy bursting out everywhere.

In the church year Spring coincides with Lent & Easter, themselves seasons of renewal and new life. Lent, a time when through prayer, spiritual practice, and simplified living we seek to renew our faith and prepare for the joy and celebration of the new, eternal life bursting free from the tomb on that first Easter morning.

Just as in Spring we see the balance of the day shift from darkness to light, remembering the events of Christ's last days through Holy Week remind us that even the deepest darkness could not overcome the light of the world that is our Risen Saviour. Could not overcome it over two thousand years ago and will not overcome it now.

So please join us in our special acts of worship through Holy Week; beginning on Palm Sunday (where there are rumours of a very special guest joining the Procession of Palms!), through the quiet reflectiveness of Compline in our lovely village churches, the starkness of darkening and stripping the church on Maundy Thursday, words and music on Good Friday that evoke the pain, loss and apparent defeat of the cross and finally the joy and jubilation of Easter Morning when once again we join to say “He is risen – he is risen, indeed – Alleluia!”, and celebrate “That Joyful Eastertide.”

And as we prepare to celebrate the risen Christ, the light and life of the

world, let me encourage you all to think about what new life we can bring to our lives together in the next twelve months. Easter is always a poignant time of year, but this year it feels even more so as we emerge from the restrictions endured for the last two years and we settle into the rhythm of life “in vacancy.”

The Mission & Ministry team talked this morning, of seeing the vacancy as, a time when we could develop and grow, individually and collectively, in our faith and in our witness to the communities we serve, not a period to “mark time”.

I’ll finish with a prayer written by Ruth Burton of the Wild Goose team. You may like to read and pray this prayer through these final weeks of Spring and ask, what does “Renew” mean for me?

Creator God,
we thank you for the beauty of your springtime creation,
awakening buds and blooms, lengthening blue skies and sunshine.

Awaken hope within us. Renew us.
May we be refreshed with energy and enthusiasm
to see you in the places where we live and, in the people around us.

Redeemer God,
we thank you for your son, Jesus, for his parables and teaching,
healing and caring, for his life, death, and resurrection.

Awaken love within us. Renew us.
May we share your love and care with others.
May we and they come close to you.

Companion God,
we thank you for your Holy Spirit,
for your comfort and guidance, presence, and trust.

Awaken faith within us. Renew us.
May we share your way and life with others.
May we be a witness to your saving love.

Creator, Redeemer, Companion,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
we bring our praise and thanks to you.
Amen

I wish you all a (slightly early), Happy Easter!

Andy Smith

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Prayer for the Peace of the World



*Almighty God,
from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed:
kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all, the true love of peace
and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom
those who take counsel for the nations of the earth
that in tranquillity your kingdom may go forward,
till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

A Prayer for Ukraine

*God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.
We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.
We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion
to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in
fear,
that you would hold and protect them.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
Amen.*

*Archbishop Justin Welby
Archbishop Stephen Cottrell*



The
**What's
On**
Notice board



St Helen's Church & Heritage Centre
Ashby-de-la-Zouch

Palm Sunday

On Palm Sunday, when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem riding on a donkey, the crowds greeted Him with an enormous & exuberant welcome, waving palm branches in celebration of his victorious arrival.

On **10th April**

Join us as we re-enact the procession with a real life donkey - Come and wave a palm frond!

The Procession

- Will start at 10am at The Rectory (4 Upper Packington Rd)
- Walk along Mount Walk
- Walk around the churchyard
- The procession will finish for 10.30am, when the Palm Sunday Service will commence in church



Facebook: St Helen's Ashby de la Zouch

Website: sthelensashby.net



Please send any articles,
jokes, book reviews,
photos etc to
jill.chapman12@btopenwo
rld.com

Thanks



St Helen's Church

HOLY WEEK

- **Palm Sunday-** 10:30 10th April
- Morning Worship
- **Maundy Thursday-** 19:30 14th Apr
- Holy Communion
- **Good Friday-** 19:30 15th April - At the Cross:
A Service of Reflection



- **Easter Day**
- 10:30 17th April
- Holy Communion



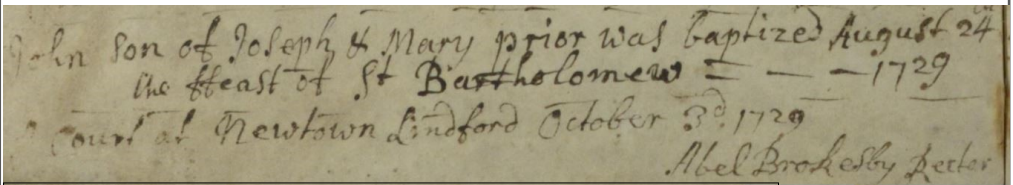
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John Prior

Vicar 1783-1803

John Prior's life is well documented. He was born at Swithland in August 1729, the son of Joseph Prior, steward to the Danvers family, and was baptised on the Feast of St Bartholomew. He had one sister, Elisabeth. Prior was educated at Woodhouse and appointed master of the school there at the age of just 15. He served as curate of Woodhouse and Quorn from 1755 to 1763. He must have trained as a priest 'on the job' because his university education didn't start until 1762, when he was admitted as a 'sizar', a poor scholar, to Emmanuel College, Cambridge.



John Prior's baptism in 1729 at St Leonard's Church, Swithland.

John Prior was ordained deacon in June 1759 at Buckden in Huntingdonshire and was priested just before Christmas the same year, also in Buckden, by the Bishop of Lincoln. Buckden, at first sight, seems a strange location for an ordination. It's a village, near St Neot's, right beside the A1. However, its location is key. It was perfectly situation to be one of the 'travelling palaces' of the Bishops of Lincoln as they moved around their vast Diocese, which stretched from the Humber to the Thames at Dorchester. Only remnants of the 15th Century Palace remain today and are used as a Catholic Conference Centre.

Prior's first appointment by the Bishop of Lincoln, in June 1759, was as Curate of Rothley's Gaddesby Chapel and he continued to teach. In 1763, he was appointed Master of Ashby Grammar School. The Hastings family were almost certainly instrumental in his appointment at Ashby and in enabling him to take up a university education. He eventually took his BD (Bachelor of Divinity) degree from Emmanuel College in 1772. Prior, a musician as well as a teacher and cleric, was also patronised by influential Ashby Doctor Thomas Kirkland and his influence is likely to have expedited Prior's appointment by Francis, Earl of Huntingdon, to the living of St Helen's in 1783. At the time, the living was valued at £180 per year. It's clear from the Parish Registers that Prior had already been doing the job of Vicar for at least ten years by the time of his official appointment, even though his official duties at the time were as School Master and Curate. Prior had been instituted as Rector of Willesley in 1780 and also became Vicar of Packington in 1804.

John Prior's appointment as Master of Ashby Grammar School in 1763 gave him sufficient income to marry, in May, Anne Cock of Quorndon. The couple had a son, John (born 1765), and three daughters, Anne (born 1764), Elisabeth (born 1767) and Mary (born 1768). Elisabeth was the only one to marry. John became a priest and, after a spell as curate at St Helen's became perpetual curate of Willesley. Ann Prior senior died in July 1774, leaving her husband with four children under the age of 9, and is buried at St Helen's.

Prior must have been grief stricken. The following year, he threw himself into the huge project of creating a large-scale map of Leicestershire, which was published in 1779. It was the first map of the county to be produced since Elizabethan times and its scale was one inch to the mile. The surveying itself was actually carried out by a former pupil of Prior's, Joseph Whyman of Aston on Trent. Whyman had learnt surveying not from Prior, but from Peter P Burdett, whose map of Derbyshire was published in 1767. The map showed market towns, villages, seats, farmhouses, churches and chapels, wind and water mills, coal pits, lime works, turnpike roads, crossroads, boundaries of the hundreds and roman stations as well as woods, forests and parks. In the lower left corner is a plan of the city of Leicester. The map was financed by 264 subscribers, mostly Leicestershire nobles, gentry, clerics and professionals, and was dedicated to Prior's Patron, Francis, Earl of Huntingdon, who was a fellow of the Royal Society and a member of the Society of Antiquarians. The Rev Peter Cowper, Prior's predecessor as vicar of Ashby, was a subscriber.

The map, decorated with Francis Hastings' armorial bearing, was published by Prior in London and in Leicestershire. He included on the map a diagram of his triangulation stations, *'intended for the use of the curious, and for a testimony of the accuracy of this work.'* His work earned him an award from the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts.

Prior also rebuilt the vicarage, which had fallen into decay, though he continued to live in the school house. He *"left his mark at Ashby not as a great preacher or schoolmaster, but rather as a genial man of liberal interests who had a wide range of scholastic and social accomplishments. He was a 'perfect master' in the theory of music and attained 'to great excellence as a performer', especially on the violin. He was 'an accurate and elegant classical scholar' and at the same time a sound mathematician and 'a person of refined taste and extensive erudition'. It is said that he learned Hebrew when over sixty years of age, sufficiently to enable him to read the Old Testament in the original."*

Prior was an accomplished musician and a cultured man, delighting in literature, friendships and domesticity, qualities which caused him to be loved in the town. One story about him was recalled by his friend Dr Kirkland in his notes. Some time after Francis, Earl of Huntingdon, had

appointed Prior to St Helen's on Kirkland's recommendation, the Earl told Kirkland, *“Well, doctor, your friend, the vicar, seems to be a poor preacher.”* *“But, my Lord, you should hear him fiddle,”* was the reply.

Sadly, Prior's failing health towards the end of his life impaired his teaching and it is said that shortly before he died there were just three or four pupils remaining at the Grammar School. In his will he expressed a wish *“to be buried in the North Side of the Vestry of the Church of Ashby de la Zouch with the remains of my late dear wife and desire it may be done in as private*

a way as is consistent with decency.” He provided for his unmarried daughters and requested that either Lord Moira or General Hastings should give his son a living within six months of his death. All his books, musical instruments and music books, except his Harpsichord pianoforte and virginal Harpsichord and vocal music were left to his son. The rest were divided between his daughters, Ann and Mary.

He died on 15th October 1803 at the age of 74. His obituary in the Derby Mercury, dated 10th November, described him thus: *“On Tuesday the 18th ult, in the 75th year of his age, the Rev John Prior, Vicar of Ashby de la Zouch, Master of the Free School there, and Vicar of Packington, Leicestershire. He was a tender parent; a kind master; a sincere friend; and a truly good man: whose death will be long lamented by his family and friends.”*

Julie Starkey

Rev John Prior's Monument on the North Wall of St Helen's Church
Photo: Martin Vaughan

¹Leicestershire in 1777. Edited by J D Welding. Published by Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service, 1984. P3.

²John Prior, Map of Leicestershire. (London 1779). BL, Maps, 3260 (7)

³Levi Fox: A Country Grammar School. University Press, Oxford. 1967. Pp63-64

⁴W. Scott, *The Story of Ashby-de-la-Zouch* (1907), p.334

⁵L. Fox, *A Country Grammar School* (1967), p.64

⁶The National Archives, Will of Reverend John Prior, PROB 11/1401/203

⁷The National Archives, Will of Reverend John Prior, PROB 11/1401/203

⁸Derby Mercury. 10-11-1803. (FMP)

March

Maverick March comes in and out with
beasts at both ends
In like a lion and out like a lamb
Or vice-versa.

We will soon be remembering the Lion transformed into the
slaughtered Lamb and once again the world
pauses for breath in the face of
a remembered death in the middle of next month.

'It is finished' he cried and indeed it was as He
burst through hell's gates from the inside out.
No maverick He but the Lord of Life
Dancing his way on the mid-April sun.

"Fool" comes the cry from the incredulous crowd
"Fool" the reply now death lies trampled and cowed.

Chris Lewis

Originally written 16.3.18 but adapted to reflect how Easter falls in 2022.



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Lord, Make Me an Instrument of thy Peace

Undoubtedly we have all sung and prayed these well known words many times. For me it will have been via a favourite hymn at St Helen's, "Make me a channel of your peace" which was written in 1967 by Sebastian Temple, and has notably been recorded by Susan Boyle, Sinéad O'Connor, Daniel O'Donnell, Katherine Jenkins and many others.

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is hatred let me bring your love
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord
And where there is doubt true faith in You

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is despair in life let me bring hope
Where there is darkness only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
It is in giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we are born to eternal life

Although the famous prayer on which the hymn is based is frequently attributed to St Francis, apparently it can't be traced back further than 1912, when it was printed in Paris in French, in a small spiritual magazine called *La Clochette* (The Little Bell) which makes it yet another creation which we can assign to that most prolific wordsmith of all, 'Anon.'

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where this is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Anon appears to have had a re-write of his or her well known words recently, and its title is sometimes 'A Reverse St Francis Prayer':

Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.
Where there is apathy, let me provoke;
Where there is compliance, let me bring questioning;
Where there is silence, may I be a voice.
Where there is too much comfort and too little action, grant disruption;
Where there are doors closed and hearts locked,
Grant the willingness to listen.
When laws dictate and pain is overlooked...
When tradition speaks louder than need...
Grant that I may seek rather to do justice than to talk about it;
Disturb us, O Lord.
To be with, as well as for, the alienated;
To love the unlovable as well as the lovely;
Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.

Jill Chapman



God's Garden

The Lord God planted a garden
In the first white days of the world,
And He set there an angel warden
In a garment of light enfurled.

So near to the peace of Heaven,
That the hawk might nest with the wren,
For there in the cool of the even
God walked with the first of men.

And I dream that these garden-closes
With their shade and their sun-flecked sod
And their lilies and bowers of roses,
Were laid by the hand of God.

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,--
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.

For He broke it for us in a garden
Under the olive-trees
Where the angel of strength was the warden
And the soul of the world found ease.

Dorothy Frances Gurney

I'm sure we all know and love the lines of this poem, 'One is nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth' and so, very appropriately, we have a new regular item arriving in the magazine - monthly gardening tips. Thank you very much to Alan for volunteering to help us gain some expertise with our own plots.

Ed.

April Gardening Tips

The months of March and April traditionally represent Springtime in the UK when you can see new growth in your borders. The clocks go forward at the end of March and so the daylight hours increase, as do the number of different flowers that appear.

Snowdrops are a sure sign of Spring. Select a spot in the garden where there is light shade with a well-drained soil. Add sand to heavy soil to assist drainage and plant the bulbs about 10 cms deep.

As with all bulbs, the spent flower heads need deadheading so that the energy goes back into the bulbs for next year.

General cleaning of paths, patios, decking etc, as well as frames and greenhouses, is a good way to start the season. One job we tend to forget is the cleaning and checking of garden tools such as lawn mowers and hedge trimmers before the season really starts.

I find the most difficult but rewarding job for this time of year is weed control for driveways and borders. But remember, weeding must be continued throughout the year.

Remove any large leaves and branches that may have fallen during the recent stormy weather. Cut back any old dead growth of herbaceous perennials and grasses. If you are able to, compost all except the weeds. You can now add compost (preferably peat free) or fertiliser to the base soil if required.

Also, get your pruners out to tackle woody shrubs and trees, but check which types like a Spring “haircut”. Spring is not the time to prune early flowering shrubs that bloom from old wood such as Lilac, Forsythia and Azalea. Spring is the last time to shear back your evergreen borders and hedges such as Laurel and Leylandii before the birds start building their nests. You may not know, but it is generally illegal to cut back nesting trees from about March to August (there are exceptions so do check).

Spring is a good time to assess and then repair, if necessary, the structure of any framework for your climbers.

Please remember that the weather in April remains unpredictable. We have had a heatwave in late March but forecasts of ground frost and even snow have been made recently for early April.

So, protect your outside vegetable and bedding plants with horticultural fleece, or put under cloches or in a greenhouse/conservatory.

Early April is the traditional month for planting out salads and early potatoes.

Continue chitting second early and maincrop potatoes until the end of April.

Potatoes take up a lot of space in borders, so consider growing them in large pots or sacks. Remember to keep potato growing areas moist and cover with fleece if frost is predicted.



Finally, consider planting out onion and garlic sets, as well as broad beans which are the hardiest of the bean family, in early April.

Alan Cross

Our Worship on Sundays in April

Week	8.30am	10.30am	pm
1 3 rd April	Staunton Morning Prayer	St Helen's All Age	6.00pm St Helen's * Evensong
2 10 th April Palm Sunday		St Helen's * Morning Prayer - Passion Narrative Coleorton Holy Communion	
3 17 th April Easter Sunday	Staunton Holy Communion	St Helen's * Holy Communion	
4 24 th April		Holy Trinity Flagstaff Team Holy Communion	12.30pm St Helen's Baptisms 3.30pm Coleorton Messy Church

Other Holy Week Services at St Helen's

14 th April Maundy Thursday	*7.30pm Holy Communion
15 th April Good Friday	*7.30pm At the Cross: A Service of Reflection



* - denotes services at St Helen's which are streamed live to Facebook, on the Flagstaff Family of Churches Facebook page. Services which have been live-streamed can be found later, on the St Helen's Church website - www.sthelensashby.net

Other Services

- **Wednesdays - Holy Communion - 10.30am**
 - First Wednesday of the month - Holy Communion - in church
 - Second Wednesday of the month - Holy Communion - at Prior Park Community Centre
 - Third Wednesday of the month - Service of the Word - in church
- **Saturdays - Parish Prayers - 9.30am in church (Hastings chapel)**

All's Wool That Ends Wool

Put on your (crocheted) thinking caps - the Events & Activities Team are trying to think of a name for a new group we are starting for St Helen's and for the Ashby Community. It will be like a 'Knit & Natter' group ... but it will be for all sorts of thread activities, not just knitting. We're hoping the opportunity to natter will still be key!

The new group will be on the first Wednesday of the month from 2 until 4 in the afternoon in the Heritage Centre. It will be a drop in, where you bring along whatever thread-based craft is your thing, and have a chance for a bit of sociable time in a relaxed atmosphere, while you chat about your knitting / sewing/ weaving/ mending (!) and exchange advice, tips and ideas

We hope lots of St Helen's crafters will be there, to enjoy the group themselves, but also to give a warm St Helen's welcome to anyone else who ventures over our threshold into the Hastings Hall.

One new face to St Helen's is Anne Acosta, who recently retired from the Fashion and Textile Department at Loughborough University, and who will help organise the group for us. Although it won't be a taught group, its joy will be the sharing of everyone's experience, especially useful if you find you need help with your project.

Anne has agreed to be a contact, in case anyone would like get in touch before they go along. Her email is a.acosta@btinternet.com

The first session will be on 4th May, so posters are being designed and hopefully will catch your eye over the next month. But there's one small snag - what should we be called? Rejected so far are:

As You Sew, So Shall You Rip
Let's Fabricate Our Story
Spinning A Yarn
Looming on the Horizon
Sew it Seams
Bobbin Along
I'll Be Darned
Thready, Steady Sew
Sew Much Fabric, Sew Little Time



I think you'll agree all these names are sew-sew. Please help!

Jill Chapman

White Roses on a Grave

Walking through the churchyard of St Helen's recently I noticed a spray of white roses on one of the very old graves – you probably noticed it too. Although the roses are artificial, it still seemed a nice thing to do, and very unusual, to lay flowers on the grave of a family who died so long ago. The inscription is partly obscured by mossy growths but Julie Starkey kindly supplied me with a full transcript:

Beneath are deposited, [in one grave and at the same time]
the earthly remains of Thomas BRADFORD and Mary, his wife,
who after a short but fatal attack of influenza exchanged time for eternity.
She died on the 9th day of February, 1837, in the 53rd year of her Age.
He died on the 11th day of February, 1837, in the 58th year of his Age.
Also Mary ROBERTS mother of Mary BRADFORD who fell a victim to the
same disease. She departed this life on the 4th day of February 1837,
in the 71st year of her Age.

" Reader, cast thine eyes around thee:
Attend to the chronicles of mortality,
And then let reflection
Prepare thee for eternity."

Their deaths were reported in four local newspapers, the Leicestershire Mercury, the Leicestershire Chronicle, the Derby Mercury and the Nottingham Journal. No further details were given other than that Thomas was a plumber and glazier and Mary Roberts was the widow of Thomas Roberts of Lincolnshire. Mary Roberts was said to have died in the house of her daughter. I think one can well imagine what had happened to this tragic family. Mother, falling ill with influenza, was being nursed by her daughter when she died but the disease had already been passed on to daughter and son-in-law.

As they died in 1837, it is not possible to find them in the Census and I couldn't find any other Bradfords living in Ashby in 1841, although there were quite a few in Moira.

So, who left the flowers on this grave and why? Julie wondered whether it someone who, in the light of the Covid pandemic, felt sympathy for a family who had died during another period of widespread disease.

Most people know about the influenza pandemic which followed the First World War but that was not the first outbreak of the disease. There have been several serious epidemics since the late 18th century and the one which took away this family swept the entire country, and much of Europe, between December 1836 and March 1837.

Although the disease was not necessarily fatal, it was particularly severe in

the very young and the old. Unlike Cholera, another killer disease of the 19th-century, which was most widespread in the poorer districts, influenza was said to attack all classes indiscriminately.

The causes of the disease were not understood in 1837 when it was thought to be something to do with the weather. This idea was dismissed by some medical professionals by the end of the century, but even then it was thought not to be “conveyed from one individual to another by contagion” and was more likely to be due to some “morbific miasma found in the atmosphere.”

Treatment was equally not well developed. Blood-letting, common in previous centuries, was largely frowned upon by 1837 although it was still used in some cases to relieve head pain. Various medicines were offered including Dr Norris’s Drops which could be bought in London in bottles costing 2 shillings and 9 pence, 11 shillings and 22 shillings – expensive!

Newspapers across the country were full of news of the epidemic. In Leicester, it was reported, that the normal number of deaths per week was 8 or 10 but that on a recent Sunday, 16 funerals had taken place at St Margaret’s Church alone. A further three were turned away – imagine how distressing that would be! The disease was “prevailing to an alarming



extent” in Hinckley and there were 500 cases in Melton Mowbray. The bank of Messrs Mansfields in Leicester was almost empty because the staff were all off sick and the congregation at St Margaret’s was very much depleted.

One slightly humorous story did emerge from the Leicester Herald. A civic dinner, to which 160 people had been invited, was cancelled, much to the annoyance of the Town Council, some members of which had been looking forward to rubbing shoulders with “gentlemen” for the first time. One man had ordered a new suit for the occasion and had asked his tailor to stop work until the event was reinstated as he was keen to have the very latest fashion! The report gave details of all the meat, poultry and fish that had been ordered and prepared, all of which had been sent back to the suppliers. However, a Mr John Taylor of Newarke, who had been expecting to host a party of 60, “being a good Conservative, did not send the articles back and like a good Poor Law Guardian, distributed the articles to the deserving poor.”

Wendy Freer

Correction to the March article: In my article about the visit of Queen Adelaide in 1839 I included this quotation: “the church which is now building, nearly opposite the Royal Hotel”. I wrongly assumed this to refer to Our lady of Lourdes, but of course the Catholic Church was built much later and so it must refer to Holy Trinity. Thanks to Julie Starkey for pointing this out.

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Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

The St Helen's branch of Mothers Union has been exceptionally busy in March.

1st March - Shrove Tuesday lunch. We sat 30 to enjoy savoury & sweet pancakes cooked by Barry Heath assisted by Julie Anne. It was lovely to see some of our older members & friends - I joined Fred at 102 & Brian Tatton & Margaret Worrall both a little younger. After the lockdown & pandemic to enjoy their company, just chatting was very enjoyable.

15th March - our Branch Meeting. We welcomed Stewart & Zoe Betts. We had arranged for Stewart to speak in 2020, but that was the first cancellation of our programme that year. So, it seemed fitting to include him this year. Stewart gave us a Lenten reflection which was enjoyed by all. He also brought a Lent Bible study which he had produced & those who wished had taken a copy & are using it as our quiet time to study through Lent.

25th March - Lady Day. Another event which was cancelled was St Helen's hosting the Deanery Lady Day service, so this year we welcomed a small but happy group into church, the Annual Theme was "Transformation-Now" & Julie-Anne spoke on this, posing to us the question on the theme.

- How can we transform ourselves, personally, & spiritually, to live out our faith.
- The churches & communities where we live & work, to reflect Christ's kingdom.
- Mothers' Union, to be relevant for the future.

Definitely a lot to ponder from this service & after our final hymn "Tell out my Soul" we then enjoyed socialising in the Heritage Centre with tea & cake.

26th March - Members of the branch created small posies for our Mothering Day service in church on 27th March .

Our next meeting is April 12th in Heritage Centre, Stations of the Cross at 10.30am.

Adrienne Sedgman

Being Sent to Coventry

The Flagstaff family and friends turned the tables on “sending someone to Coventry” when a coachload and more, travelled to Coventry Cathedral on Saturday 12th March, to share and celebrate Revd. Mary Gregory’s installation as Canon for Arts and Reconciliation.

If being sent to Coventry means to ostracise or ignore someone the Flagstaff family and friends were having “none of that!”

Right at the beginning of the service, the church families walked Reverend Mary down the aisle to her seat, a gentle and loving sign ‘handing her on’ to her next ministry.

The service was filled with music and ceremony alongside humility and prayer, and the light of Christ which shone through.

After the service, there was joy full celebration and joyful sadness as friends and family shared a word and (hugs) with the be-cloaked Canon for Arts and Reconciliation- but still very much Mary - the loving, caring servant of God

We give thanks for her ministry with us, the Flagstaff family, and we look forward to seeing the future God has in store for her - and for us.

Elizabeth Smith

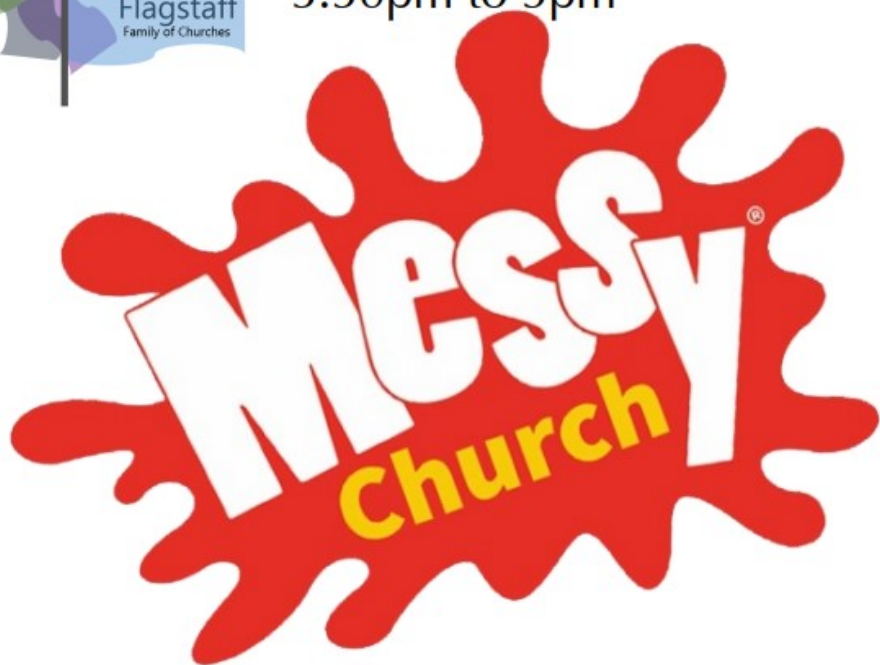






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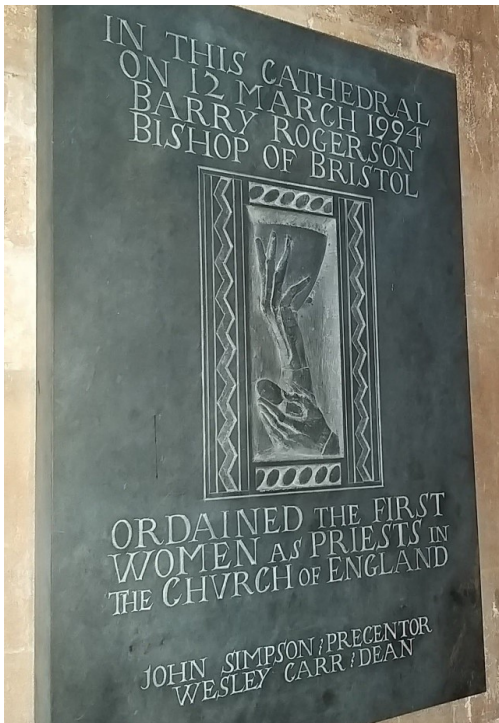
St Mary's and St John's, Coleorton

St Helen's Ashby de la Zouch

Messy Church at St Helen's

Until its Coleorton venue is back up and running we have the opportunity and blessing of hosting Messy Church in our Heritage Centre. The proximity of the church was an added bonus when March's meeting saw everyone heading in for a 'Prayer Hunt' (Think Michael Rosen's Bear Hunt.)





I Know You By Name

On Saturday 12th March 2022 the Rt Revd Vivienne Faull, Bishop of Bristol, unveiled a new plaque in the cathedral. It commemorates the first 32 women priests who were ordained there, by the then-Bishop of Bristol, the Rt Revd Barry Rogerson, in March 1994.

Not that the cathedral had spent 28 years without a plaque to mark this auspicious occasion. It's just that some people felt that the old plaque (see photo) had some important information missing - The new plaque, carved by Robyn Golden-Hann, includes the names of the women priests.

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Football

So much happens in the hour or so we're on the football pitch and then there are chats after the game and people I bump into on the way or on the way home that as I walk home I'm replaying incidents and comments in my mind and sifting them for meaning and evidence of God's grace; turning concerns and gratitude into prayer. It's a wonder my small brain manages to find the bandwidth to navigate me home.

Please pray for me and for the lads, that as we reflect on our times together we wouldn't just be reminded of our successes and failures with the ball but that we would remember evidence of God's grace and be thankful and hungry for more. Pray specifically that God's word to us would grown in us, deep rooted and juicily fruiting.

We have talked to the lads about Russia and the conflict with Ukraine/NATO, discussing if events precipitated a call to arms, whether they would volunteer to lay down their lives for Queen, country, friends, family, freedom, justice... I quoted 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.' (John 15:3) not to motivate them to become soldiers but to remind them that Jesus' sacrifice proved that God's love for us is first sacrificial, not romantic, sentimental, erotic or brotherly. Please pray that this will be revealed to them by the Holy Spirit and that they are moved to love him.

Over the last few weeks a small huddle of female spectators has grown. These hardy friends / girlfriends of the lads playing sit without complaint. They are subjected to a questionably entertaining display of skill and industry yet keep returning for more. Please pray they will know they are included, if not in the game then in the gift of God's grace.

Because we have lots of players we are planning to divide the evening into two sessions: 17:00 - 18:00 for ages 11 - 16s and 18:00 - 19:00 for over 16's. The fact that we are experiencing such high attendance is something to be thankful for. These young people want to be a part of ... A free football game? Maybe. A group of passionate but light hearted peers and near peers engaged in energetic play? Probably. A community of young people being blessed by God? I think so.

How aware are these young people of God's blessing? How much do they credit him with the fun we have on a Wednesday? How grateful are they for the words of truth that are shared with them and for the prayers that are said for them?

Please pray for these young people, that they would grow as worshippers - become more and more aware of God's grace and increasingly free in expressing this gratitude to Him. Pray that they would become increasingly conscious of, and hungry for, God's greatest gift to them.

Vernon

Sk8ers

During March it was with a really heavy heart, that we told the young people what our beloved Kate - Ashby Youth For Christ worker - was going to be leaving us. I was teary, the young people ... well they all agreed to sign a card and said some lovely things. And then Vernon (don't you just love him), took out the youth bibles box from the youth cupboard and started searching for encouraging passages for the young people to write into Kate's leaving card. At the end of the session, we gave Kate her Card and a little gift; and with bibles still out, Vernon passed one to one of our young people and suggested they read from proverbs to Kate...well this had them all laughing as many of the passages made no sense at all out of context!!

What happened next was utterly amazing...all of the other young people, picked up one of the bibles and started to open it and read to themselves, just wherever they opened it! Psalm 23 had them asking "what on earth a pasture was, and wasn't still water poisonous"? I brought us back together to end in prayer for Kate. As they young people started to put the bibles back, the young person whom Vernon had asked to read at the beginning asked if they could keep the bible. I didn't hesitate in saying YES!, then 4 more young people asked if they could keep theirs too. Mike (one of our amazing volunteers) asked where they should start, and I suggested Matthew (now wishing I had said Luke - but never mind!), and if they read the whole chapter by next week there would be a gift for them at Sk8ers.

At one session in March one of our regular members said to a new arrival, encouraging them: "I told you it was good, we should tell more people" (or words to that effect), and it reminded me of how we are all called to share Jesus with others, telling them the good news and sharing what he has done for us; who will you share with today? Who could you invite into God's presence? And that is what we try to do week after week at Sk8ers - invite young people into a safe space where we can be and show love to them, serve them, sometimes correcting them, always encouraging them, and sharing of what Jesus has done for us and inviting them to get to know Him for themselves.

As our group is growing, we would really value more volunteers to be available to listen to our young people. With only 3 of us each week now (one of whom mainly serves food and drinks), it would so benefit them. To see young people queuing to come into church some weeks, and then

sitting and talking about big things, without a Christian adult to ask questions of and engage with, is a shame. God has brought these young people to us, and we dearly seek to serve them. Would you be able to spare 90 minutes once a month or so, for these young people? To sit and listen, answer questions where you can, play a game of pool or a card game, or sitting to one side, prayer our Sk8ers? Please reply to this email if you think you could help in some way at our group. As always, we value your prayer so much and thank you for praying for us each week.

**The Sk8ers team,
Kate, Katie, Vernon, Eileen, Mike & Debbie**

Rock Solid

We marked the beginning of lent with a Bible study considering Jesus' temptation in the desert / wilderness. We became very well aware of the cost of faithfulness - the sacrifices made by Jesus and those we anticipated him calling us to make as we make him our first priority. It was sober stuff. It was also hopeful. Jesus' sacrificial faithfulness led him to the cross and resulted in him being able to offer us eternal life. Where might our sacrificial faithfulness lead?

We also enjoyed plenty of silliness. Someone had their face coated in flour and there was also a game that saw players moving Maltesers using only their talent and drinking straws to suck like vacuum cleaners. Sometimes Rock Solid sucks!

Please thank God with us for the fun and the levity that he blesses us with even as we grapple with the tough realities of the Gospel. Please pray that the Scriptures we read will return to us through the week and take root in our lives.



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Quotes for the Month

My 6yo daughter praying this morning: "God, make your light shine upon the Russian soldiers..." (I think, "Wow! How profound!") She goes on: "...so that they go blind, like Saul, and give Ukrainians the chance to run away."

Lucas Sabatier, Twitter, March 3rd

'I think that God is calling me to be a peacemaker, which is really annoying because what I've wanted to do for most of my life is fight people.'

Jayne Manfredi, an ordinand & contributor to BBC R4 Thought for the Day, blog, March 8th

'A lot of people are fed up with the C of E. It is important to say (in the name of inclusivity) that there are also other churches available where you can be having a tiresome time'

Revd Alexandra Logan, Love letter to the Church of England, Blog at WordPress.com, Mar 9th

'Mothering Sunday or Mother's Day ... is a real pain in the proverbial butt of the Church. It is a pain because people have begun to wake up to the complexities around the day.'

Sheila Matthews, saltwaterandhoney blog, March 9th

'There is no place like God's home.'

Very Revd Prof Martyn Percy, Embrace "Tutufication" of C of E, modernchurch.org.uk, Mar10th

'God sees everything and sees in such a way as you cannot hide. There is no such a bunker where you can hide from God's answer.'

Volodymyr Zelensky, president of Ukraine, quoted on Kissing Fish Facebook page, March 11th

'It is a truth universally acknowledged that clergy, even when not actively considering a move, are strangely fascinated by the Job Vacancies pages of the Church Times.'

Fr Trevor Thurston-Smith, The Pensive Pilgrim blog, March 11th

'We've come a long way from the church in the 10th century that was still actively debating whether women had souls.'

Revd Dr Ellen Clark-King, Rediscovering the Middle Ground, ViaMedia.News, March 12th

'Apparently millions of people are saying [psalm 31] daily, and in Ukraine people are praying it aloud in subway stations, bomb shelters and wherever else they are sheltering.'

Reverend Mary Gates quoted on the Monkey Mind Blog, Patheos.com, March 13th

'I mourn what my country has done ... I apologize'

Rev Vitaly Vlasenko, general secretary of Russian Evangelical Alliance, open letter, Mar 14th

'The only cleric in the world to bless the Russian atrocities in Ukraine is Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia. Watch him. Or maybe just look at his watch ... the \$30,000 Swiss Breguet watch.'

Phyllis Zagano, Keep Your Eyes on Kyrill, Religion News Service, March 14th

'It isn't racist ... It can't be surprising that people of a European and Christian origin will have a more direct sympathy with other people of a European and Christian origin'

Charles Moore on the UK attitude to refugees, BBC R4 Sunday, March 20th

Very Hot Cross Buns. Former Queen's chaplain hits out. Novelty Easter treats branded 'the devils work'.

Daily Star headline, March 20th

'I am overwhelmed by what God is calling on me to do and be in this world ... Denzel [Washington] said to me a few moments ago, he said, 'At your highest moment, be careful, that's when the devil comes for you.'

Will Smith best actor acceptance speech, The Oscars, March 27th

'The devil, in fact, doesn't exist ... This was a fundamentalist speech that we should neither hear nor see.'

Film director Pedro Almodóvar re Will Smith, awards-week diary for IndieWire, March 30th

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