

Old Malden News



The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist, Malden

February 2024

50p

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Old Malden News

**The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist Parish Church Malden**
Church Road, Worcester Park KT4 7RY

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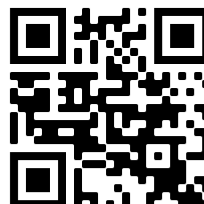
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Hall Bookings	Mrs Pat Sutton	020 8942 8321
Parish Website:	www.stjohnsoldmalden.org.uk	
Parish Office:	administrator@stjohnsoldmalden.org.uk	

To receive the Parish Mailing please scan the
QR code with your smart phone camera



Services for February



St John's is OPEN

St John's is open for worship so please see the Parish Mailing for details Live Streaming of services will continue so you will be able to see services live via our YouTube Channel.

Sunday 8am - Said Eucharist

Sunday 9.45am - Sung Eucharist

Wednesday 11am — Said Eucharist

Coffee hosted by Mothers' Union after the first Wednesday service of the month.

Please make sure you are signed up to our mailing list to get up to date information regarding the services.

<http://eepurl.com/gNz4Tf> or scan the QR Code

Vicar's Letter

As I write this in the middle of January, in time for our publication deadline, I am reminded that Christmas has barely been packed away in boxes waiting for December, and that Lent is just on the horizon. It is a very strange gear shift to move from thinking about the baby Jesus to following in the adult Jesus' footsteps to Jerusalem one last time and the Cross to come. In my first parish a colleague would save the Church Christmas tree by taking it home and chopping its limbs off. It would duly appear on Good Friday as the Cross for the Veneration as part of the service for that day. It is hard to link the joy of Christmas to the tragedy of Good Friday, but they are both integral parts of Christ's story and we simply can't have one without the other. As we move into Lent, let us treasure his nativity and all it promised, as God worked out his saving plan. That had been unfolding for centuries as God patiently worked with and through generations of people, until finally all was set and Mary gave birth to God's own Son.

For over a thousand years, Lent, Holy Week, and Easter have been kept and marked here. This year will see different services and offer new opportunities to engage with this great mystery of God's love offered to us by Jesus as he confronted the power of sin and death in order to set us free from them. I would encourage everyone to make the most of these as we explore how the past still shapes our present and future even now, over two thousand years after the fact. At St. John's, in the midst of all the busyness of getting ready for Christmas itself, so many of you gave of your time and energy to make Christmas happen, as the wider community joined us for what is the most accessible celebration of the Church's year. Lent, Holy Week, and Easter do not attract nearly as much interest largely due to the themes of suffering and death even though it finishes with a "happy ever after" ending. So do take this as your time to reap the benefit of this chance to deepen your understanding, your personal spirituality, and recharge your batteries.

As we journey through Lent, the PCC and I will be preparing for our Parish Annual Meeting in May. With Harvey Howlett's help we are reviewing and the way the Parish is run (Governance) and updating procedures and

responsibilities in order to be fully compliant with recent guidelines and expectations from General Synod and the Bishops. We will also look at our different committees and their aims, scope of action, and effectiveness so that we can ensure our mission, outreach, and common life together is as efficient as it can be. We welcome anyone who would like to consider what gifts, talents, and insight they could bring to make this possible. St. John's runs almost entirely on volunteers to function and I would encourage anyone who would like to be part of that to join us. The Restore Project will be publicly launched around St. John's Day in June, and preparations for that as well as the wider appeal are just beginning to emerge. If you haven't replied to the "Time and Talents" survey (<https://www.stjohnsoldmalDEN.org.uk/time-talents-survey>) launched before Advent, please do as you may well hold the missing piece of the puzzle that is vital to our success!

Already the snowdrops appear and Spring bulbs are sending up their shoots. Warmer days and sunshine are just around the corner, but we first will have to negotiate the cold, dark days of the Winter playing out in the weeks to come. Let us use this time to prepare for all that Easter will bring and the busy days ahead. The future of St. John's lies in all our hands and everyone has something to offer. What we have here is very special and may yet flourish to enrich the whole of our community. Let us move forward together in the confidence that God is indeed with us, showing the way to even brighter days to come.

Michael

MUSIC AT ST. JOHN'S

We are very fortunate here at St. John's ~ we have our wonderfully experienced organist, Barry Eaton; we have our talented, creative and incredibly hardworking music director, Marilyn Burkett; and we have our lovely choir!

And we also have a Church with excellent acoustics.

So what better way to raise funds for our Restoration Project than to hold some musical events?

Plans are being laid with a view to organising a series of concerts starting some time after Barry's organ recital in April. I have a few contacts in the world of classical music (and a few others), but who else is there? Do YOU have any contacts, do you play an instrument or play with an ensemble or have someone amongst your family and friends who does? I would love to hear from you with ANY contacts or suggestions, so that we can make this work!

And any help with the organisation would be greatly appreciated ~ all volunteers welcome.

Bobby Child

07946 532 846 (or via the "C" cubby hole at Church)



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St John's Reading Group

February 2024

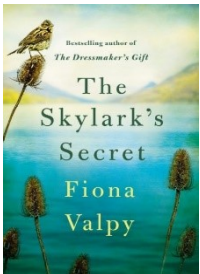


Fully recovered from Christmas Celebrations, we met in early January to check on our January Quiz and then review the chosen books.

Some of the group encountered difficulties with our first choice of novel, Isabel Allende's '**The House of Spirits**'. It was not available electronically and the font proved to be rather a challenge. However, those who did read it, had very mixed views. The novel details the life of the Trueba family across four generations and is set in the post-colonial and political upheavals of Chile. It was made into a film in 1983 and it starred Jeremy Irons and Meryl Streep. The main character, Esteban is a very complex character – brutal, ruthless and cruel. Yet the female characters are strong and passionate, particularly Clara, Esteban's long suffering wife. Goodreads describes the novel as 'an enthralling saga that spans decades and lives, twining the personal and the political into an epic novel of love, magic, wishes and fate.' It does not spare any details and so is maybe too graphic for some readers. I found it quite a compulsive read.



Average score so far 7½/10.

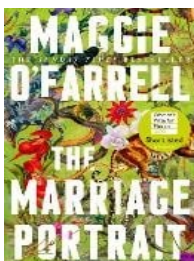
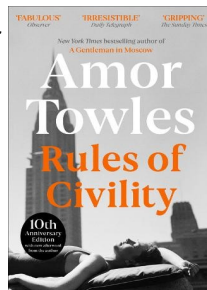


Our second title was Fiona Vapley's novel *The Skylark's Secret*. Set in 1940s Scotland and the late 70s, the novel is full of family secrets, relationships, effects of war, tensions and revelations. Lexie goes to Loch Ewe when her singing career in London falters – she grew up in the village near the Loch and wishes to find out a little more about her mother, Flora, and what happened to her father. In the 1940s, Loch Ewe was the focus for the Royal Navy's Arctic convoys yet secrecy seems to surround her father and his role. It is an interesting and very gentle and relaxing read. Not

great literature but a satisfying read nevertheless. An average of 8/10.

With so many books from which to choose – our choices for the next few months are as follows:

February – Amor Towles, *Rules of Civility*. This novel is set in New York City in 1938 and follows 25-year old Katey Kontent and her friend Eve as they move from a Wall Street Secretarial Pool into New York Society. They meet Tinker Grey, an upwardly mobile banker and then explore those heady days of 1930s Manhattan.



For March - Maggie O'Farrell's *The Marriage Portrait* – set in the Florentine court during the Renaissance. As one critic has written, Maggie O'Farrell has given us 'an exhilarating, devastating look at women's captivity, creativity and ultimately, rebellion in a world run by some very cruel men.'

For April, we shall be reading Andrew Taylor's 6th novel in his series set in the Restoration era - *Shadows of London*.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday 1st February at 8.00pm in the Church Coffee Lounge.

We have a full programme of reading ahead. Let us know if you enjoy our selection!

Marilyn



A New Year message from the Chair of Governors of Malden Parochial C of E Primary School

This is my first update since Mrs McMullan, our Headteacher stepped into her post, and I hope that you are as encouraged as I am with the transition of leadership.

We are not expecting immediate, great changes, but as Mrs McMullan settles further into her role, I am sure we can all look forward to building strong relationships and supporting her in developing her role within the school.

It was good to be able to see so many parents and carers at our Meet the Headteacher sessions, such a wonderful opportunity at the beginning of term, and again later in the new-style consultation evenings.

I was happy to join in with other parents on the Careers morning, where the pupils were finding out about the different professionals and would like to add my thanks to the volunteers who gave their time to explain their career and answer questions from the pupils.

In the Autumn term pupils in the school engaged in a number of activities beyond the school gates; the Heritage Days at St John's Church, singing at the Church Fair and Christmas tree lighting on Plough Green.

We have had some success with our recruitment campaigns for Governors last term and the Governing Body will be welcoming a new Co-Opted Governor, a new Parent Governor and a new Foundation Governor in the new year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs McConville for her contribution to the school through her roles of Deputy Headteacher, DSL and this year as our SEND Coordinator.

The school staff will undoubtedly miss her contributions to many aspects of school life, and I appreciate the support that she gave to Mrs McMullan in her first term. In addition, her experience and support have made significant contributions to the Governing Body; to me, in my role as Chair, and the other Governors. We will be challenged to find a replacement. I would like to send our good wishes to Mrs McConville as she leaves Malden Parochial.

There are other developments expected in the New Year, starting with the expansion of the Nursery, which we all hope will be a great success and later in the Spring Term, the official opening of the new School Library, which has been made possible by great support from the PTA.

May I belatedly wish everyone a Happy New Year.

Trish Brown.

ST. JOHN'S HALL

On the last day of December 2023 we said good bye to Rosemary McCann our hall cleaner of 33 years. She has been an important and dependable member of the hall team, keeping everything clean and tidy; not an easy task in a hall now 125 years old. Latterly she has been helped by her husband Andy and we wish them both a very happy retirement. Thank you.





The Men's Thing

Here are the programme of talks which will be held on the 2nd Saturday of each month in the Church extension.
Tea, Coffee and biscuits etc will be available from 10.00am.

February 10th - A talk by Neil Stafford on his career on the Railway.

March 9th - A talk by Paul Henry on an introduction to the history of books, from the beginnings on papyrus, through medieval bindings to mass produced paperbacks etc.

April 13th - Ben Jackson will give a talk on “ British Fountain Pens and Manufacturers Between the Wars”

Would you like to learn how to knit or crochet in 2024?

Perhaps you have not taken up any knitting or crochet for a while? Why not come along to our friendly group and see what you could create!

Maybe 'granny squares' or a large version which you can make into a blanket.

If so, you could come along to St John's Knitting & Crochet Group on the last Thursday afternoon of the month - next meeting on Thursday 29th February from 2pm-4pm.

You can also bring along your projects - tapestry/ embroidery - a good opportunity to chat, drink tea and relax. Good for your 'mindfulness' time.

Do join us!

Marilyn



CHRISTMAS DAY EVENT 2023

It really was a Happy Christmas Day at the Hall with all guests appreciating and enjoying all that was shared with them. There was a lovely atmosphere with everyone socialising and joining in.

Once again we have to thank our fantastic cooks Jemma Stedman, Jill Holditch, Kate Willoughby and Keith who all did an extremely good job of producing an excellent traditional Christmas meal for 30 plus people. A great team.

There were many other people who contributed to the success of this event: Heather Mathews our entertainment hostess who brought fun and laughter during the afternoon; Marilyn, Natalie and Stephanie Atkins who prepared and donated the supper bags and contents and spent the day looking after the guests; Janet F. and Janet J, Angela, Gita, James and Stephanie, Alastair and Deborah, Billy, Margaret and Des, Bob and Piers who helped with greeting guests, washing up, making tea and coffee, etc; Grahame our tech man; Andy and Beth who made the celebration cakes; Iluska Beaton for delicious canapés; to all those who drove guests to and from the Hall and to Steve for organising the drivers; Chris and Sue's music with a serpent; and to all who came to sing carols rounding off a lovely day. It must be mentioned that it was an enormous help to have many stay at the end of the day to put away tables and chairs, as was the number of people who turned up on Christmas Eve to set up. Thank you EVERYONE.

We must also thank members of the congregation who helped finance this event and to all those who donated gifts and goods to this event. We are especially grateful to Malden Parochial School PTA members who raised money, bought and wrapped gifts for our guests and helpers. Also the school children had made lovely cards for each guest with a beautifully written story inside.

We were pleased to welcome the Mayor and Consort of Kingston upon Thames, Cllr. Diane White and Mr. Jonathan White during the afternoon who spent time chatting to everyone.

This is such a great and important local community event to be part of but a lot of work and preparation goes on beforehand with making sure cooks and helpers are available amongst many other details. A request for more help with the organising had gone out last year without any result, which is quite disheartening. Please consider becoming part of the 2024 event, you won't regret it.

Pat Lovegrove





The Importance of Diversity in St John's Churchyard

We are the custodians of a very valuable resource in St John's Churchyard. A church was recorded on our site in the Domesday book, so the area nearest to the church has not been ploughed for crops; it has been used only as pasture or as a burial ground. It has been a sanctuary for plants, insects, birds and animals for over 900 years. So the range of plants in the churchyard is of importance. 75 plant species were recorded there on May 26 2003. Graham Burley, who for 45 years has managed the whole conservation process deserves to be very proud of the verdict of the first survey by those scientists of the London Ecological Unit. Their advice was that his work should be continued exactly as he was doing up until 2003 - and presumably by his many, many predecessors.

A 17 year long plant-count followed the 2003 survey (to August 2020). Within the whole churchyard area 208 species were found. This year, a one-day survey is planned, as near as possible to the original May 26 survey date. It is to be under the guidance of our local ecologist, Alison Fure. This may reveal species we have lost as well as gained. It will exactly record the same area of the north churchyard surveyed in 2003, twenty-one years ago.

Unfortunately Ox-eye Daisies (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) have vanished there completely. Embarrassingly, this is one of three plants the scientists told us to monitor to be sure conservation was succeeding. Garden roses and tomatoes thrive in rich soil. Many wildflower species can apparently only thrive in poor soil. They fall sick and die in over-fertile ground. This seems to be the problem here. The extinction of Ox-eye Daisies warns us, like a canary's death used to warn in a coal-mine, that many other wild flowers will be suffocated in the churchyard's over-fertile environment.

There are many ways of dealing with the problem of over-fertility. The easy one is to sow seeds of a semi-parasitic wildflower called Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*). This reduces the vigour of the tall grasses that crowd out wildflowers and deny them light. 30,000 seeds of that semi-parasite were sown. The Yellow Rattle plants flourish, seeding copiously and increasing year by year. Unfortunately they have not reduced the soil fertility enough for one single Ox-eye Daisy to survive in the area "set aside for conservation". So

Ox-eye Daisy plants were then pot-grown. 87 of them were planted where gravestones gave them partial protection from the strimmer. After one season, only ten survived. A year later, it is hard to find three.

A different experiment was done. Ox-eye Daisies from a seed-packet were planted alongside the impoverished, clay, bricks, rubble and puddles that we call 'Church Path'. They have spread and flowered without stopping - for a decade. Their seedlings produce a thousand flowers every year.

See the photo below.

In a different experiment about plant-leaf identification, Ox-eye Daisies were transplanted into part of the south churchyard's most manicured lawn. This is where grass has for centuries been repeatedly, meticulously cut-and-cleared. These grew, spread, flowered and seeded so vigorously that they are threatening to smother and destroy our laboriously conserved Lady's Smock. Constant cutting and clearing seems to do the trick.

A single annual cut-and-clear may be sufficient for country hay meadows. It is not enough here. Initially churches chose to make burials on their south side, but as Malden's population burgeoned, burials became dense on the north side of the church too. That is the area specifically "set aside for conservation", the area where our surveys take place. Dated graves in that area begin in the 1870s. Beyond the cross-hedge, dated burials start in the 1930s. But somewhere, six feet down, still providing a super-rich legacy of soil nutrients today, there must be 900 years of buried Malden inhabitants - doing the exact opposite of 'kicking up the daisies' and all exceedingly amused at our dilemma.

The neatest lawns, nearest the church, are cut every few weeks, creating the perfect backdrop for photos at weddings. Graham Burley instinctively knows how lawns, hedges and trees should be kept to maintain the churchyard's ambience. It is unique, the epitome of an ancient, well-kept, Surrey village. He takes infinite pains to achieve this. Telling 'one daisy from another' is not something he ever claims to do. Chris Beales is involved to help with aspects of conservation like that. But we are all now committed to finding some small areas for a new experiment in the churchyard. These narrow strips of grass will be cut and cleared twice in the first year, three times in the next year and so on, until Ox-eye Daisy seeds we sow there grow as well as they do by the old cart-track.

Keith Marshall and Chris Beales

But will Ox-Eye Daisies come back?

Seed rattles in Yellow
Rattle Seed pods.



Answers to January's Reading Group Book Quiz

The Quiz was printed in January's OMN and here are the answers:

1. Kate Bush – Wuthering Heights
2. Grapes of Wrath
3. Louisa May Alcott
4. Clara del Valle is the wife of Esteban in Allende's House of Spirits
5. The Marshalsea Prison
6. Charles Dickens wrote The Cricket & the Hearth
7. Desdemona is the wife of Othello
8. Catherine Morland is in Northanger Abbey
9. Latest Galbraith novel is The Running Grave
10. Frances Hodgson Burnett
11. Charles Dickens
12. Sue Barker's autobiography is 'Calling the Shots'
13. SPQR is written by Mary Beard
14. Senatus Populusque Regiensis
15. Nancy's steps are near London Bridge/Southwark Cathedral
16. Shadows of London
17. The Seven Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle
18. Ken Follett's latest novel is The Armour of Light
19. The Secret Diaries of Charles Ignatius Sancho

20. Ian McEwan's latest novel is 'Lessons'

Titles including vowels:

Lessons in Chemistry

Pride and Prejudice

Persuasion

Nicholas Nickleby

The Forgotten Bookshop in Paris

Crown and Sceptre

Lincoln Highway

Titles with missing words:

Politics on the Edge

The Future of Geography

The Dead of Winter

The Year of the Locust

Prussian Blue

The Satsuma Complex

I hope that you enjoyed the Quiz

Marilyn



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Bereavement Café

Thank you to everyone who supported the Bereavement Cafe through the Co-op community Charity scheme! You raised over £1,100! The next meeting will be in the coffee lounge at St. John's on Tuesday 20th February 2:00- 3:30pm. We have been very fortunate to be trained and supported by Princess Alice Hospice, who will continue to work with us to provide this needed service for our community.



With things opening up again please help raise much-needed donations for St John's Old Malden - Repairs Fund when you plan ahead and arrange things to do! From booking staycations and getaways to tickets for concerts or other fun activities, remember to use #easyfundraising to raise FREE donations for us. Book now: <http://efraising.org/fx3w1QPP7u>

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