

Old Malden News



The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist, Malden

June 2025

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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Copy date for the magazine is the 15th of the month and
please only send submissions in Microsoft Word.

ST JOHN'S HALL

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Large and small halls available for hire with kitchen facilities
For parties, receptions, meetings etc
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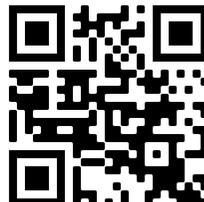
Details from the Bookings Secretary – Pat Sutton
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St John the Baptist Parish Church, Malden

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Safeguarding Officers	Mrs Sally Pusey Mrs Margaret Barrington	020 8330 2817 020 8330 2817
Church Electoral Roll Officer	Mr Steve Clarke	020 8337 2392
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 June



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 we begin the month of June and look forward to summer getting underway, we will be celebrating a couple of important milestones. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the building of the Nave by the Rev'd William Chetwynd-Stapylton. This replaced a smaller extension of ten years before which was desperately needed to accommodate the increase in parishioners, brought about as the railways expanded and newcomers arrived in what had been a sleepy little farming village. This must have been very personally satisfying to Fr. William given that there were only three people in attendance at his first Sunday service in 1850!

To mark the occasion, Barry Eaton, our organist, has organised a musical celebration with a larger than usual combined choir for June 14th at 6:30pm. There will also be a special Evensong on December 7th, the day of the dedication of the new Nave. Given this stepping back in time, I intend to keep our Patronal Festival, the birth of John the Baptist, on June 22nd just as Fr. William would have done in 1875. This is similar to what we did back in 2011 as we marked the 400th anniversary of the rebuilding of the old church, the present Lady Chapel.

Fr. William will have followed the law introduced in 1874 under the Public Worship Regulation Act, an attempt to curb the ritual innovations of the Oxford Movement and its clergy adherents. By then vestments, incense, and candles on the altar had become commonplace in many churches, upsetting a more Puritan mind-set and even Queen Victoria. Several priests actually went to gaol, causing great embarrassment to the bishops and eventually making the law all but unenforceable.

The service will be using the Book of Common Prayer 1662, the only legal resource at that time, so I will be practicing my best Tudorbethan English. Its words are treasured by many from their younger years, for others it will sound a bit alien and far removed from today. The end result I hope is a renewed appreciation for the way we worship today and the freedom we enjoy to worship in those ways that suit us best. I, for one, find inclusive language in our modern Bible, liturgy, and hymns very important. Having been brought up with the American Prayer Book of 1979, I have always chafed a bit when using the English version with its outdated language and hierarchical social pecking order. It may well be that you gain a new insight into how we worship by this revisiting our past.

In the end I am reminded that generations of people have had their own faith nurture by what feels old-fashioned now. They have navigated difficult times when religion was charged through with conflict and even violence. The very English “middle way” was a grand compromise as factions within the Church fought for the nation’s heart and soul. This has enabled us to reach a place of tolerance in our multi-faith society, and to make room and respect those who hold none. This too we will celebrate come June, until then I shall be practicing my “these” and “thous”.

Michael

Sharing a prayer – The General Thanksgiving

Chris Benson

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we shew forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

Prayer comes from the heart not the mouth. *Prayers* – the words we say, silently or aloud – are just a tool to help us, a means to an end. But over the years I have been grateful that a few prayers that I have not deliberately set out to learn, but which have somehow just sunk in, have remained in my memory, and they are for me like lamps in the dark, guiding me through those times when God’s presence seems elusive. I would like to share a few of them with OMN readers.

I begin with the General Thanksgiving, which I first encountered at school. Thanksgiving is an essential element in prayer, because, as the opening words remind us, God is the “Father of all mercies” – every good thing we enjoy in life we owe to him. Firstly, there is the fact that we exist at all, that God has created us. Secondly, that amid all the potential harms that we might be exposed to – accidents, illnesses, deprivation – he has nevertheless preserved us: we are alive! Thirdly, we are not only alive: we are also surrounded by “all the blessings of this life”, all the things which make life enjoyable and enriching. All these are things for which we should be thankful. But God’s greatest gift of all is Jesus, giving us, through his death and resurrection, redemption – the wiping away of everything that separates us from God’s love – the “means of grace” – becoming worthy to stand in God’s presence – and “the hope of glory”, the ultimate, eternal fulfilment of our life in Christ, now and beyond our life’s end.

It is one thing to say, “Thank you”. But the General Thanksgiving reminds us that thanksgiving is more than words. It has to be sincere (“unfeigned”), and also needs to be expressed in action, not only thanking God, but also responding, in service, in the Church and in the world, and in our conduct, leading lives that as far as possible follow the example and teaching of Jesus, and stand as an example to others. So this prayer is a challenge as well as a thanksgiving, asking how God might be calling us to respond to all the great things he has done for us, and in what ways we might better walk before him in “holiness and righteousness”, and so honour and praise him.

Streaming our Services - Great News!

Each week we get up to 50 people watching our 9.45am Sunday service.

We have been aware that the quality of the sound and the picture needed improving. This has now happened, due to a legacy which has paid for new equipment, and also with the efforts of the small team of people who make sure each Sunday service is transmitted to you via our YouTube account.

We are very grateful for all the support we have received to make this happen. Please give the improved service a try, you will be pleasantly surprised.

Mike Broome

A glimpse from the past.....



Humphrey Willoughby Perry-Gore was welcomed as Curate at St John's during Holy Week in 1934 and remained until 1935. His niece contacted us, having found some photos of Humphrey's time at St John's – which prompted me to do some research on his life and background.

Whilst at St John's, he proved to be a great help to Fr. Stewart Frost who was not in robust health. HWPG as he became known, was particularly enthusiastic in his work with the young people of the parish. HWPG lived at Tunstall House, a former nursing home on the site of Daphne Court, Royal Avenue so he was not far from the church.

HWPG was born in 1894 in Oldham. He attended Keble College, Oxford from 1913 although his studies were interrupted by WWI. (He was awarded his BA degree in 1919 and MA in 1934.) He joined the Officer Cadet Battalion but he was initially found unfit for military service due to poor eyesight. In 1915 he was gazetted to the 8th Battalion of the South Lancashire Regiment – he went to see an eye specialist with a view to new glasses which solved the problem. In 1915 he was a 2nd Lieutenant of the 8th Battalion, South Lancashire Regiment, moving to the 10th Battalion later in 1915 and then Lieutenant of the 2nd Battalion in 1917. He served in Gallipoli in 1915, Mesopotamia in 1916 – 1917, Italy in 1918 and France in 1918 – 1919. In 1919 he left active service to become Assistant Master of Lambrook Preparatory School in Bracknell until 1920. In 1925 he attended Ripon College, Cuddesdon and took Holy Orders (deacon in 1925; priest in 1926). Not only was his father a clergyman but his other two surviving brothers were also ordained. Ralph lived in Cornwall and later the West Indies, and Noel was rector of St. John's Wood church in London. One of his sisters, Barbie, became a nun and lived to 103!



HWPG also taught at Summerfields prep school in Oxford for 10 years.



Whether from his time at public school, university or army, HWPG was an ardent cricket fan and during his time at St John's, he encouraged the team spirit of the Choir Boys Cricket team and applauded the captaincy of young Bernard Mockford. Indeed, the team record was an excellent one: 7 Matches played, 7 Matches won and no Matches lost.

As HWPG wrote: 'When you have players who are willing to go anywhere and do anything: 'you have a team that is contented, a fellowship in spirit and in truth'.



In December 1934, HWPG reported on the progress of the Young People's Church: on Advent Sunday there were 22 boys and 22 girls present. The current membership being 70.

There is a lovely humorous touch at the end of his report and those of us who remember those Sunday School stamps will have a gentle smile: HWPG writes: 'The stamp albums have now been

distributed and the stamps much appreciated. I would remind young people that you only receive the stamp when you are present; of course if you are ill in bed on the Sunday you will get the stamp as well, but if you decide to visit your great grand-father or your auntie in Golder's Green, I am afraid you must forfeit the stamp.'

St John's in 1934, as HWPG would have known it – showing the Victorian painted wall decoration.

HWPG left St John's in 1935, he then spent 3 years at Newton Longville and after the war was Vicar at Yarnton, outside Oxford, until his death on 27th February 1960.

several newspaper articles on the coroner's report made reference to HWPG's insomnia which had indeed reached a chronic stage just before his death, causing him to act 'in odd and strange ways'. He had become very deaf and felt isolated in his parish, all adding to his acute depression. One newspaper article quoted his sister who said that HWPG had suffered shell shock during WWI and another article stated that he had suffered from insomnia for over 40 years. Now it would be described as PTSD. The pathologist stated that HWPG had died from barbiturate poisoning.



HWPG was ultimately a victim of the effects of war all those years later, but it would be sad to dwell on the negative as we mark his contribution to the lives of young people at St John's in the 1930s. It would appear that his time at St John's was a very fulfilling time for HWPG as many of the photos in the album are of cricket teams, choir groups, boys' clubs, and Sunday schools. I wish to express my thanks to HWPG's niece who has provided the photographs and some information as we learn about someone who had contributed to life at St John's.

The changing local area

I thought that, as the congregation is ever changing, it would be of interest to let people know of the way in which the parish and, indeed, the local area have changed in the time that we have lived here. I suppose that a little context would be helpful. My parents belonged to a rambling club back in the 20's and one of the favourite rambles was to take a train to Worcester Park station and go off rambling in the fields of Malden. Worcester Park rather than Malden Manor since the Chessington line had not been built then and the area where we live now, South Lane was not developed until the 30's. They bought their first house in Amberwood Rise in 1935, watched it being built and paid the princely sum of £250 for it – and I still have the receipt for the deposit of £5. However, that all predates our arrival here. I will now outline what I consider to be the major developments within and close to the parish that have occurred during our residence.

I suppose the most significant was the development of Tamesis Gardens and Paddock Close. In the old days, it was a little treat to collect the children from the Parochial School and walk them across the Manor Drive to look at and feed the ponies that grazed there. Of equal magnitude was the development of Percy Gardens which used to be a home owned by London Borough of Sutton. Not that they have been developed, but between Percy Gardens and the railway, there used to be extensive allotments which fell into disuse soon after Percy Gardens was developed. A third major development over which St John's had some control was the development of Church land which had been earmarked for development down Green Lane and which was sold off to a private developer, to help fund the church extension some 25 years ago. This in itself was a major change in the parish since it, whilst it did nothing for the capacity of the church, it did provide a very useful coffee lounge and associated rooms upstairs and, most importantly, TOILETS. Of course, it would be remiss not to mention at this point, the sale of the old vicarage, its demolition and subsequent redevelopment as an eminently desirable group of some 7/8 large detached houses and the current vicarage. It is hard to forget that during an intervening period, the vicarage was located by the bus stop in Malden Road, whilst the construction in Vicarage Close was underway. Again, quite close to the church, and indicative of the once close relationship between the church and the manor was the redevelopment of the old Manor farm buildings, just opposite the church, down the lane.

Then there are a whole host of lesser developments. Among these are Hopton Gardens adjacent to the old BBC sports ground – opposite the Fulham Ground, which of course used to be London University Sports ground. The development of Lower Green by Worcester Park station. I can recall horses being stabled there and there was also a large

furniture shop at the rear. Moving on, there is the Chelsea Close development. A fairly late development because, sandwiched between the two railway lines, it could never have been seen as a good site for subsequent sale. Then there used to be a nurse's home in Church Road which has disappeared and been replaced by housing. We have also seen the development of houses at the end of The Glebe cul-de-sac.

There used to be a petrol station/garage opposite Malden Manor station – now gone and replaced by a block of flats. Of course, there used to be a pub on the corner of the Avenue. This building, most unfortunately once disused, suffered a fire, was burnt out and left the developers free to develop. It would appear that their business plan went wrong because nothing has happened on the site for many years. People might not realise that the headmaster of Malden Parochial lived on site in what were termed “the old school buildings”. They also housed the Sunday school. However, they are no more and were replaced by some houses and a nursery building for the school. Apart from the nursery, the school itself has also seen major extensions. Richard Challenor school has also been extended significantly, but the extensions are too numerous to detail here.

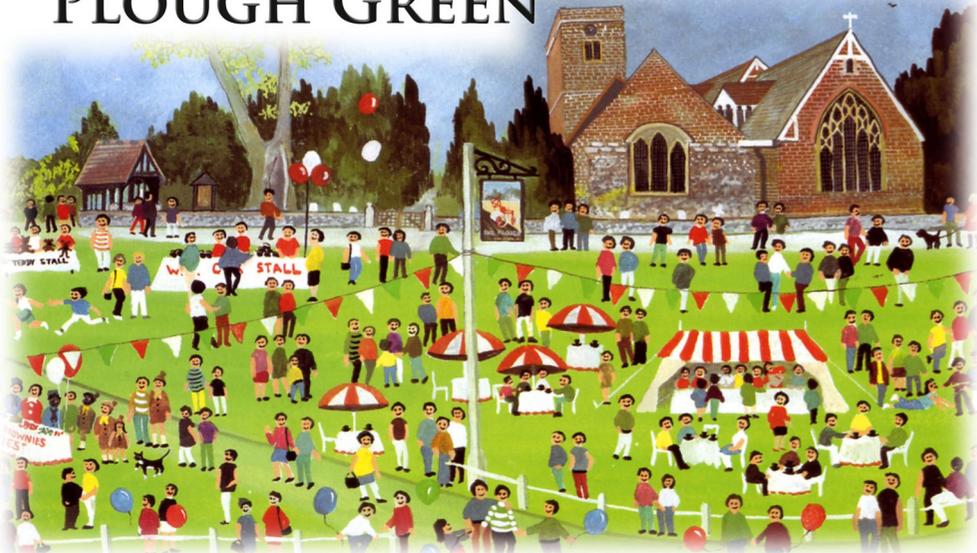
Naturally, there have been some significant developments near to the Parish boundary. People might not realise that there used to be a plain roundabout at the junction of Malden Road with the A3 – there wasn't an underpass and, equally, there was a cross roads where South Lane meets the A3 which was traffic light controlled. Moving back to developments, Cleveland Road and Gardens and a retreat in that area were all developed some 30 years ago as well as parts of the Royal Avenue. Going down Church Road past the Manor House grounds, one could not unreasonably describe Worcester Park Lane as being the subject of ribbon development! And then, Malden Park has also seen demolition and redevelopment.

So, overall, England's green and pleasant land is somewhat less green and pleasant than it used to be, thanks to the gradual infilling of areas such as Old Malden. We are a reflection of society and England as a whole!!

I suspect that Graham Burley – a resident of greater standing than myself - will look at this and send in subsequent factual corrections as well as additions.

Malcom Sutton

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH MAELDUNE FAIR PLOUGH GREEN



SATURDAY 21ST JUNE
11.00AM - 3.00PM

(BAD WEATHER: CHURCH HALL, 411 MALDEN ROAD)

- ◆ GAMES ◆ STALLS ◆ BBQ ◆ RAFFLES ◆ ARENA EVENTS
- ◆ HOMEMADE CAKES/PRESERVES ◆ REFRESHMENTS

SUNDAY 22ND JUNE
PATRONAL FESTIVAL OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST
AT THE PARISH CHURCH
8.00AM EUCHARIST
9.45AM FESTIVAL EUCHARIST



**ST JOHN THE BAPTIST,
OLD MALDEN**

**celebrates
The 150th Anniversary
Of the Enlargement of the Church
An Historical Narrative
by Dr Alastair K Daniel
With Choral items of the period
Sung by
An augmented choir
Conducted by
BARRY EATON
Accompanied by
SIMON HARVEY (organ)
Saturday 14th June 2025 at 7.30pm
Admission by Programme £15.00
(Includes refreshments)
All proceeds to the RESTORE fund.**

MPS The Musical: The Vicar the Vision

Christians have been worshipping in Old Malden since Saxon times and Malden is derived from the Saxon word Maldune, meaning cross on the hill. But in the 1830s finding a new incumbent for St John the Baptist, Old Malden was proving problematic. However, a vicar did say he was willing to fill the role for a couple of years. The Reverend Chetwynd Stapleton ended up staying for 44 years and had a significant impact on the life of the parish.

As we know church schools have been vital in shaping the educational landscape of England. Prior to church schools, access to education was limited to privileged, wealthy boys and for children in Worcester Park, Kingston upon Thames this was no exception.

The current headteacher at Malden Parochial was so inspired by the impact The Reverend Chetwynd Stapleton had on the life of the parish, she wrote the lyrics and a script to create a musical about his vision for the parish. Kyungwon Pringle, a parent at the school and accomplished musician, wrote the music, entitled **MPS the Musical: The Vicar the Vision**, Lucy McMullan wrote about the development of the railway from Worcester Park to Waterloo, bringing the opportunity for jobs in London town, for which children would need to be educated.

Children in years 3, 4 and 5 shared the story of the vicar and his need to convince the parish that this was a good idea. He explained to the PCC that a school would help the community to flourish, so that children, now educated, could take on roles other than farming, enabling the sleepy village of Old Malden to be transformed.

Performed in the church itself for 3 performances, historical accuracies made their way into the script including lines such as "But I have 7 daughters, what use is a school to me?" To which Stapleton replies

“Education is the foundation upon which we build our future. By teaching our children to read and write, we give them the tools to understand God's word, to grow in wisdom, knowledge and faith. Knowledge is a reflection of the Kingdom of God, where every soul is valued, and every mind is nurtured.”

Still unconvinced by the vicar's vision he encourages them further by saying

“Remember, this is an investment in our future-a future where the light of education shines brightly for all, now and for future generations, imagine....the school could still be here in 2025.”

followed by a collective gasp! And yet they are still sceptical

“Reverend, what about the future? What will the world even be like in 160 years? My goodness, that will be the year 2025 (laughter from the whole crowd) Is it really our responsibility to think so far ahead?” T

To which he replies

“It is our responsibility to lay strong foundations now, so that future generations may thrive. The world may change in ways we cannot foresee, but the values of love, wisdom, joy and peace are timeless.” (The school's values today). Still unconvinced they press Staplyton further

“We have our own immediate concerns. Why should we focus on what might happen in the distant future?”

And the scene ends with him saying

“By investing in our children's education, we are ensuring that they can cope with whatever future awaits them. It is an act of faith and hope, trusting that God's plan will unfold through their lives.”

Lucy took direct quotes from inspectors' comments from 1860

“The writing is a little rough. There is a rather scanty show of needle work and knitting of ordinary quality.”

Amusing anecdotes were added to the script from the book published about the school's foundation, including an entry by headteacher Mrs Tozer who wrote

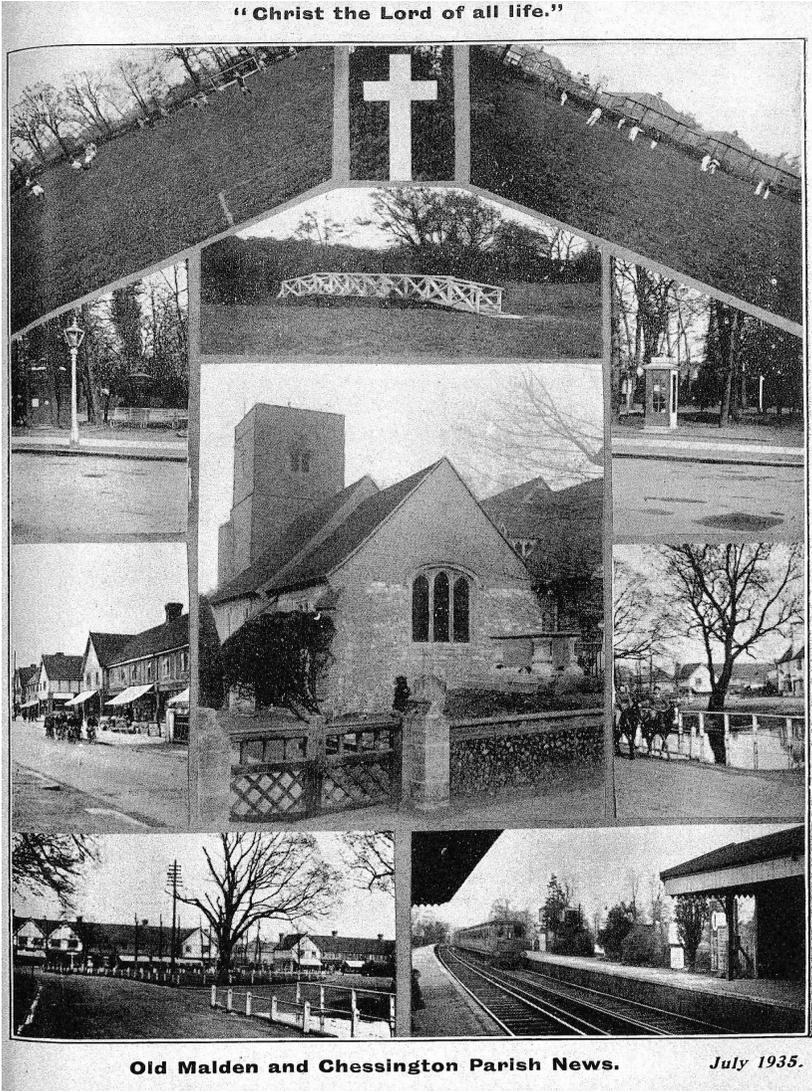
“May 27th Unable to go to school today by doctor's orders, as he says I have an overtaxed brain.”

Tickets were available for parents, parishors and the wonder community to purchase and all proceeds went towards the church's Restore project, for urgent building work. Just as the church had the school built now it was time for the school to help rebuild the church.

Headteacher Lucy McMullan was keen for the children and audience alike to appreciate the impact individuals can have on the lives of others and the importance of valuing the legacy of people who have gone before. The school's vision today is **Reflecting The Kingdom of God, by Enriching and Transforming Lives**, and this musical certainly did that.

In 1934, Fr Stewart Frost requested a new design for the front cover of the parish magazine.

He wanted a design which would reflect the church's position in the middle of the parish and community – with local views of Plough Green, railway station (Worcester Park as Malden Manor not opened until 1938), the Hogsmill bridge and local cricket and football pitches. Maybe ninety-one years later, it is still how we envisage St John's in the heart of the parish and serving the local community.





You may be wondering how the Restore Project is going after its inauguration.

To recap, the Restore Project aims to undertake urgent repairs to the crumbling brickwork of the church tower, its cracked parapets, the leaking roofs, and vestry. This is necessary to provide a safe sound building to enable us to be a hub for community based social care activities and exploration of our local heritage and natural environment. The overall estimated cost is £450,000 excluding VAT.

Where to start?

Our thinking is summarised below

Overall complex and costly repairs (£450,000)
Requires series of grants to fund
Undertake in stages
Select most urgent repair

V

Tower repair most urgent to prevent loss of use
Highest single cost (£270,000)
Phase work into feasible steps.

V

PHASE 1: REPAIR TOWER BUTTRESS

**Funds available. Grants awarded by
Marshall's Charity (£20,000)**

Surrey Churches Preservation Trust (£2,500)

Phase 1 work started on March 17th. Two firms specialising repairing historic buildings are undertaking the buttress repair. Universal Stone are replacing crumbling bricks and mortar. H.G Matthews, are making new hand-made bricks. The estimated time to completion is 6-8 weeks.

Crumbling buttress brick

New hand-made bricks



PHASES 2 & 3 will complete the overall project. Our grant committee has selected suitable organisations. None fund just 'bricks & mortar' unless accompanied by community projects, which our project does. Our grant committee is compiling applications to several organisations to secure funding (e.g. National Heritage Lottery, Garfield-Weston, National Churches Trust and others). This is a lengthy process requiring a lot of information, not to mention time.



This year 1st Old Malden Scout Group is celebrating our 75th anniversary and we would like to make it a year to be proud of by increasing the number of adult volunteers supporting our young people. We need more adults in every Section of the Group and there are children waiting to join who we might not be able to offer places to unless this situation is resolved. Please get in touch to find out how you can join in and be part of our successful Group and be part of the next chapter in our history.

Email: gsl@1omscouts.org.uk

St John's Word Search puzzle no.1

V Q C V A D P S R E T H I X P
 M J L L Q O H I R V U H Z P G
 O G T O R G A N A E E Q W Y T
 A A L P R W D Q I N W U N P N
 R W X S T Y Q D O A O O M E E
 R I C F N F Y H L V Z A L W M
 X N N T E T P C U E R A L F U
 E D M B I O B U S C H I S F N
 F S C P R E L E E N K S O W O
 D R L C F R Z S S O R C Y H M
 L U I O I A W B J H U B J I C
 P M N D H C D R A O B N M Y H
 E T V N L I B R A R Y F H D J
 V Y E G S V S P T U Z M U N A
 B S X J X L N E I H X R G H U

flowers

Font

Hymnboard

Kneeler

Library

Microphone

Monument

Nave

Organ

Pew

Piano

Pulpit

Vicar

Altar

Choir

Cross

Members of Sunday Lunch Club celebrating the 80th Anniversary of VE Day. Judy Lawrence cooked a memorable wartime inspired meal. Lord Woolton Pie and Bread pudding, both of which were surprisingly good considering the ingredients were vegetables and whatever else was available. Conversations flowed with memories of evacuation, mainly to Wales and the West Country, and one member told stories of her time in Malta throughout the war. *Lord Woolton had been the Minister of Food from 1940-1943. His job was to prevent the country from starvation. The pie recipe had been devised by the head chef at the Savoy Hotel London.*



St John's Knitting & Crochet Group

Work in progress.....

Would you like to learn to crochet? If so, come along and join us on the last Thursday of the month in the Church Coffee Lounge.

A 4mm crochet hook and a ball of DK yarn is all you need.

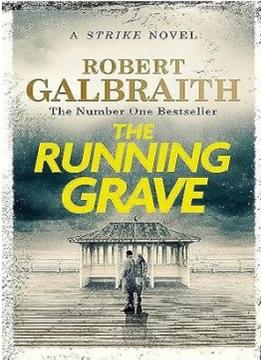
Our June meeting will be on Thursday 26th June from 2.00pm - 4.00pm.

Maybe you would like to learn to knit? Learn how to follow a pattern...Open to all - do come and join us!

Or bring your embroidery or tapestry! Or just come along for a friendly chat and cup of tea.

Marilyn



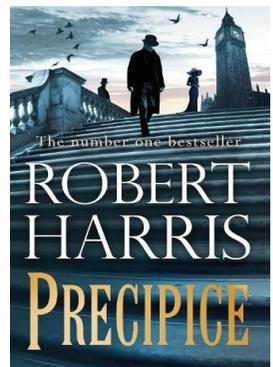


Our choice for May was **The Running Grave** by Robert Galbraith (Cormoran Strike book 7). Another case for Cormoran and Robin with a very dark story. The private detectives begin an investigation on an evil religious cult in Norfolk and Robin volunteers to go under cover. It is a story of abuse, cruelty, death and fear but full of suspense. Not for the faint-hearted. Thought to be the best in the series, we await its TV serialisation though that will be a challenge and definitely a post-9pm watershed programme if it follows the story. There are

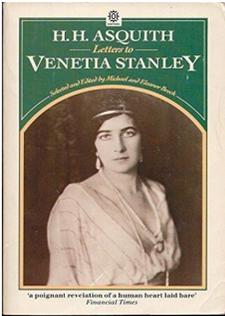
approximately 69 characters altogether and the book could do with a good editor as it comes in with 945 pages. It was a popular read with almost all the group and it scored an average on 9/10. I have to admit that, unlike my co-readers, I did not enjoy this book at all and I gave it a generous 2½/10. Well, it all added to a lively discussion.

The publication date of the eighth novel in the series, *The Hallmarked Man*, has been announced for 2nd September. I daresay it will become one of our choices in the future.

Our choice for June is Robert Harris' latest novel, **Precipice**, which has been issued recently in paperback and which has gone straight to number one in the official UK Top 50. It is an intriguing story based on the real letters of the 1914 Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith and the author's imagined replies from his lover, a much younger aristocrat, Venetia Stanley. Asquith became obsessed with her, often sending her three letters a day (when there were 12 postal deliveries a day in London at that time). These letters contained not



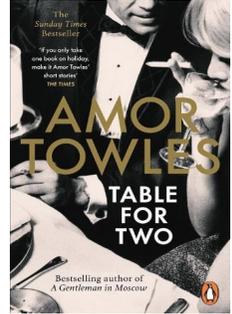
only mundane day-to-day thoughts but also some very sensitive information relating to the tense political situation as WWI loomed. Asquith was under surveillance at the time from the Security Service.



This was Venetia Stanley, less than half Asquith's age and he was totally besotted with her.

Our choice for July is a collection of short stories by Amor Towles entitled **Table for Two** – the author of *A Gentleman in Moscow* and *The Lincoln Highway*. This is a collection of six stories based in New York City and a novella set in Golden

Age Hollywood. *A Gentleman in Moscow* was a very popular and memorable read so we expect great storytelling.



For August we are reading **Death at the Sign of the Rook** by Kate Atkinson and for September, **The Women** by Kristin Hannah.

An interesting book which I have just started is Elif Shafak's **There are Rivers in the Sky** - more on that next time...

Our next meeting will be on Thursday 5th June at 8.00pm in the Church Coffee Lounge.

Marilyn

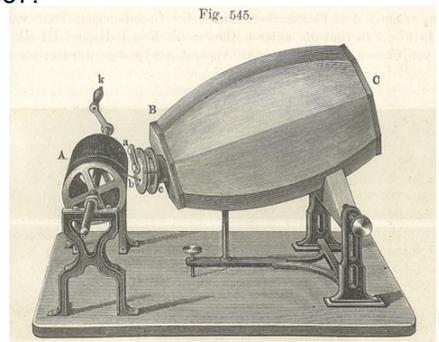
Hog's Bristle, Tin Foil and Soot: a brief History of Early Sound Recording 1860 – 1924, Part 1

In April I gave a presentation to the Men's Thing gathering with the above title. Sadly for those of you who weren't able to be present you won't be able to hear all of the sounds that I played that day but the story might be interesting....and surprising.

Asked the question "Who invented sound recording?" most people will probably answer "Thomas Edison". But we can now say that's not the whole story. Musical notation or chiming clocks are, of course, ways of recording sounds and reproducing them. But recording an actual sound – a specific human voice, a piece of music played in a particular way by a specific person – and then reproducing it at a different time or in a different place, has not been possible for most of human history. But in the 1850s this man had an idea about it:



Edouard Leon Scott de Martinville was a typographer and editor at a scientific publishing house in Paris. One of the books he edited was a physiological treatise which described the workings of the human ear. Inspired by the recent development of photography he wondered if he could do for sound what photography had done for light i.e. make a permanent record of it. He developed a machine to do this which he called the Phonautograph and patented it in 1857:



Using a funnel or horn to collect sound vibrations he attached a flexible membrane to one end of the horn and then to the membrane “a boar’s bristle a centimetre or even more in length, fine but suitably rigid”. His recording medium was paper covered in lamp-black or soot from an oil lamp and wound round a cylinder. The sound vibrations made the bristle vibrate and in turn this scratched away the lamp black to reveal the paper underneath, describing the pattern of sound waves in the process. He called the resulting traces in the soot, phonautograms:



The thing to point out here is that de Martinville had no notion or concept of *playing back* the sounds; his publishing background led him to believe that the visible vibrations on the paper could be read by eye. That readers at a later date could read the tone of voice or inflection of the speaker just by looking at the page.

This turned out to be a scientific dead-end and in 1860s Paris no-one was quite sure what to do with a phonautograph. A few were made for scientific institutions and used in the study of acoustics but ultimately de Martinville went back to his proof-reading. For 150 years his phonautograms lay silent in the archives of the French Patent Office, the Academy of Sciences and the Society for the Encouragement of Industry. But in 2008 researchers at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California developed a method of recovering their contents. This involved making very high-quality scans of the phonautograms and then using specially developed software to convert the images into sound. As a result we can hear them and the earliest recording of the human voice anywhere in the world is of de Martinville himself singing (or perhaps “intoning” might be a better description) “Au clair de la lune” traced on a phonautogram on 9th April 1860. If you want to hear this for yourself then go to

<https://www.firstsounds.org/sounds/scott.php>

It wasn’t until 17 years later in 1877 that Thomas Alva Edison came up with the idea of the phonograph: a machine that could not only record sound but reproduce it.

To be continued.

I had half expected our friend, Alastair Daniel, to be there – and he was! Stoneleigh Community Library was host to a very successful World Book Night on the 23rd April. More than 40 visitors enjoyed an evening of browsing and chatting and a quiz (all with a literary flavour) and writing reviews of favourite books. We were also entertained by members of Surrey Storytellers who delivered what was described as “magnificent performances ... with their captivating narratives receiving enthusiastic praise from the audience.” And as you will know, Alastair delivers exceedingly good narratives! Yes, and the cakes were really good too.



Bobby Child

Check their website for details of storytelling events and practice & coaching sessions

www.surreystorytellers.co.uk

THE NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA

I have been a supporter of the National Youth Orchestra for a few years. As a music lover I really want to support our young musicians, and help, in a small way, the development of the next generations of talented performers, both amateur as well as professional. The last time I was privileged to see the Orchestra was in April, at the rehearsal for their evening concert at the Round House in Chalk Farm (an amazing venue).



The music was amazing, too. The rehearsal included Jennifer Higdon's Percussion Concerto - the soloist, Jordan Ashman, is an alumnus of the Orchestra and was a finalist in the BBC's Young Musician 2022. The enthusiasm, and the pure joy, of all the young people was transmitted to us, the observers, and their playing was superb, wonderfully engaging, and for them, as well as us, great fun! They also rehearsed their very imaginative encore. If you saw their performance at the Proms last year, you will know how imaginative they can be!



The NYO are playing a Prom this year (Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th August), and next season they will be playing concerts in various parts of the country as well as London. For anyone interested in finding out more about what they are doing and how to support them, information about the Orchestra and their other projects can be found on their website – www.nyo.org.uk



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The Men's Thing

Spring/summer programme of talks held on the 2nd Saturday of each month in the church extension. Tea, coffee biscuits etc. available from 10am for a 10.30am start.

June 14th- A talk by Malcolm Sutton - " A young engineer in "Nepal".



Bereavement Café

In partnership with Princess Alice Hospice , St John's runs an informal support group for all those experiencing the loss of a loved one. The next meeting will be in the coffee lounge at St. John's on Tuesday 17th June 2:00- 3:30pm.



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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