

Keeping in Touch..... Number 57

Welcome to this week's KIT. Thank you so much if you sent something in this week. Please keep the articles coming. The deadline for next week's KIT is noon on Wednesday. Please send anything to c.a.curtis@ntlworld.com. Or ring us on 01480 350787 . We also need to start looking to the future—see the article on page 5..

Hunts Forum – what is it supporting now? By Sally Runham



Hunts Forum is a network of community and charity providers, and has a small staff that helps and informs: the church pays an annual subscription, currently £25. Hunts Forum offers training and support, pointers to legal advice, and aids understanding of statutory legislation, as well as providing a funding database. Networking volunteer organisations interact and collaborate, aiming to prevent people falling through gaps in care and social provision. This year, Hunts Forum has an online conference in June.

Connecting Communities Conference

“This year’s theme is Volunteer Management and how the voluntary and community sector can move forwards from the past year. The event is hosted online, and as with last year’s conference, each day we will be taking on a different format and theme.”

Topics include redesigning recruitment, reviewing retention, and re-examining volunteering.

There are also sessions on Engaging and Influencing Parliament, Risk Management for Small Charities, and Diversifying Sources of Income to Improve Sustainability. Elders hope to attend some sessions, and discuss with staff and managers.



Who remembers the ducks in the chapel?

Back in 2015!

They were removed carefully to the river!!

From the Church Secretary

Many thanks from Barbara and me for all your prayers, love and support in recent months during my cancer diagnosis and treatment. This care has been wonderful and has caused me to reflect on some things which I thought I would share with you.

In one of Roy Muttram's online reflections, he described the different ways in which people come to their Christian faith. If I remember rightly, he gave four – having always been brought up as a Christian, having come to faith through a single enlightening "Damascus Road" experience, having grown gradually through study of the Bible and religious writings, and finally by seeing how faith has affected those around us who live it out. For me personally, although my parents were regular churchgoers, it's the last route which has sustained me most through good and bad times. So, perhaps to my own surprise, in recent months I don't think I've ever been angry with God. There was one particularly difficult week when I fired up a "Come off it, God!" arrow prayer, but otherwise the support of family and friends has shown me how God works through people. That's why personally I value fellowship more than formality, structures, symbolism etc. – even singing, I'm afraid!

We continue to have many discussions in Elders and other groups on how and when to reopen the church building and its activities. This has brought home to me just how different we are in what's important to us in our faith. For example, I know how important it is for some to be physically in the church building. However, for me the move to online worship and meetings has allowed me to stay involved during my treatment more than I would ever have been able to before. On the other hand, I really do miss the fellowship and those unplanned brief chats with the person sitting next to me in church.

In the coming months we will have to continue to make balanced judgements, both as individuals and as a church. Personally, while local cases are low, having had two doses of vaccine, and being in between treatments, I'm taking the opportunity to restart playing badminton and meeting up inside with a friend I've hardly seen for well over a year. We hope to have family staying with us overnight during the Bank Holiday weekend. As formal rules relax it will become less obvious what is "right" and what is "wrong". So we will all make our own decisions and should continue to respect those with similar aims and concerns who may come to different conclusions. Perhaps that's a message of the Christian faith too!

God bless you all and your families and friends.

David

One of Kate's Prayer Poems

Invocation

*Come Holy Spirit,
come as the robin in the morning.
awakening our hearts
with your song.*



*Come as the dove at evening,
bringing blessing and peace.*

*Come as the blackbird at noonday,
gladdening your world with joy.*

*Come to us
as we come to worship,
that we may sing
to the creator,
grapple with the wounds of creation
and find peace through active prayer.*

In the 'Line of Duty' - for a policeman's son!

When I was born in 1940, my father was already a police officer in the market town of Boston, Lincs. But it wasn't until about 5 or 6 years old that I became more aware of what being a policeman really meant. From earliest memories, I knew he dressed in a special uniform with an impressive helmet, carried a whistle - and also sometimes a 'wooden thing' called a truncheon. As I grew older I gradually began to realise that as a policeman, my Dad had a very particular role to fulfil in the community - by which I mean more in the style of George Dixon in 'The Blue Lamp' and definitely not 'Line of Duty'!

I am sure that my parents knew that there were aspects of my father's work that could be confusing to my sister and myself. Why would our father sometimes have to work very strange hours? And the terms 'night shift' and 'early turn' were commonplace. And very often when we returned home during the daytime, my sister and I had to be very very quiet because our Dad had been 'on nights' and was in bed asleep.

And so at weekends on his days off, my Dad, my sister and I would often call in to the main Police HQ so that we might see his place of work and 'get to feel comfortable' amongst policemen. I always enjoyed these visits because as a young boy I got to see and do things that most people never experience. I was handcuffed, locked in a cell, rang the 'bell' on a police car, had a go on an enormous billiard table - and every visit usually meant a ginger biscuit. I remember seeing and hearing lots of typewriters for the first time and also a huge telephone switchboard with dozens of long wires and plugs being pushed into lots of holes whenever the phone rang.

I particularly remember that in the ground floor offices were all men in police uniform. On one visit I was taken upstairs to meet another group of people who were not wearing the uniform. Of course these turned out to be 'the detectives' who were dressed in normal everyday clothes - and amongst them were the only two females I ever saw there.

Having been a Coldstream guardsman, my father was a natural choice to marshall all the Civic parades in the town. I remember so vividly standing proudly in the crowds with my mother and sister watching him lead long parades of military bands, local dignitaries and almost always at that time (late 1940's) large contingents from each of the services. After 25 years as a serving police officer, my father retired and eventually became the Mayor's Officer for Boston - so more civic parades to watch!

My father was a passionate believer in Robert Peel's concept of 'policing by consent' - a phrase he constantly referred to. He firmly believed that he was simply 'a citizen in uniform' and carried out that role always with compassion and understanding.

I look back on my early and teenage years with huge gratitude for being within a loving family and also with great pride in the way my father carried out his role as a police officer. I feel sure that my Dad and PC George Dixon would have been great mates!



Irene calling.....

CLIMATE JUSTICE PLEASE!

The Cornish coastline beckons
Many Nations will fly in,
And gather for the Summit
On which all our hopes we pin!

Now Boris, if you're listening
Please know we really care,
We hope you'll fight for justice
For the poor countries despair.

We've been through the Pandemic,
Our country's had it rough,
You've helped us through, but more to do
To equalize- get tough!

Rich polluting Nations
Should cancel unfair debts,
And help the poorer countries,
Aid vulnerable to set,

A plan to tackle climate
That's workable for all,
A strict and urgent mission
We must act now, rise to call!

The danger signs are flashing,
Our world is in distress,
Talking's great, but we can't wait
Please sort this climate mess!

cc. IRENE CARTER

***Irene is sending this
poem to our Prime
Minister in the hope it
will catch his eye!***

A personal reflection from Freda.....

I have been mulling over all weekend what to say today, the very best I can do is a HUGE 'Thank You' to so many people. I know it has been hard for many people during our lockdown times, especially if like me you are on your own. We have all been so lucky to have had the inspiration of Chris and Alan for 'KIT'. It has been so much better than the usual monthly magazine as it has been so very personal for many of us. The stories and pictures are not the type of articles to have been put in Inspire because of the wider circulation involved. (A quote 'nicked' from a dear friend!) Thanks also to Catherine and Peter for keeping us going spiritually and Peter D for making this happen.

These are the only names I feel I can mention, because I am concerned that I shall leave someone out of the enormous list of friends who have kept me sane with emails, zoom, phone calls, doorstep and garden visits and trips to the garden centre, over the past year plus, in and out of lockdowns. (I am sure you all know who you are). I give thanks daily for the friends the Lord has blessed me with, especially my church family, present and past.

So again many thanks, I hope that today 17th May is the beginning of the end, but who can tell. We must all continue to 'stay safe' and be sensible in what we do.

With much love to you all and look forward to worshipping together again soon. Freda

Photo from Grafham Water.

John and I did a day's guided birdwatching there and earlier this month. We found places we did not know existed, heard and saw a nightingale which was a rare privilege. Our guide was brilliant, being able to identify most bird songs which I am not good at but perhaps working for the RSPMB for 20 years helps there. Other highlights were yellowhammers, reed buntings, red legged partridges, long tail tits on their nest and many more but my favourite part of the day was watching 20 or 30 yellow wagtails (a bird I don't think I have seen before) from the walk along the dam along with thousands of flies. It is amazing what beauty there is in places we know well and next time you visit Grafham keep your eyes and ears open to the wonder of God's earth



Babs Moore

John Williams writes: I often take a walk up Old Ramsey Road past the cemetery and last year sat in the little shelter for a rest, thinking about this place and what it means to people:

REST, REMEMBRANCE AND SOLACE

The number of busy people about
Reminds me that Sunday is the day of Eternal Rest.
I am no longer afraid of this.
I know that it will happen one day,
Until then I will abide in faith
And maybe I won't even realise
That my turn has come.
It could even be a Sunday –
Let the birds sing, but
Maybe they won't notice it either.

Many more of those who lie here
Just as they are, recycled to earth
Are each like no-one else
And each are loved by those who were close.

Dedicated folk place flowers and water
For spouse, father, mother, for son or for daughter,
Prayerfully meant but sometimes without prayer,
Carefully each person places tributes right there.
Memories flood their minds throughout their attention
Sadness, it's true, but gladness too, worth a mention.

Knowing their loved one's voice is now mute,
They take their time, their emotions acute.
One day they won't come here busy anymore
When they too will reach the eternal shore.

23 / 11 / 2020 J D W

Another bird that doesn't know its place.....



Into the future.....

Thank you to everyone who has responded to last week's article. We'd love to hear from more of you, especially those who receive KIT by post. Here is a copy of last week's article.

And what of the future.....?

Soon we will be able to meet again regularly for worship and hopefully it won't be too long before we're allowed to chat and catch up too. However, not everyone will either be fit enough to do so or may not yet feel confident.

I have thoroughly enjoyed producing KIT since last Easter but obviously it can't go on for ever! Neither does reverting to an Inspire every two months seem right. Inspire is predominantly full of dates, adverts of things to come and photos of past events. We would love to hear from you about what you would like to see going forward. I can't promise our very small Inspire team will be able to deliver but it would be good to know what you would like to see in an ideal world.

Let Pete Davies - 01480 495835 or davies.peter21@sky.com

or Alan Curtis 01480 350787 or a.k.curtis@ntlworld.com know what you'd like and this will help us to plan our way forward together into the future.

Chris

A collared dove that thinks it's a swallow from Babs and John.....

LITTLE GIDDING – RE-VISITED

I know some members of our church have visited Ferrar House, Little Gidding many times, but my first outing was in April 2019 when Gerry Swain was my chauffeur.

My gardener, who lives in Alconbury Weston, cycles to Little Gidding regularly, so he informed me that Ferrar House was to have an open day on Sunday 9 May 2021 where the gardens and church would be open plus afternoon tea would be served.

As it was such a lovely day, I decided I would attend. My chauffeur on this occasion was my dear friend and neighbour who has never visited Ferrar House, and, fortunately, enjoys driving.

As it was a lovely sunny day, there were many visitors and the stalls selling garden produce and plants were delightful. I did partake of a large slice of home-made carrot cake – not that it's good for my figure – but I thoroughly enjoyed eating it whilst looking across the fields, towards the sheep and St Andrew's Church at Steeple Gidding in the far distance.

Whilst walking around the gardens, I bumped into Susan Capp (the hospitality manager) who told me that the house is currently being renovated as it is over 200 years old and needs a lot of repairs. She hopes the work will be finished in time for visitors again early next year. I said I would keep an eye on their website for further news.

I decided to take a seat near the church to listen to the narrator giving the visitors a brief history of the house and its surroundings, including when the men of Charles I's army came "bounding" up the hill in the 17th century to visit Ferrar House and its occupants.

The gentleman narrator gave a fascinating talk about the history of Ferrar House etc, although I couldn't understand why he told those congregated that he was "born and bred in Northamptonshire" when he had such a strong Irish accent! I didn't ask him why as it's clear he spent a lot of time there.

One of Nicholas Ferrars' great-great grand-daughters (Susan, I believe) joined us and listened very intently.

At one point, the "Irishman" mentioned that Ferrar House was used as a retreat by Methodists, Catholics, and Anglicans. Before he continued, I am afraid I did put up my hand to say, "*You forgot to mention my church - The Free Church (URC), in St Ives*". Whereupon he said, "*Ah, yes, now I remember - they have also visited here*".



Having spent a good 2 hours wandering around the gardens and church, we decided to make our way to St Ives across country, via Hamerton, Woolley, Spaldwick, Kimbolton, Great Staughton, Grafham Water, Buckden, Godmanchester and finally, St Ives. I hadn't realised what beautiful countryside we have in Cambridgeshire, not that I would like to drive up or down Belton's Hill regularly, which is on the way from Little Gidding to Spaldwick. The only way I would choose to travel down Belton's Hill is on skis. The highest point is 49.90 metres (approx. 163 feet) and lowest 22.50 metres (approx. 73 feet). As the "Irishman" said, Charles I's army came "bounding" up the hill – I certainly don't think so. I can't imagine anyone, fit cyclists included, would "bound" up Belton's Hill. So much for everyone surmising that Cambridgeshire is flat!

I am so looking forward to Ferrar House re-opening and seeing what improvements have been made. No doubt, our church will be organising another "retreat" there as and when possible.

SINDY



Editor—there is a reason the A1 run where it does. It follows the boundary between the hillier country of the west of the county and the flatter, marshier land to the east. There are many beautiful villages in west Cambs and Northamptonshire.

