

Old Malden News



The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist, Malden

August 2020

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Old Malden News

**The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist Parish Church Malden**
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August OMN Letter

The good news is that St. John's will re-open for public worship on the 16th of August. The Ministry Team, Churchwardens, and I have been working through the ever-changing guidance from the Diocese to ensure that this will be as safe as possible. There is still an element of risk involved, just as there is with anything that may potentially expose us to others who may be infected with Covid-19. I still find shopping at Sainsbury's and Waitrose a bit unnerving at times given how little people are socially distancing. We fully understand if you decide not to return to Church at this point. We expect to be able to live stream our Sunday services so that those at home may still take part.

A survey has gone round with the Sunday Eucharist mailing asking about service times and content. I proposed two Sunday services, one at 9:45 and another at 4:00pm in order to give the more vulnerable a chance to worship in the morning when the building has been empty. Only one vote has come through for attending an afternoon service so this may well have to wait until there is a demand for it. As it stands any service will require booking your place so that we can guarantee a seat and keep the numbers attending within our safety guidelines. Social distancing will continue with half of the pews blocked off as they currently are for prayer. This booking is likely to be through an app like Eventbrite or something similar.

In order to protect everyone we will also be running a programme of contact tracing by checking our list of attendees and asking everyone to choose either the morning or afternoon service (no crossing back and forth for the time being). This system will depend on you telling us if you test positive for Covid-19 so we can inform others that they need to be tested. Given that I have buried ten people with Covid-19 in Old Malden so far, we must be very careful and do all we can to minimise any spreading of the virus. Once at Church, we have hand sanitiser available and ask that everyone wear a face mask. Communion will be available with the Host alone being given out as we were doing before lockdown. The Government has advised against singing, but Barry will be playing the organ from the 23rd. The service will feel very different, but it is a start on the road back to normality. I am sure that we will manage and that St. John's will resume our round of praise and worship that has been hampered for so long.

With Every Blessing,
Michael



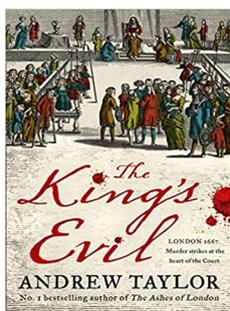
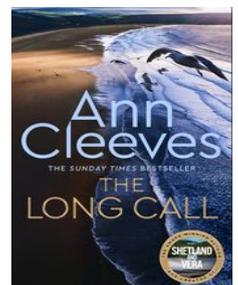
St John's Reading Group

August 2020

Our choice for last month was **Persuasion** by **Jane Austen** – her last fully completed novel. Jane died in 1817, aged just 41 and this novel was not published until the following year in 1818. Due to continuing 'lockdown' we held another Virtual meeting through Skype which seemed to go very well.

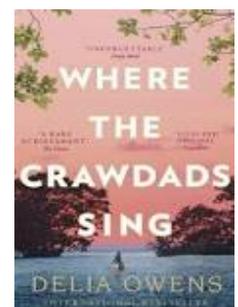
In this beautifully crafted novel, Jane takes us from Kellynch Hall, Anne's family home, to Lyme Regis and to Bath. Anne Elliott is the overlooked middle daughter of the very vain Sir Walter. So far in her life, she has agreed to and accepted the advice of others – but in this novel, she asserts herself and really becomes her own person. At the age of 19, Anne becomes engaged to the young Frededrick Wentworth but as he is considered to be without prospects or money, she is persuaded to break off the engagement. Now, still unmarried at the age of 27, (rather too old in Jane Austen's society) the now well-established and much respected Captain Wentworth arrives back into Anne's life. Jane Austen portrays some wonderful characters: the Crofts and the Musgoves, Anne's ever-complaining sisters, Wentworth's sea Captain friends, Benwick and Harville and Lady Russell (who was the main reason behind Anne breaking off her engagement). 18th and early 19th century society with position, money, and the rising influence of the 'nouveau riche' are perceptively described by Jane Austen in this brilliant classic. Many members of the group found it a very good read and gave it scores of 8/10 to 10/10. Some of the group are really not into classics and so did not read it but hopefully will enjoy our future titles.

For August we shall be reading **The Long Call** by **Anne Cleeves** – the first in a new series of murder/mystery novels set in North Devon by the author of favourites 'Vera' and 'Shetland'.



For September: **The King's Evil** by **Andrew Taylor** (James Marwood and Cat Lovett No.3 in the series). This is an historical suspense set during the reign of Charles II.

For October: **Where the Crawdads Sing** by **Delia Owens**. A murder mystery, romance and a celebration of nature, set in North Carolina. A coming of age story of survival which has led to it becoming a very popular read.



So enjoy your summer reading and perhaps discover new authors or re-read some of the wonderful classics available to us.

Marilyn Burkett

A romp through the Old Testament to the tune of Widcombe Fair (by Faith and Brian)

Our God, our God, made everything good,
All along, down along, over the world.
But Eve tempted Adam with forbidden food.
Leaving Eden, they laboured, clad in fig leaves, always hungry, bodies aching, snake-hating,
With young Cain and Abel and all, with young Cain and Abel and all.

Old Noah, old Noah, go sail in your ark,
All along, down along, over the sea,
Floating along mid the thunder clouds dark,
With two horses, two camels, pair of leopards, two squirrels, brace of oxen, woolly sheep,
with spiders and cobras and all, with spiders and cobras and all.

Old Sarah she laughed loud when promised a son,
All along, down along Chaldean Ur.
But they trusted their God: a new race was begun,
With old Abram, and Isaac, hairy Esau, wily Jacob, clever Joseph, little Ben,
the twelve tribes of Israel and all, the twelve tribes of Israel and all.

Then Moses he guided the Israelites out,
All along, round along, through the Red Sea.
In the wilderness vast they wandered about,
Old Aaron, and Miriam, manna-eating, water needing, ever seeking - promised land
where honey and milk flowed all day, where honey and milk flowed all day.

Now Joshua's priests all blew loud on the horn
All along, round along Jericho's wall.
But Samson's strength failed the day he was shorn,
by Delilah, in Gaza, while sleeping, was blinded, pulling roof down, so he died,
And with him the Philistines all, and with him the Philistines all.

The shepherd boy David, he sang for the king,
All along, down along, Bethlehem way.
He laid down his harp and he picked up his sling,
Five pebbles, ten cheeses, brothers' picnic, he set out, killed the giant, Goliath.
They made him the King of Israel, they made him the King of Israel.

The prophets they offered grim warnings of doom,
All along, down along, round Jordan's banks,
But Job he refused to sink into gloom,
as did Daniel, mid lions, also Shadrach, furnace fiery - never burned him, nor Meshach,
nor faithful Abédnego too, nor faithful Abédnego too.

In latter days Christians have trusted their Lord,
All along, down along, all round the world,
Still reading the Bible and preaching the Word,
Paul and Peter, Mart' Luther, William Tyndale, Mary Sumner, John Bunyan,
wise Archbishop Tutu and all, wise Archbishop Tutu and all.

A third note on the Seychelles

I referred to the Northolme Hotel in my last note. Well, a feature of the local social scene was a curry lunch there. You can imagine that with very few hotels, this was the sort of thing that people really enjoyed. Mrs Broomhead would oversee things and a vast array of different curries would be set forth before the assembled crowd. Another highlight was a visit from the Lindblad Explorer. The Lindblad Explorer was one of the first cruise ships, focussing on specific “cultural” things. It cruised round the Indian Ocean in the winter and round the Antarctic in the summer. All passengers were, by definition, very wealthy. I particularly recall the owner of the Carlsberg brewery was one passenger. Well, the vessel would dock in the harbour of Mahe and passengers would then be transported by “bus” round the Island to our hotel. Since there were no busses, this involved them climbing aboard an open lorry, which fortunately had seats round it, for their journey. Because it was a small hotel, with limited staffing, Mrs Broomhead asked me if I could help run the bar. No trouble at all said I. The only problem was that I had no idea what a “bloody Mary” was....you can imagine how things developed. All rather interesting. An interesting point was that, much to my surprise, none of these wealthy people ever offered me a drink!

Another man from the job also came to stay at the Northolme. For those of you who have watched “Death in Paradise”, you could imagine that it was based on Norman Rose. The evening he first came down to dinner, he was wearing a heavy flannel suite and was determined to maintain, with stiff upper lip, proper standards. We tried to persuade him that an open necked shirt was far more suitable, but it took weeks before he changed his approach. You have the picture, staid and old fashioned etc. Well, one of the other members of staff had a villa up the mountain and had invited everybody to a dinner party. It was quite an idyllic location, with a magnificent view across to the other islands. The house itself had bedrooms upstairs and a huge open plan reception area. The first floor was accessed by a great sweeping “spiral” staircase. The party started with everyone having a pineapple put in front of them. The top had been cut off and the pineapple scooped out and its juice mixed with some rum or brandy and you then drank the contents with a straw. Things continued in the same vein and then, quite suddenly, we were awakened from our slumbers by the sound of “the stripper”. To our amazement, Norman proceeded to make his way down the staircase from upstairs, removing items of female clothing that he had borrowed. One feather would have been enough to knock both Pat and I down. It was absolutely hilarious.

Malcolm Sutton

Summer Quiz Winners

Winners of the Underground, Overground Quiz: Chris and Anne Beales.

Congratulations to them and thanks to all who sent in answers.

Something rather different for August: Statues have been in the news lately. There are many in London and we easily pass them without really noticing.

Twenty are pictured. How many of these can you name and place?
See Statues on the Quiz section of St John's website.

St John's Mothers' Union has regular contact with other branches in the Kingston Deanery. The nearest of these are Holy Cross, Motspur Park, and St James (our other neighbours belong elsewhere: St Philip's to Sutton, St Mary's to the Guildford diocese). The other Kingston Mothers' Unions are St Peter's Norbiton, St Andrew's and St Mark's Surbiton, St Paul's Hook, St Andrew's Ham, and Mortlake and East Sheen.



In normal times groups from these churches have formal meetings to share news and ideas in March and October each year, and rotate around the churches for the Lady Day service. The other branches are invited to advent services, special celebrations, quiet days, even a barn dance, and there is an annual deanery garden party. Friendships are thus developed, and funds raised for MU projects. This June our members had hoped to join Holy Cross when their speaker was to have been the Diocesan President, but that sadly had to be cancelled.

Our groups all benefit from frequent contact with the Deanery Vice President, Wendy Moss from Christchurch East Sheen, who has become a supportive and appreciated friend.

What's That All About?

Have you ever felt a frisson of excitement as you entered the Church, as if you'd stepped through the door of a boozy speakeasy or walked into an illegal rave? Imagine if everyone at Church was a bit on edge, worried that the police would show up and arrest the vicar. That was once the case. In 1874 the Archbishop of Canterbury proposed a bill in Parliament, with the support of Prime Minister Disraeli and Queen Victoria, to outlaw recent innovations in church services. The bill became law and several priests were tried in court and briefly imprisoned. Their crimes? Wearing vestments, putting candles on the altar, and adding water to the wine in the chalice at the offertory. Even worse was the use of incense. These were all practices that dated back to before the Reformation and were seen as dangerous backsliding. They had to be stopped at all cost. St. John's would have looked very different on a Sunday morning a hundred and forty odd years ago. In fact it wasn't until the 1930's that St. John's would be fairly recognizable to what our Sunday service looks like today. Eventually many of these contentious practices became the norm for middle-of-the-road and high Anglican churches across the country and beyond until the 1970's as the tide began to turn. What we do is now seen as unusual and even a bit eccentric. So why the fuss?

By the 1870's there was a reappraisal of worship, in particular of Holy Communion. Theological reflection and experience made people realise that something was actually "happening" at the Eucharist. Jesus really was present in some wonderful way that went beyond a simple remembrance or re-enactment of the Last Supper. It was no longer acceptable for the priest to take the leftover bread home for toast and sandwiches in the week, nor throw it out for the birds as some did (and still do!). People felt that if they would make an effort should the Queen pay a visit, then surely they should if they believed that Jesus was really in their midst. The formality, the vestments, all the little quirky rituals during the celebration of Communion point to this reality. It's not about being old-fashioned or looking pretty. It's about heaven touching earth and standing in the presence of the living Saviour, as the power of his passion, death, and resurrection transform our lives. When we come on bended knee to the altar rail, we don't have to imagine or pretend that the Lord is here because he is here. That closeness is just one of the gifts he offers us.

Personally I'm not bothered about "dressing up" and tradition needs to be a living tradition. All too often we do things a certain way without knowing why. I have seen churches drop Communion itself as outmoded, so we ought to think about what we're doing and why. Our tradition is a wonderful inheritance, it connects word and action into a glorious whole that can draw us closer to God. We may have to do without some of what we love most as we navigate the complexities around Coronavirus and keeping everyone safe, but Christ is with us always.

Social Distancing at St John's



Many thanks for Brian Bowers for his recent picture of our fellow parishioners successfully practicing social distancing after the service on Sunday. It is a bit strange talking with a mask on, but it is something we will all get used to.



What I value about St John's..... The recent lockdown of the past months has given all of us time for reflection. Maybe for the first time since Oliver Cromwell's time and the Great Plague of 1665, St John's has been closed for public worship. This has been a difficult time for all of us. Perhaps many of the things that I have missed, not being able to worship freely at St John's amongst them, are synonymous with the aspects of being part of St John's which come top of my list of what I value most of all.

Not only do I value the fact that St John's is our much-loved beautiful building and a reminder of our rich heritage of centuries of prayer and worship in this place, but I also value our 'liberal' and inclusive way we do things. As Lay Reader for the past 17 years, I have been privileged to be part of the Ministry Team which is concerned about the spiritual well-being of the congregation and many aspects of St John's worship. I love our liturgy, worship, ceremony, seasonal celebrations, festivals, challenging preaching, vestments and incense and of course our musical tradition. As Choir Director for the past 25 years, music is an important part of my worship as well as, I hope, a means of enabling others to participate. It is wonderful to know that so many of our young choristers have continued to sing and use the musical knowledge which they have learnt through their membership of our choir. How I look forward to the choir starting up again – and hopefully, to be able to recruit new young choristers. It is wonderful to see on a Sunday morning that that we have many young families and young people who worship with us – and we all value welcoming them as part of our St John's family.

Over the past months our church building may have been closed – but with the aid of phone calls, zoom and other forms of technology, many of our usual events have still continued: our PCC, various committees, the Julian Group, St John's Reading Group and Traidcraft have all continued to operate. We still have our parish mailing and OMN and Fr. Michael has been brilliant in streaming the Eucharist and sermons for us. I find all this really heartening and encouraging. St John's carries on.... and will continue to discover even more ways to spread the good news of the Gospel.

I think that many of us will remember HM the Queen's VE Day broadcast when she said: *'But our streets are not empty; they are filled with the love and care that we have for each other'*. In the same vein, our church building may have been closed – but the love and care which has been shown to many of us, our friends, families and neighbours by members of St John's has shown us at our best. We have come together to support one another, something which I really value. A brilliant example has been the Sunday Lunch Club which has continued every month with the kindness of some wonderful volunteers.

During these weeks of lockdown, I have greatly valued our churchyard as a wonderful resource for contemplation and reflection, to observe nature and hear the birdsong – to walk past the locked church doors in the knowledge that all will be well – that once again we shall rejoice and sing together, with our voices resounding through the church and beyond.

One of our most basic human needs is social contact – technology is fine – but how I look forward to meeting someone face to face, to shake hands, even a few hugs – all gestures which we have taken for granted. So I value our real-life coffee mornings, the chaos of the coffee lounge, lots of chat and laughter, children running about and of course, brilliant Traidcraft coffee. Those days will return and we shall all value them even more.

Marilyn Burkett

In lockdown, even the stones cry out

Only one small clump of Ox-eye Daisies was planted on the barren, infertile rubble of Church Path. And this spring 800 Ox-eye Daisy flowers were counted here.

In the north Churchyard, however, the company of saints are not kicking up the display of daisies that people admired so much before 2006. This year the Ox-eye count there dropped to less than ten. This is in spite of clumps of it being re-planted again and again there.

Ten square metres of the north churchyard are set aside as a conservation test-bed. But removing the cut grass there twice last year has not been enough for the Daisies.

So on half this tiny patch, this year, grass clippings will be removed three times, after three cuts,



Our grass must be overfed by the nitrogen-rich mulch of clippings we give it. Ox-eye Daisies have been choked out. Lots of other nectar-bearing wildflowers with them. This is even after planting thousands of seeds of Yellow Rattle that remove nutriment from the grassroots. Again this year, over 30,000 Yellow Rattle seeds have been harvested. And, squirrels permitting, these will be sown both sides of the centre path this September, over a larger area.

Wild flowers very often do best on the least fertile soils. In the 1940s, brick rubble from bombed houses was dumped on a meadow outside my home town. A few school holidays later, grass was growing on the grim landscape, then Ragwort, then Blackberries, soon crimson Rose-bay Willow-herb. In no time, undergrowth had become taller than I was. Tragic bits of living room wall became a garden of wildflowers - a rock garden - on broken bricks - and on steroids.

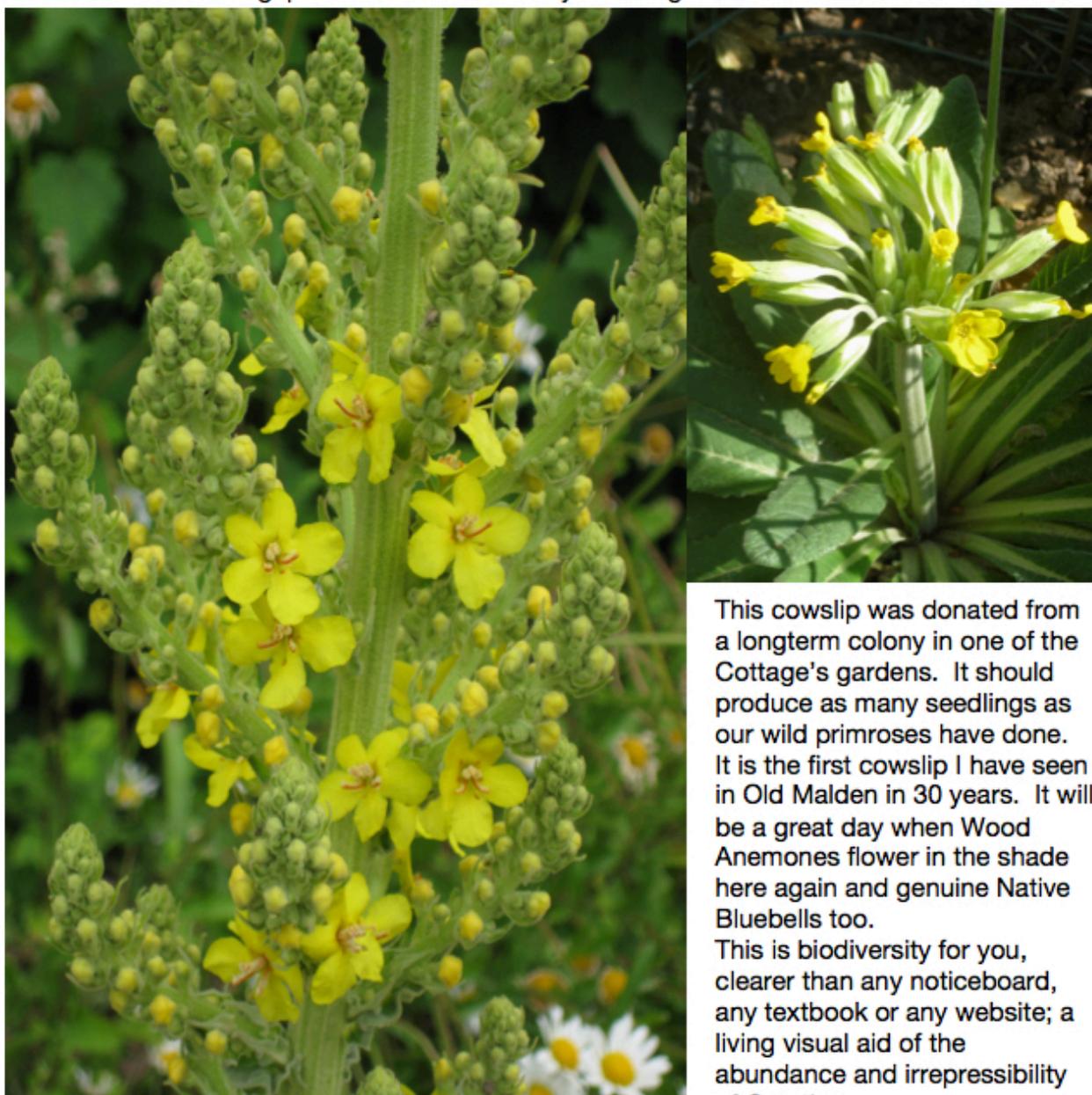
Within the main Churchyard the first rule of conservation is "Add nothing". Outside on the stony, infertile ground alongside Church Path, conservation is a surprisingly different ball-game. This is a fragment of the mediaeval hamlet of Malden - ancient trackway deserving conservation in its own right. Its quality as countryside needs be nurtured. But stones and unwanted building rubble have been crushed into the clay here, ever since wheels of carts got stuck in ruts. Underneath it now there are water, gas and electricity mains. Extreme caution is required as well because any stony fragment of it might hold precious archaeological information.

Rather than stripping off the stones, rotavating the whole patch, then blanket-landscaping it with a wildflower seed-mix, conservation on Church Path means building up the collection of wildflowers already hidden here. The gaps left by removing ash trees, sycamores and brambles need to be filled with well-chosen plants, where they belong naturally, adding appropriate biodiversity, step by step. This is to build a living collection of wildflowers that will spread by its own seed; wildflowers that people identify by name and appreciate so much that they want to conserve and care for them as living things not just website pictures.

Cottage-garden plants from the houses at the end of Church Path overflow among wild flowers here: Hops for brewing, Ransoms for cooking, Balm for making soothing tea. Wild Rocket seed from the former Aroma Restaurant was collected for planting here. Chicory, Sage, Thyme and Rosemary belong here. Woad for dyeing cloth would be at home here, even Flax for weaving. Where a big Goat Willow root was dug out, a Lavender root has been dug in. Bird's-foot Trefoil and Knapweed should be here, and many other food plants and nectar sources for bees and butterflies. There are already four species of wild Geranium here. More will follow.

Following the theme of the September charity "Go Gold" to raise awareness of children's cancers, yellow and orange flowers are being chosen first. Great Mullein plants (below, left) locked out from the Riverside Mill building site along Old Malden Road, have already rocketed a first flush of yellow flowers skywards. But will they manage a second flush of yellow flowers for September?

Non-invasive yellow and orange wildflowers like Hawksbeard, Rockrose, Yellow Toadflax and Fox and Cubs will be planted among the sulphur yellow flowers of Wild Rocket. Cottage Garden favourites like Calendula, Eschscholtzia, and Welsh Poppy are waiting to be sown there to fill the gaps - and the autumn days - with gold.



This cowslip was donated from a longterm colony in one of the Cottage's gardens. It should produce as many seedlings as our wild primroses have done. It is the first cowslip I have seen in Old Malden in 30 years. It will be a great day when Wood Anemones flower in the shade here again and genuine Native Bluebells too. This is biodiversity for you, clearer than any noticeboard, any textbook or any website; a living visual aid of the abundance and irrepressibility of Creation.

Chris Beales

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