

St Bartholomew's Church

Oxford Parish News



May 2019

www.stbartholomews.co.uk

£1

SERVICES AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

May	8am	10am	3pm	6.30pm
5 May 3rd Sunday of Easter	Holy Communion	All Together Worship	Commemoration of Departed Loved Ones	Evensong
12 May 4th Sunday of Easter	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Messy Church	-
19 May 5th Sunday of Easter	Holy Communion	Civic Service	-	Evensong
26 May 6th Sunday of Easter	Holy Communion (BCP)	Holy Communion	-	-
Thursday 30 May Ascension Day	-	-	-	7.30 pm Deanery Ascension Day Service at West Kingsdown

SUNDAY CLUB (FOR AGES 0-14) INFANT: 3-7

JUNIOR: 8-11

SENIOR: 12-14

First Steps for toddlers and their carers meets on alternate Wednesdays during term time. For more details please contact Najen Harris, 01959 522813.

EPIC (for school years 5-7) meets on the 2nd Saturday in the month, 6-8 pm in the Church Centre.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FELLOWSHIP meet every Sunday evening during term time in the Church Centre, 6.30 - 8.00 pm.

HOLY COMMUNION Every Wednesday 10.00 am (Book of Common Prayer)

If you would like to book a baptism or wedding, please contact the Church Office 01959 523185.

Cover photo: Tea at Messy Church (Richard Worssam)

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VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

The devastating fire that came close to destroying Notre Dame in Paris on the Monday before Easter was truly shocking. It took less than five hours for the fire to inflict enormous damage on the Cathedral which took 200 years to build, and which dates back 856 years.

We are told that if the fire had not been brought under control it would have taken just 30 more minutes before the ancient building, dating back to 1163, would have collapsed. The following day the press and the internet had dramatic images of the fire. There are two in particular which will stay in my mind: the first is an aerial photo taken by a drone of the whole roof turned into a blazing inferno, contained within the cross-shaped outline of the walls; the second is a photo of the interior with the cross above the altar emerging through the smoke, still amazingly intact.

The fire evoked a huge response worldwide, with donations pouring in to fund the repair and restoration which will take years to complete. I find it interesting to reflect on the reaction to this fire. Since 1905, Notre Dame has been under the care of a constitutionally secular state, and yet President Macron vowed to rebuild the Cathedral saying, "This is what our history deserves...It has witnessed major moments, our wars, our liberations. It is the epicentre of our lives." The fire has made us realise that there is something to be treasured about our historic churches and cathedrals. They are part of our shared heritage.

In this respect, what has been said and written about Notre Dame is true also of St. Bart's, which is even more ancient, dating back to late Saxon and early Norman times. I feel this whenever I worship or pray in St. Bart's; there is a sense of being part of a living tradition of faith which stretches back



over the centuries. The prayer-soaked walls have witnessed generation after generation coming before God, in both joyful and sad times, seeking God's presence and strength.

The Celtic tradition of spirituality speaks of "thin places" where the gap between heaven and earth is thin. I find that sitting quietly in church, at the beginning of the day in Morning Prayer, or at the end of the day before I lock the church, that St. Bart's is such a place. There is a real sense of presence.

I look at the board of previous Vicars and see that I am just a small link in the chain which stretches back into the distant past. It is good to think about the faith of those who were first inspired to build our church. It is the oldest building in our community by several hundred years, and it has stood as a witness to the Christian faith through many social and historical changes affecting both our village and our nation.

In our fast-paced modern life, I find that St. Bart's reminds us of deeper truths than those conveyed by ephemeral social media. It invites us to connect with a reality that transcends our own short-lived lives. In a way beyond words it encourages us to be open to God who is the same yesterday, today and forever. We can see our lives in the perspective of the eternal, and know that we are held in God's love.

Your friend and Vicar, *Richard*

DIARY FOR MAY 2019

**Morning Prayer is said on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays
each week in Church at 9.00 am**

- 1 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
- 3 1.30 pm Golden Wedding Blessing of Michael and Janet Hart
- 4 9.00 am Churchyard Working Party
- 2.00 pm Wedding of Colin Anderson and Penny Beacom
- 5 **The Third Sunday of Easter**
- 8.00 am **Holy Communion**
- 10.00 am **All Together Worship**
- 3.00 pm **Commemoration of Departed Loved Ones service**
- 6.30 pm **Evensong**
- 6 Spring Bank Holiday
- 7.45 pm Cameo (17 Leonard Avenue)
- 8 9.30 am 'First Steps' (Otford Methodist Church Hall)
- 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) refreshments afterwards
- 10 **Magazine material for the June edition by today, please, to the Church Office,
st.bartolomews@otford.net**
- 10 2.15 pm Magazine Editorial Team (The Vicarage)
- 11 6.00 pm EPIC (Church Centre)
- 12 **The Fourth Sunday of Easter: Christian Aid Week**
- 8.00 am **Holy Communion**
- 10.00 am **Holy Communion**
- 12 noon **Baptism of Finlay Graeme Hobbins King**
- 3.00 pm **Messy Church**
- 13 12.2 pm Soup Lunch (Church Centre)
- 7.45 pm Homegroup (17 Leonard Avenue)
- 14 8.00 pm Homegroup (Park Farm House)
- 15 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
- 18 5.30 pm Games evening (Church Centre)
- 19 **The Fifth Sunday of Easter**
- 8.00 am **Holy Communion**
- 10.00 am **Civic Service**
- 6.30 pm **Evensong**
- 20 7.45 pm Homegroup (17 Leonard Avenue)

- 22 9.30 am 'First Steps' (Otford Methodist Church Hall)
 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) refreshments afterwards
 7.45 pm PCC meeting (Church Centre)
- 25 1.00 pm Wedding of Martin Boniface and Emma Torry
- 26 The Sixth Sunday of Easter**
 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
 10.00 am Holy Communion
- 27 Bank Holiday: Village Fete
 7.45 pm Cameo (17 Leonard Avenue)
- 28 8.00 pm Homegroup (Park Farm House)
- 29 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
- 30 7.30 pm Deanery Ascension Day Service at West Kingsdown**



Registers

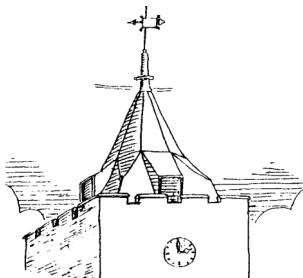


FUNERAL (Our Sympathy)

9th April

Sheila Hood (aged 84)

FROM ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH



CHURCHYARD WORKING PARTY

We are very grateful to all those who came last month to help in the Churchyard and we look forward to seeing everyone again on **Saturday, 4th May from 9.00-11.30 am.** If anyone can help for an hour or two it would make a difference. Come and join in the fun and bring some useful tools too!

COMMEMORATION OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES - Sunday 5th May

The annual service to commemorate Departed Loved Ones will take place in church on Sunday, 5th May at 3.00 pm.

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK COLLECTION

12th-18th May

We hope you will be kind and generous to those who give up their time to deliver and then collect envelopes on behalf of Christian Aid, which gives us all an opportunity to give to those less fortunate than ourselves. We are grateful to our magazine distributors for undertaking this task. Please leave the filled envelopes in the Parish Church Office.

Please note, members of Otford Methodist Church will be collecting in the following roads this year:

Bubblestone Road, The Butts, Evelyn Road, Flowerfield, Hopfield Close, Knighton Road, Sidney Gardens, Shoreham Road (north), The Old Walk, Tudor Crescent, Tudor Drive, Warham Road, Well Road and Willow Park.

(Magazine distributors do not need to take envelopes to deliver in these roads. Thank you.)

MAY SOUP LUNCH

You are warmly invited to our lunch on **Monday 13th May from 12 noon - 2pm in the Church Centre.**

Do join us for a bowl of homemade soup and bread followed by a light dessert. Our coffee-time interviewee will be *Christeen Malan, JP.*

Please sign your name on the list at the back of church. Suggested donation of £5. We look forward to seeing you!

Due to the popularity of these lunches, the team would be grateful to hear from anyone willing to help serve/clear dishes on an occasional basis. Thank you!

SPRING CLEANING OF THE CHURCH CENTRE

Saturday 18th May, 10 am

We will be cleaning and tidying the storage cupboards, kitchen, office, loft, and rear corridor - many hands will make light work!

SAVE THE DATE! - 18th May, 5.30 pm There will be a family Board Games evening with hot dogs and an ice cream bar. Look out for more details on the church notices and website in due course.

CIVIC SERVICE - Sunday 19th May

The date of the annual Civic Service is Sunday, 19th May, 10.00 am at St. Bartholomew's Church. We warmly invite you to join us at this service as we celebrate the life of our village community.

BIG CHURCH DAY OUT

Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th May at Wiston House near Worthing

An outdoor Christian Music Festival for all ages with lots of activities and all styles of music. Join us for just one day or both. Website: www.bigchurchdayout.com and speak to Mags Southgate (524720) about tickets.

ASCENSION DAY (Thursday 30th May)

and PENTECOST (9th June)

On Ascension Day, forty days after Easter, we think of the completion of Jesus' ministry on earth and his return to our heavenly Father. It is, in effect, the other side of the coin from Christmas. At his Ascension, Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit which we focus on at Pentecost, fifty days after Easter.

To celebrate the Ascension there will be a joint Deanery Service at St. Edmund's, West Kingsdown at 7.30 pm. At Pentecost there will be communion services on the Sunday morning at 8 am and 10 am. You are warmly invited to join us for these two important Christian festivals.

ST.BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH FAIR

Saturday, 15th June, 2-4.30pm

The Church Fair will be held on Saturday, 15th June on The Green and the surrounding areas. There will be the usual array of stalls and attractions. There will be refreshments available on the Green before the fair opens from 1.30pm. Proceeds of the day will go to support the mission and ministry of St. Bartholomew's so please book the date in your diary and come and support the church. Towards the end of May we will be looking for donations of books, items for the white elephant stall, unwanted gifts and bottles. If you can help in any way, please contact Andrew Hill (01732 469538) or the Parish Church Office (523185). Further details of the Fair will follow in next month's magazine.

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WEEKEND 2019

St. Bart's will be running a youth and children's weekend from 12th-14th July at Kench Hill, Tenterden for anyone over 8. Cost £40/person. Leaflets are now available at the back of church. For more information please ask Claire, Dawn, Donna, Mags or Russell.

FAITH IN THE FAMILY...

May: Let's bring our children to Jesus!

Bible story: We're going to find Jesus!

Look! Here comes Jesus.

He's telling everyone that God loves them.

What a beautiful day!

Everyone smiles when Jesus comes to stay!

Jesus is staying at this house.

Lots of people follow him in.

People who are feeling sad and lost - or not very well.

Let us in, let us in!

They know that Jesus will make them feel better.

Uh, oh!

So many people want to see Jesus.

The house is filling up.

It's bursting at the seams.

No-one else can fit through the door.

They just have to stand outside and look through the windows.

Let me see, let me see Jesus!

Who's this coming?

It's four friends with a heavy load.

Stumble trip, stumble trip!

"We are carrying our friend who is lying on this mat.

He can't move his legs.

So we are bringing him to Jesus.

Jesus will make him well.



Uh, oh!

Look at the crowd!

A squishy, squashy crowd.

We can't push through it.

We can't tunnel under it.

We'll have to go over it, up the stairs and onto the roof.

Steppity, steppity, step!

We're bringing our friend to Jesus.

He's going to make him better.

What a beautiful day when Jesus comes to stay!

Uh, oh!

Look at the roof!

It's made of straw and mud.

Squelchy, squerchy mud.

Jesus is under it.

Oh, well! We'll have to dig through it!

Scrabble and dig, scrabble and dig!

Hooray!

We've made a hole.

A big beautiful hole.

Now we can see Jesus inside the house.

We can lower our friend gently down.

Careful, now!

Bumpity, bumpity, BUMP!

Right at Jesus' feet!"



Look! Jesus is smiling.
He is SO pleased with the four kind friends!
They didn't give up, did they?
They carried their friend:
Along the road . . .
Stumble trip, stumble trip!

Up the stairs . . .
Steppity, steppity, step!
Through the roof . . .
Scrabble and dig, scrabble and dig!
And lowered him down to Jesus . . .
Bumpity, bumpity, BUMP!

Jesus smiles at the man who cannot move.
“It’s all right. God loves you very much,” he says.

“Pick up your mat and go home!”

Well! The man stands up.
He picks up his mat.
And he sets off home SMILING and WAVING at the crowd! YAY!
Then he skips and he dances all the way home.
Skippety, skippety,
SKIPPETY, SKIPPETY, SKIP!



Just for parents: The four men in Mark 2: 1-12 had such faith in Jesus that they went to a lot of trouble to bring their friend to him. Jesus came to forgive those who had hardened their hearts against God. By healing people physically, he showed his compassion but also his power to forgive sins.

As loving parents, it’s natural to worry about our children’s health and development. It’s easy to forget that we can bring them to Jesus by saying a simple prayer.

Toddler groups such as First Steps are places where we can share concerns in “real” conversations with other parents and leaders. It can be reassuring to know that others have similar worries. They may have helpful advice or be happy to pray for us.



Story time: Retell or play the Bible story above with young children using a doll’s house or adapted cardboard box with dolls or using Duplo materials.

Wonder about the story together:

I wonder how the man who couldn’t move felt?

How do we feel when we are sick?

I wonder why the men wanted to bring their friend to Jesus?

I wonder if they gave up when they saw the crowded house. What did they do?

I wonder how the man felt when Jesus made him better?

I wonder what the crowd thought when they saw the man walking?

I wonder what is your favourite part of this story?

On a walk/in the rec: Put on wellies and walk with your toddler along the pavement, *pit pat, pit pat*, through grass, *swishy swashy*, through puddles, *splash splash*, through mud, *squelch squerch*, over gravel,



scrunch scrunch, etc. Keep going! Mention all the people who came walking to see Jesus because he was so kind. Chat about what you would ask Jesus to do for you.



Eye Spy: When you are out and about, look out for hospitals, doctors' surgeries and ambulances. Explain their purpose. Link this with the idea that Jesus made people well. He healed people's hearts by turning their angry hearts into kind hearts.

Get well card: Involve your toddler in making or buying a card or gift for someone who is not

well. Chat about how that person might be feeling. Do you think the card/gift might cheer them up?



Bedtime prayer: Cut out a circle of white card and draw a sad face on one side and a happy face on the other. Talk about any people you know who are not well or struggling. (*Look at the sad face.*) Say, *Lets bring them to Jesus.*

Dear God, Thank you for sending Jesus to love us and care for us. Please help . . . to feel better.
Amen (*Turn over to the happy face.*)

Vicki Howie



IN MEMORIAM



Arthur Turner, 1921 - 2019

Arthur was born on 22nd January 1921 on the Isle of Dogs, the third of four children. From an early age he was playing football in the street, using jumpers for goalposts. Academically, he shone and attended a grammar school, running some distance between home and school each day. This probably contributed to his fitness and developed his sense of discipline and effort, which was later applied to everything he did.

Arthur played football throughout his school life, joining the London Federation of Boys Clubs. Whilst playing for Nunhead FC against Charlton Athletic, he was talent spotted and signed up by the club. On leaving school Arthur worked in the Stock Exchange for a year but he hankered for something different. So together with his brother Wag and their father they went into business together (E Turner & Sons Builder's Merchants). It was to be a successful venture which lasted throughout their working lives.

Arthur would often work at the shop on a Saturday morning and on closing-up, he would sling his boots over his shoulder and head off to

The Valley and play a match for Charlton. This continued until the outbreak of the war in 1939.

Arthur enlisted with the RAF and subsequently trained as air crew, wireless operator, air gunner and radar operator. Football continued to figure prominently throughout his time in the RAF. He represented the RAF and was lucky enough to play alongside Stanley Matthews, Stan Mortensen and Bernard Joy; in practically every game, he was playing with an international team.

Arthur was flying on operational duty with the RAF, conducting night forays against the U-boat wolf packs in the Atlantic. In July 1943 they began daytime searches. On his first daytime search a U-boat surfaced some 200 miles out in the Bay of Biscay. She was a mothership full of torpedoes sent to re-supply the U-boats. They attacked and a depth charge blew a large hole in her side, but simultaneously her powerful guns struck the Wellington and shot her down. Arthur blacked out. He came to, spinning under water. On surfacing he swam away from enemy fire; as luck would have it, a dinghy rose up within

reach. It was damaged but had bellows and he set about pumping up the inflatable. He pumped for 10 and rested for 10, all the while being shouted at by the 100 or so displaced German's who were similarly in life rafts! He continued for 12 hours until he was rescued the next morning and sent, with a damaged hip, to recover at Mountbatten Hospital in Plymouth. He was devastated to learn that he had been the sole survivor of the crew. This was the beginning of a lifelong respect, together with a deep sense of both loss and duty, for those who had lost their lives. He wrote about it saying "Every day I share some thoughts with my old air crew. If I ever start to feel sorry for myself I know they would give anything for one day of the last fifty or more years I have enjoyed. Somewhere in there is a lesson for all of us." Arthur returned to his RAF duties after recovering sufficiently.

After the war the Football League resumed and Arthur continued to play for Charlton. He became a regular first team centre-forward. In the 1945-46 season Charlton headed the division and reached the FA Cup Final, but were beaten by Derby County. It was a tremendous occasion; Arthur met the King and played before a 100,000 crowd. It was also memorable for the ball bursting during the match and for a dog running onto the pitch.

Following being demobbed, Arthur met Maureen Hardy. They got married on 3rd June 1950 at Christ Church, Isle of Dogs, and settled down to have a family of five children.

Arthur discovered a new passion for sailing, which he threw himself into, regularly attending night school until he was qualified to captain large vessels. His enthusiasm was generously shared with family and friends over the years.

Arthur was a family man having very strong ties with his own siblings and he loved spending time with them. He respected them all and cared deeply about their well-being. There were regular get-togethers. Arthur was a

generous man who loved to have a good time. He was childlike with Christmas and birthdays, wanting to make them special and memorable. He would always stand a round in the Bull on his regular Thursday nights, with his friends.

Arthur loved to sing. He would sing regularly, not encouraged for the most part, in the shower, whilst making breakfast, in the car and notably for Otford Players, where he thoroughly enjoyed playing up for the audience.

In his latter years Arthur was devastated at the unexpected and untimely loss of Maureen, but his family rallied and supported him to stay at home for many years, and later at the excellent Gloucester House Home. Arthur's extended family grew to include eleven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren, Arthur lived a full, varied and generous life and he passed away peacefully to be back with those who have gone before him.



IN CONVERSATION WITH ...KEVIN GRAFTON

St Bartholomew's organist and choirmaster



For the last thirty-nine years St Bart's has been privileged to have Kevin Grafton as its organist and choirmaster. In that time he has worked with four vicars, played the organ at some 3500 services and organised around fifty concerts. He told me that, in addition

to loving the music, a significant source of satisfaction lies in 'providing assistance for people in their worship'.

Kevin and Sylvia moved to Sevenoaks in late 1979 and their involvement with St Bart's began in 1980. Kevin had previously been the organist at Crockenhill Parish Church but wanted to find a church nearer to their new home. Although he was also offered the post of organist and choirmaster at the United Reformed Church on St John's Hill, he chose St Bart's, which already had a good choir, because he liked the style and tradition of the services. At that time the choir sang at two services every Sunday and there was a fifteen strong junior choir. One of the biggest challenges nowadays is attracting young singers when there are so many alternative activities on offer. There are currently very few choir members under the age of fifty ... and the oldest is ninety. For Kevin (as for many of us) two of the highlights of the year are The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols and the choir Christmas concert.

Kevin's interest in music began when, aged six, he joined a church choir in Kensington near

where the family lived. His older brother, who was already a choir member, lured him there with the promise of choir pay. When Kevin was nine, the family moved to Dartford where his father had found a job as a caretaker for a building company. Kevin joined the choir of Holy Trinity, Dartford singing firstly as a choirboy then later as an alto. The church choirmaster, Geoffrey Knight, taught Kevin to play the organ; Kevin had already taught himself to play the piano. He has never sat for any accredited music exams and admits that formal training in fingering would have been helpful in his musical proficiency.

As a Dartford Grammar School pupil, Kevin was a good all-rounder academically. In particular, he was drawn to physics, chemistry and maths as well as to learning languages. At A level he decided to concentrate on the arts, studying French, German and Latin. This led him to read Modern and Medieval Languages at Trinity Hall, Cambridge – 'a really lovely small college'. He thoroughly enjoyed his degree course, especially his Part IIs when he followed courses in linguistics, phonetics and the history of Teutonic languages including Anglo-Saxon. Not surprisingly music also took up a significant amount of Kevin's time; he sang in his college chapel choir and also with the Cambridge University Musical Society (CUMS), conducted by Sir David Willcocks. In fact, Kevin sang under Sir David Willcocks for twenty-five years as, after Cambridge, he joined the Bach Choir which Sir David also conducted. To date Kevin has been part of the 220 strong Bach Choir for forty-four years, singing as a bass.

At the end of his first year at Cambridge Kevin married Sylvia whom he had met through her brother, a fellow choir member at Holy Trinity, Dartford. Kevin initially thought of a career

working with languages, perhaps in technical translation or interpreting. However, because this would have required working abroad to progress in his career, it was not a practical option for family life. Instead he trained with an accountancy firm in London, Hodgson Harris, and became a chartered accountant, qualifying in 1978. He then worked in internal audit for a year with Trafalgar House but hated it so went back to classic accountancy and stayed in the profession until retirement in 2018.

Over the last twenty eight years, Kevin has enjoyed a musical involvement in Austria. He and Sylvia went on holiday to the country in 1990, partly to see the Oberammergau Passion Play, and stayed in the village of Söll. On the evening before the play, Kevin was invited to play the organ – ‘a magnificent large instrument’ – for a service in the village church. Since then the Graftons have visited Söll every year and now count the church organist and his wife amongst their ‘dearest friends’. Organ concerts are a regular feature of Söll’s church



life and Kevin has frequently participated in them – to satisfactorily appreciative audiences.

Now retired, Kevin has a little more time for his hobbies which, as well as the Bach Choir mentioned earlier, include an interest in early music. He is a member of the Southern Early Music Forum which occasionally runs early music days at which Kevin has played the harpsichord but is more likely to sing.

The Graftons also like to spend time with their family and love following the development of their great grandson, James, who is eighteen months old.

One of Kevin’s current aims is to re-order his music room in anticipation of a new piano arriving in the early summer. He readily admits that he has too many books, CDs and musical magazines. Once the task of sorting is finished, he looks forward to reading more and to listening to some of the 1000 CDs in his collection of 2000 that he has not yet had the leisure to enjoy!

We are fortunate indeed to have such a long-standing, dedicated and talented organist and choirmaster at St Bart’s.

Christeen Malan



DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWS

This will be the last article that I write for this magazine as your District Councillor as I have now stood down after 12 years' service. I have thoroughly enjoyed being your councillor and feel so privileged to have represented two of the most beautiful villages in the country.

I have come a long way since I was first elected in May 2007. My son had just turned two years old and I was pregnant with my daughter who was due that June. In those days we faced many controversial planning applications. I remember Otford residents pushing my children in their push chairs to keep them quiet while I attended site meetings. Some Otford residents occupied my son by playing Lego with him at planning inquiries. I learned a lot about planning, the Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and conservation areas - of which Otford and Shoreham have more than their fair share.

I served on many committees including Social Affairs, Performance & Governance and the Development Control Committee. In 2013 I was asked to serve in the Cabinet responsible for the new portfolio of Housing and Community Safety and was elected Deputy Leader of the Council. In my new role I saw the importance good housing plays in our overall wellbeing and requested the new portfolio of Housing, Health and Leisure which I was given in 2015.

It was in this role that I developed a vision for the future direction of the Council that is now at the very heart of the Council's new plan – which you may have seen in the last edition of 'In Shape'. We now consciously use all the Council's functions (Housing, Planning, Licensing, Environmental Health, Leisure, Economic Development, Community Safety etc) together to build a district that is even more conducive to promoting wellbeing than ever before.

Secondly we work with Kent County Council, the NHS and the voluntary sector to help and support people with medical problems where the underlying cause is not medical. Examples include: anxiety caused by debt, asthma caused by damp housing and a range of issues caused by loneliness, poor diet and lack of exercise. We have HERO (Housing, Energy, Re-training Options) officers on the front line not only preventing homelessness, but also helping reduce debt which is a major cause of mental ill health.

They work closely with our 'One You' advisors who are based in GP surgeries and other places such as the Citizens Advice Bureau to help people give up smoking and tackle loneliness, and they also advise on how to avoid falls with home adaptations and appropriate exercise. This work also links into the charity sector where for example we work with West Kent Mind to tackle the causes of hoarding.

I started work in February doing public affairs for the Shaw Trust – a charity that specialises in removing barriers which prevent disabled people and people with mental ill health from working. I see this very much as a continuation of the work I have done on Sevenoaks District Council.

I would like to thank you all very much for placing your trust in me to represent you for 12 years and for being so supportive of me and my personal situation as my children have grown – both are now at secondary school.

With best wishes and many thanks,

Cllr Michelle Lowe



MISSION MATTERS ... CMS

**CHURCH
MISSION
SOCIETY**

The call
in action

As Faith Gordon, our previous mission link partner through CMS, has decided to go her own way, we have been appointed new link partners: Andrew and Liz Peart. They are in Bolivia, South America, and their role is to partner with the local church to strengthen its missional outreach to schools, residents and businesses. They will also be assisting the diocese in its goal to become financially self-supporting. Andrew and Liz, and their 2 daughters, live in Santa Cruz which is one of the fastest growing cities in South America. As well as being Bolivia's financial centre, its rapid change has resulted in significant socio-economic

challenges such as reducing educational opportunities, healthcare shortages, social instability, infrastructure issues, worsening sanitation and increasing corruption. The church the Pearts are connected to, Cristo Luz del Mundo (meaning "Christ the Light of the World"), is located within the heart of the financial and residential centre. It is well placed to connect to and engage missionally with the burgeoning community of middle-class professionals, businesses and families.

Mags Southgate

We are very grateful to Michelle for her thoughtful and informative articles over the years and we wish her all the best in her new job. The Editors



OUT AND ABOUT



OTFORD EVENING W.I.

Our next meeting is our Annual Meeting which is on 9 May at 7.30pm in the Club Room. We hope to see you there.



KEMSING SINGERS Join us for "A Bouquet Garni" on Saturday 11 May at 7.30pm in the St Edith Hall, Kemsing TN15 6NA.

We are presenting a joyful programme of folk-inspired music to celebrate the season of blossoming hedgerows and new life returning. We are joined by a merry band of instrumentalists to perform wonderful works about the people and places of the British Isles.

Tickets £8 from 01959 523752 or at the door.

www.kemsingsingers.com



OTFORD-NEUFCHATEL-HARDELOT TWINNING ASSOCIATION

Our Summer Social Gathering at the Woodman will be on Monday 3 June from 7.30pm. We shall look forward to seeing you.

Our car-sharing visit to France this year will be the weekend of 5/6/7 July 2019 with a reception on Friday evening in Hardelot and overnight accommodation with host families. On Saturday you will be driven to La Chartreuse de Neuville, near Montreuil, a renovated Benedictine Monastery, with lovely gardens, and visit Le Touquet on the way back to Hardelot. You will leave on Sunday morning and spend the day as you choose. We can guarantee a warm welcome from our Twins and they are always pleased to welcome new

faces. Please contact Jane Lawrey via the Parish Office if you would like further details.



OTFORD VILLAGE FETE

**Monday 27 May
11.00am – 4.00pm**

Fete doors will open at 11.00 am and entrance for adults, 16 years and over, will be £2.00 per person. Please ensure you come early as registration for the Dog Show, run by Elands Veterinary Clinic, will commence at 11.00 am, with the first class for the "Most Handsome Dog" at 12 noon. Entry fee per dog £5.00 with rosettes and prizes for the first six placed.

To help support our charity of the day we will have a class of Guide Dog puppies competing at 2.30 pm – this should be something very special to watch.

Once again there will be live music throughout the day both inside the Memorial Hall and on the main stage located on the Recreation Ground.

During May our volunteers will be calling on residents to sell raffle tickets; please be generous as your donations help us support so many different associations within Otford.

And finally, don't forget to help us raise £2,500 to name a puppy with an Otford theme. Please go to <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/otfordvillagefete> and donate what you can.

We have two individuals living in Otford who now have Guide Dogs and you can read about one of them, Howard, on our website:

www.otfordvillagefete.org

NEWS FROM OTFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

On a sunny spring morning a few weeks ago parents and children gathered round for the grand opening of the new KS2 playground. A red ribbon was cut by members of the PTFA while the school ukulele band played to the crowds and the children were allowed to test out the play equipment for the first time.

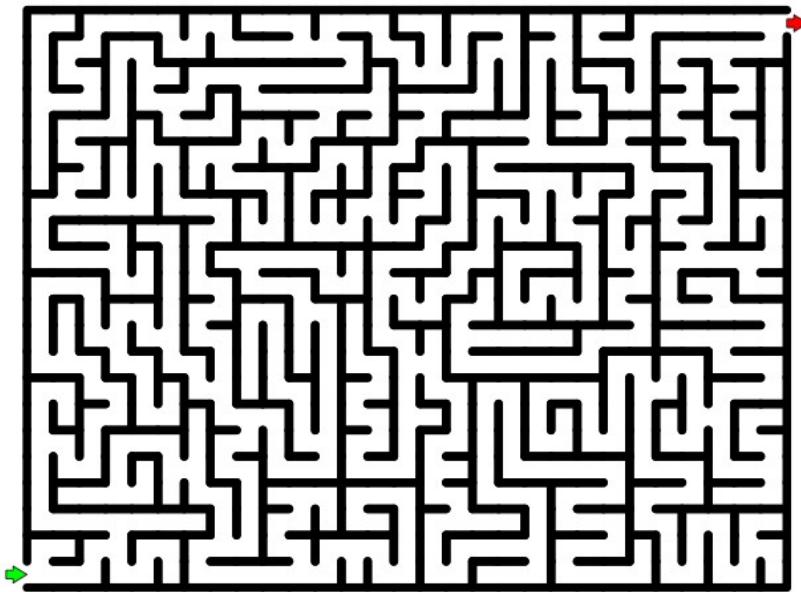
The PTFA have fundraised, designed and developed a wonderful wooden play area containing climbing poles, rope frames all on a new safety surface. Together with a very generous donation from the Otford Players they were also able to include an amazing outdoor stage and chill out zone. The result is spectacular and will be loved for many years to come by hundreds of children in Otford.

The outdoor stage has already been put to good use. On March 25th, another sunny spring

morning, the children performed 'The Greatest Day' to parents and friends. This was a charity event to raise money and awareness for a deaf health charity called Sign Health. Not only did the children sing but they also learned all the BSL signs to the song and performed these along with the words.



MAY PUZZLE



OTFORD HERITAGE TRAIL - THE POND, 'HEART OF THE VILLAGE'

With all the traffic passing by, it is difficult to imagine how the area around the pond might have looked in Elizabethan days. You would have been standing beside a high wall which stretched round onto The Green. Village women and children are filling pitchers and pails at the pond. Where you see today's pharmacy a small, timbered hall-house stood. Across the way there used to be an impressive Tudor mansion.



An aerial image, from 1978, of the heart of the village.

THE POND

For centuries The Pond was the main supply of clean, fresh water for the village. Its source runs in a culvert from a spring in Friar's Pool. Water only came 'on tap' to householders in 1887 when standpipes were installed along the High Street fed (by gravity) from a higher spring. Mains water did not arrive in the village until the 1920s.

Due to the amount of litter being thrown into the Pond, in 1926 the owner of Colet's Well erected high iron railings around it. The railings remained there as an eyesore for the next 24 years until a new owner removed them in 1950. Ownership of the Pond was transferred

to the care of the Parish Council in 1964. To protect it from being destroyed by road building, its walls were listed as an ancient monument in 1975. Thus, this now idyllic traffic island is the only pond in the country to have been granted listed status.

If you look carefully you may find one of its edge stones showing a coating of green glass on its surface, probably a remnant from the glass workshop at the Tudor Palace.

THE PHARMACY

Across the pond stands the village pharmacy. It is surprising to realise that it was originally a small, medieval hall-house, built as long ago as 1450-1530. The building stands parallel to the street with a long, gabled cross-wing on its eastern (right-hand) side.



The Pharmacy in 1960, when horses were as common as cars !

As in all these early homes, a single fire would have burnt in the centre of the hall and provided the only source of cooking and heating for the family. The cross-wing would have contained the private parlour and sleeping quarters. In the Georgian period a broad brick inglenook (fireplace) was added, which you can still see inside the shop.

In the early 1800s it became home to the village wheelwright who worked in the large barn behind. At this time the house was clad in brick and tile, and had a higher, shallower roof added. The family continued their business here for three generations until 1871. It then became known as Rose Haven due to its marvellous front garden displays. It became a pharmacy in 1939.

THE CORNER HOUSE

In Elizabethan times this end of the village was part of a large estate. The main entrance, flanked by a pair of double-storied gatehouses, was from the Green. There were also three barns, two stables, an oxhouse and an apple orchard. It seems, however, that the house burnt down in the 1700s. All that remains today are segments of its extensive boundary wall that once stretched from Bubblestone Farm right round into the High Street.



For many centuries The Pond provided villagers with a convenient source of clean water.

The Corner House, previously named Mount View, was built by the Polhills in the 1760s. Its symmetrical front of 'header-bonded' bricks (laid end-to-end) is typically Georgian. It was originally built as an L-shaped cottage and included a pair of dormer windows in the roof.

Its chimneys still include generous inglenooks and two bread ovens (although both are now covered over). Within the angle of the 'L' there is a deep well located beneath the living room floor... also safely covered !

A condition was placed on early tenants that a room in the house must always be set aside for the rest and refreshment of the visiting Shoreham curate as Otford had no vicar of its own at that time.

The Pond was 'beautified and refurbished' as part of the village contribution to the Festival of Britain celebrations in 1951. Here we see the latest occupants – Ada and her ducklings – being introduced to their new home in 1953.



The Pond was once home to the rare Edible Frog. However, with the introduction of ducks on the Pond in the 1950s the 'edible' frogs all suddenly vanished!

With thanks to Rod Shelton, Phil Clucas and Ed Thompson



A BOOK WHICH INFLUENCED ME...SISTERS OF SINAI

How two Lady Adventurers found the Hidden Gospels - by Janet Soskice

I never imagined that I would recommend a book on obscure theological debates, or that these would be readable. But, there are exceptions to most rules and this book, "Sisters of Sinai", is one. It made a big impact on me when I read it and caused me to look a great deal further into the history of what we might call 'The Holy Lands', where God's Chosen People wandered for so many years, as distinct from 'The Holy Land' we know today. I've looked up maps showing the routes 'Bible people' are thought to have travelled or inhabited and have managed to visit some of them.

Agnes and Margaret Smith, twins born in January 1843, were not your typical Victorian scholars or adventurers. Female, middle-aged and without university degrees or formal language education, they made one of the most important scriptural discoveries of their time – the earliest known copy of the Gospels in Syriac, a dialect of the Aramaic language of Jesus. At a time when most westerners feared to go to the Middle East, they slept in tents and endured temperamental camels, unscrupulous locals and suspicious monks to become unsung heroines in their effort to discover the Bible as originally written. It's worth remembering that the Dead Sea Scrolls weren't discovered until between 1946 and 1956, so these ladies were real pioneers.

The idea of two sisters travelling from the small Scottish town of Irvine without a male escort at the end of the nineteenth century to what was considered a wild area was unusual to say the least. Their aim was to reach the then isolated St. Catherine's Monastery to search for an ancient

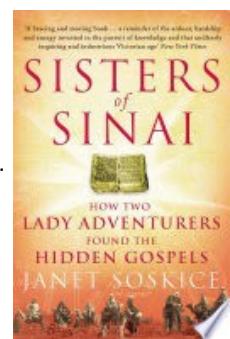
biblical manuscript. This monastery lies on the Sinai Peninsula at the mouth of a gorge at the foot of Mount Sinai, which is now in Egypt, though at the time it was in the Turkish Empire. The site contains the world's oldest continuously operating library of unique books. Built between 548 and 565, it's one of the oldest working Christian monasteries in the world.

It would be easy to think that Agnes and Margaret may have lived dull, limited lives but theirs were anything but conventional. They made several arduous visits to the monastery and to numerous other places in the region. Their travels turned them into scholars and fluent in Arabic languages. When they returned home they settled in Cambridge, but this was at a time when women were not allowed to sit for a degree from that university, nor receive an honorary degree. However, they received honorary doctorates from other European universities.

This is the story of Presbyterian Scottish twins who, by their tenacity and conviction, uncovered a series of 'lost' biblical texts that illuminate the Christian faith. The prejudice, and sanctimoniousness they encountered make you want to weep and their determination makes you want to cheer. It beggars belief that these two ladies are virtually unheard of and unknown today. They make Indiana Jones seem like a real wimp.

I find their story thought-provoking and inspirational. Who and where are such remarkable pioneers for Christianity today?

Margaret Lidbetter



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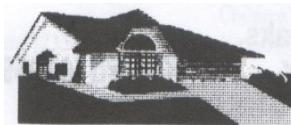
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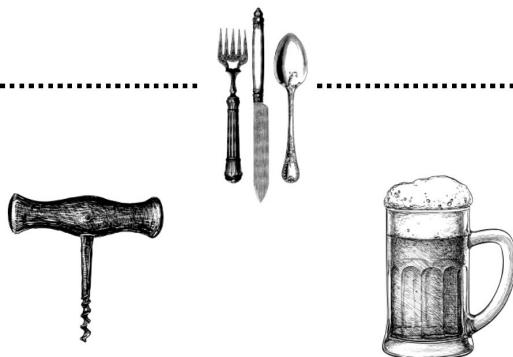
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