

+ STAMP

SUMMER 2024

AGAZINE

ISSUE 62



THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

£1

STOMP MAGAZINE

ISSUE 62 SUMMER 2024

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COVER PICTURE

What is the burning question of the hour? At supermarket check-outs, in saloon bars, the gathering at the office water-cooler, mums at the school gates, bankers in their boardrooms, what is the subject of the earnest and serious discussions taking place?

How England will fare in the Euros? The name of our next Prime Minister? The prospects for a proposed stock exchange flotation?

None of these.

What everyone wants to know is, when is the weather going to warm up?

I've no more idea than anyone else but I thought I'd choose a picture that would remind us of long summer days and beautiful gardens - there's still time for this to happen before the nights start drawing in again.

Jeff Wallis

FROM THE EDITOR

Some eight years ago, during the vacancy, Archdeacon Jonathan spoke to a few of us in St Mary's Hall. This was about the nomination of a person to be the next Team Rector and Vicar of St Mary and St Paul. Memorably he had in mind a person who, with a lot of fun, would bring St Mary's Church more closely into the local community.

Robin's article in this edition of STOMP is a perfect setting for an editorial reflection. Early on Canon John showed his intentions with the pub/pulpit job swap and later his Extravaganza with motor bikes, trains and craft works.

He has overviewed the very welcome daily opening of St Mary's.

This year, from June through to August, the three core Summer months will demonstrate an interesting expression of so much work by John and the supporting team. The monthly High Street market, is followed by the periodic 'Vintage and New Table Top Bazaar', the 'Hemel Old Town Beer Festival' and finally August's 'Art in The Nave'.

I see John as fulfilling Jonathan's wish and of course, quoting Robin, confirming that 'the Nave was built for the people'.



'FAREWELL' FROM RICHARD AND JENNY LESLIE

A Valedictory from Canon Richard Leslie

We arrived in the Parish nine years ago, uninvited and unannounced. It has proved impossible to leave in the same unobtrusive way - as shown by the Rector's suggestion that I write his piece in this edition. We came because Jenny was commuting into north London for her work in a psychotherapy clinic and Hemel Hempstead is very much a commuter town. We had been searching up and down the A41 corridor and settled on No 17 George Street, because we liked it and, Oh look! there's a rather grand church just five minutes down the road. And it is still in the Diocese of St Albans where I have spent most of my ministry.



The pandemic brought an end to commuting and Jenny worked from home and 'on line'. Now that she has retired we can revert to Plan A which was to retire to Hampshire to be near our sons and their families. Jenny has gone back to her first love - gardening. The garden here is 'small though beautifully formed'. We are now moving to a big garden with a modest house in it. It is also barely a mile from our eldest and three miles from our younger son. They say they want to keep an eye on us but we strongly suspect that child-minding and dog walking have a lot to do with it as well. But it will be good to see more of our three grand-daughters, the eldest has just turned 16 and driving down to see them, round the M25 was becoming increasingly tedious.

It is good to be fit enough to take up a new challenge at our time of life and we hope that we shall be able to spend many contented hours pottering and sitting in our new garden. Jenny has been studying learned papers on such topics as 'Navigating the complexities of ageing through counselling'. For my part it's a second retirement. I shall hand over my pastoral responsibility for 23 clergy widows and one widower in the St Albans Archdeaconry. They are proving to be remarkably long-lived.

Hertsmere Forum of Faiths, the group I started in that borough to improve communications and understanding between the different faith communities will pass into new hands. From it has sprung the award winning Camp Unity, a week-long summer camp for 40+ young children from different faith backgrounds. The area now boasts the largest Jewish community in the country, two Jain temples and the great place of pilgrimage for Hindus at the Bhaktivedanta Manor. I have also stepped down as vice-chair of the Hertfordshire Inter Faith Forum after the inaugural signing of the Faith Covenant for Hertfordshire, a big step forward in local interfaith relations. It is good to see the bigger role our cathedral is playing in interfaith relations under the new dean.

The Rotary Club of Elstree & Borehamwood founded in 1942 and of which I have been treasurer for about 10 years has dwindled in numbers and will now be merging with the next nearest club.

And of course St Mary's has come to play a central part in my life with its rhythm of worship and events. Despite a lifetime in churches, I have never before been a regular worshipper in so large and magnificent a church. We shall be leaving some gaps in rotas. I have even enjoyed my mornings with 'Henry' on Church cleaning days. Any volunteers to take our places to read, lead prayers, lock and unlock, cut grass or support the 10.30am Wednesday communions etc?

We have of course checked out the churches within reach of our new home. Portchester looks lively. It sits within the walls of the castle and has a vicar, no less than 5 active retired clergy and 3 lay ministers. We could lie low there but that is not in my nature even at this stage. And I prefer to stay loyal to my Anglo-Catholic roots.

When I had a proper job in the secular world, I was described as 'known to dress up on Sundays'. The other description of me which has given some satisfaction is that in the Bishop's file it was once noted that I was doing 'better than expected'. That's a good enough epitaph for me. I hope that folks at St Mary's will not disagree.

Richard Leslie

THE CHURCH BUILDING AND THE COMMUNITY - 'THE PEOPLE'S CHURCH'

Hemel Hempstead is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as having 23 households which might equate to around 150 people. So it is amazing to me that some 55 years later they should have set about building quite such a large church. This is especially so because at the time civil war was raging through England as Stephen and Matilda fought each other for the throne. Henry II succeeded to the throne in 1154, so the Nave may well have been planned and built in more peaceful and hopeful times.

For the first 350 years or so of its life the Nave is likely to have had an earth (chalk) floor and it is probable that this will have been covered with rushes – there would have been an annual community festival, called Rushbearing, associated with renewing the rushes on the church floor, and this would also have involved drinking and partying and local sports.



Rushbearing in Upperhill, Oldham in 1880 and in Sowerby Bridge in 2012. Note the similarity of the rush carts paraded through the village on their way to the church. It is easy to imagine a similar vehicle being trundled along the High Street on its way to St Mary's.

The Nave, built after the church (Chancel and Tower) was consecrated in 1150 so is likely to have been unconsecrated, and its maintenance was – and still is – the responsibility of the congregation. It would have been used for storage of the arms that every Parish had to provide, a venue for Guild plays, processions, Church Ales and business. It is self evident that the church Nave would have been a really important community hall for the population. There were, of course, no pews just a few benches along the outside walls. The saying 'the weakest to the wall' comes from this.

God's part of the building, the Chancel, was usually screened off, and the responsibility of the Rector – now the Church Commissioners.

In 1527 the Vicar and churchwardens built the Lamb Pub – also known as the Church House. This was where the CVS Building is now, on the North side of St Mary's Square. Their reason for this venture was ostensibly because there was too much drinking in the church on Market days. The history of Hemel Hempstead suggests there were quite often drunken brawls on Feast Days!

I wonder if the Lamb was the first and only Pub in the High Street at that time and the other 15 or so Pubs all came later.

There is no record of when pews started to be put into the Nave but Robert Coleman was fined for keeping his hat on in church (because he said his seat was under a roof leak which the Churchwardens were failing to repair) in the early 1600s so the Nave must have had fixed seating by then and in 1620 churches were instructed to be 'pewed out'.

This all came along with a radical rethinking of what services were. They were now in English with English readings from an English Bible and the start of hymn singing and regular Sunday sermons – but not yet the hour long ones!

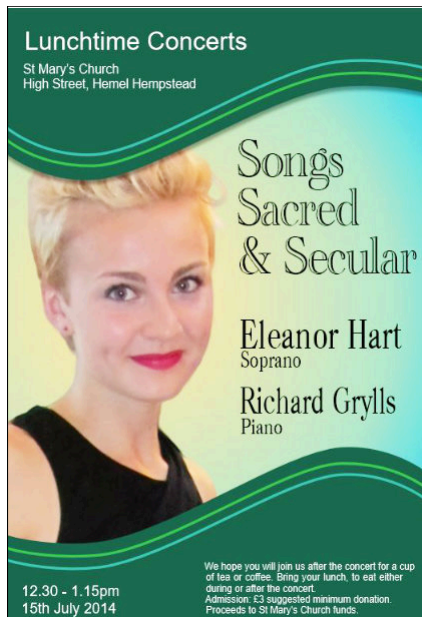


St Mary's Close - the site of St Mary's very own pub, The Lamb. Discounts for the clergy and church wardens?

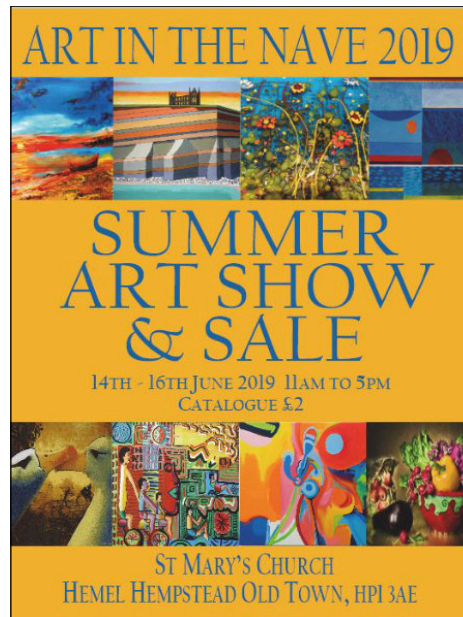
Once the church was 'pewed out' – and that really did mean pews everywhere including in the Transepts and under the tower – there was less opportunity for functions other than Concerts, plays or Exhibitions.

In the 1970s, St Mary's used to put on a play at regular intervals in the Nave and this included a Miracle Play, Son et Lumière, Murder in the Cathedral, and Alice Through the Looking Glass.

Concerts have been a frequent church use, and for many years we had a monthly lunch time concert, as they still do at St John's. There was a Festival of Creation in 1980, regular annual August Bank Holiday open days and June Church Fêtes. Following the successful exhibition of the Methodist National Collection, organised by the St Mary's Millennium Committee, Gordon West started the Art in the Nave Exhibitions in the early 2000s which Brian Doran has now rejuvenated. John held the Extravaganza Exhibition two years ago, started the annual Craft Beer Festival last year and has initiated the Vintage Item Sales. Caroline Wainman started the Halloween Festival before she left for Waddesden, and that continues each year.



Lunchtime concerts were a regular feature from 2011 with visitors bringing packed lunches to eat during the concerts.



Art in the Nave has been a regular Summer event since

When Gill and I arrived in Hemel in the late 1970's, St Mary's was open unsupervised every day from 10am to 6 pm. After the Vestry fire and an attempt to vandalise the organ, caution took hold and limited supervised opening started; but filling the necessary rota became a challenge and so in 1994 the Parish employed Les Crossley to man the church between 12 noon and 2.00pm every weekday. This continued until he became ill and had to stop. After this the church remained closed when not open for services. For many of us, seeing the church sitting there closed and empty was a great sadness, so supervised opening on a Saturday morning started, followed by full daily opening in September 2020 - such a great joy. And you only have to skim through the Visitors Book to see how many people come to visit from far away and close by, and all really pleased to be able to get in and enjoy the gift that the building is.

Remember that the Nave was built for the people. Our Nave may well have never been consecrated, and so it is an inherited community asset that is crying out to be used. Putting in fixed seating may have limited the use options in a practical way, but hopefully uninformed minds won't limit its use even more.



A St Mary's Mystery Play was performed to a large audience in the churchyard in 1971. Trevor Barton portrayed Jesus while Ynis and Anthony Richardson played Mary Magdalene and John the Baptist.

Yes, Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and the sellers of doves, sheep and oxen in the temple claiming they had 'made it a den of thieves', but that was a criticism of the way the money-making Temple system worked. Firstly it was only any good if you made your gifts, or your sacrifice, at the Temple in Jerusalem. Nowhere else was acceptable to God you would have been told. Then there were prescribed sacrifices required for each type of occasion and gifts could only be given in Temple coinage.

Imagine if the PCC said that you all had to put five St Mary's coins in the collection each week and buy two doves. We would need to set up a money changers table at the door as well as a seller of doves so that you could buy St Mary's coins and your doves at whatever rate we set for that week. And, so long as you all felt that you had to buy the five coins and the two doves, I fear that there would be a temptation for greed to set in when setting the rate of exchange! All very different to normal community trading.



Extravaganza 22 was a new event attracting around 2,500 visitors over the three days. Opposite - a Flower Festival held on the weekend of our Patronal Festival in 2008

To sum up St Mary's Nave is ours and we are really lucky to have such a fantastic community owned facility bequeathed to us, so I say hooray whenever a new sensible community use is proposed. Remember that the down side of ownership is the responsibility to maintain and this costs money, so the more the use, the more the enjoyment and with that comes affection and the potential for input to the costs.

And after all, almost anything is better than one of the early uses which, it is said, may have included 'trial by ordeal'.

Robin Woodd



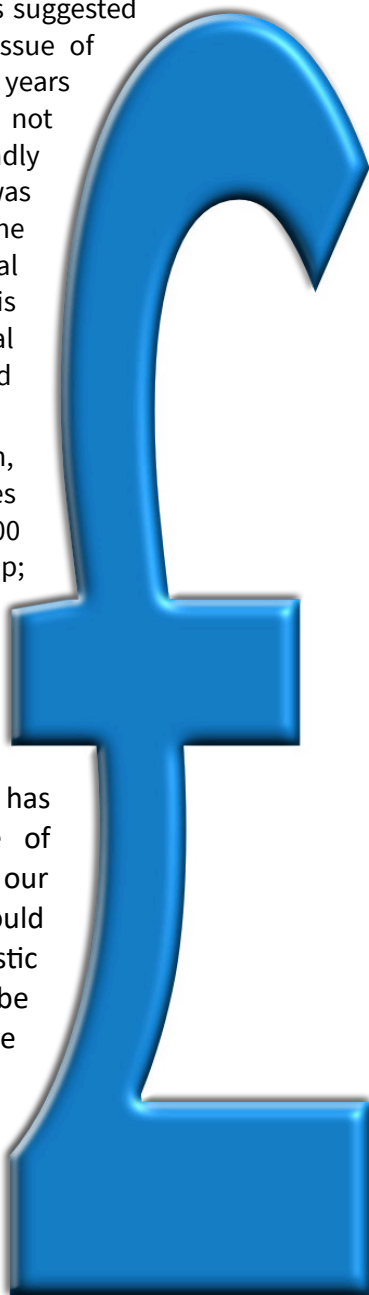
PARISH FINANCES 2024

During the PCC Finance discussion on 20 May it was suggested that an article be prepared for the forthcoming issue of SToMP. Parishioners will be aware that for several years annual budget deficits, whilst feared, happily have not materialised. Things may be very different this year. Badly hit especially by high energy price rises a budget was established with a deficit of £13,088, although the projected deficit is now £11,929. As a marker the total energy bill for both churches including the halls is forecast to be £17,200, circa a sixth of our total expenditure. It is interesting to see the pluses and minuses at the end of April.

The Parish Giving scheme continues to underperform, the projection being minus £1,300. St Mary's boxes compensate for this the projection being circa £1,200 up, with St Paul's weekly collections being £1,700 up; weddings and funerals are £800 up. Turning to room hiring income it is interesting to see that the total budgeted for is £25,000 and this is the projected income, that is circa a quarter of all our income.

For some years the successful policy of the PCC has been to maintain a current account balance of £29,000, so a deficit can be absorbed at the cost of our reserves so two years of such projected deficits would put us in serious trouble. However, one optimistic view expressed is that the deficit in 2024 could be £8,000 or even less. There are many efforts, some clearly evident and others in the making, to raise more money, so can you do your best to help us achieve this more optimistic outcome by your generous giving and support of our fundraising and other initiatives?

Gordon Gaddes 27/05/2024



RANDOM SMILES



Seen in a West Country church:

Whenever I see a little church,
I always pay a visit.
So when at last I'm carried in,
the Lord won't ask 'Who is it?'

From The Nineteenth Green

A recent study found that the average golfer walks about 900 miles a year. Another study found golfers drink, on average, 22 gallons of alcohol a year, which means, on average, golfers get about 41 miles to the gallon. Kind of makes you proud. I almost feel like a hybrid.



*...well you cannot fault the efficacy of
the new 'Planned Giving' scheme...*

Seen in a church magazine:

The church hall is available for hire for groups and parties. There is a well-equipped kitchen and disabled toilet facilities, with the capacity to seat up to 80 people.

Taking Jesus

A Sunday School teacher asked her class why Joseph and Mary took the boy Jesus with them to Jerusalem. A small child replied: "They couldn't get a babysitter."

Choir

Seen in a parish bulletin:

Next Sunday the choir will give a recital, after which the church will be closed for repairs.'



TACITURN GRANDPARENTS OF YESTERYEAR AND THE FORGOTTEN TIN TABERNACLE

I wonder whether you have experienced something that Roger Sygrave and I talked about recently, grandparents seemingly reluctant to talk about the past. On my maternal side I had a grandad who did not reply to my question, 'did we lose anybody in the First World War?' I found out five decades later that he lost a brother, Private John Murray of the Seaforth Highlanders, in 1917 in the mud of the Ypres battlefield. Equally, take grandma Murray, losing her dad in a coalmine accident in Aspatria in 1907. I found out only 15 years ago about great grandad Sandwith's death in Brayton Colliery!

Which brings me to Roger's reminiscence about Grandad Sygrave, who did not have much to say about his past. Roger however does remember an intriguing story told by grandad who was an altar boy in the Hemel Hempstead's old St Paul's Church.

Roger mentioned that Grandad Sygrave at the time of the story lived in Herbert Street when the old St Paul's Church on Queen Street also serviced a building, was it a 'chapel of ease', a mile and a half up the road at High Street Green.

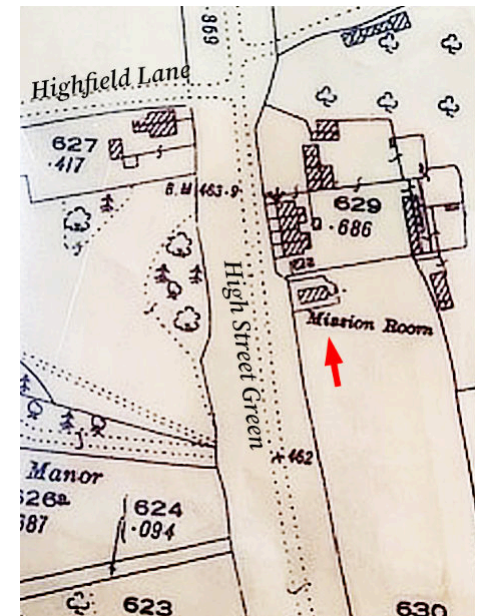


'Tin Tabernacle', Bedmond by Jim Osley

Constructed in 1880 the photo shows the Bedmond church as it is now, a Grade II listed building, the last such church in the St Albans Diocese. It was one of some corrugated iron 'tin tabernacles', constructed from the 1850's onwards, many of which were sent to the colonies as 'instant churches' and which featured as quick and cheap buildings to serve needs of our rapidly growing population in Britain from the mid - 1850s to the early 20th century.

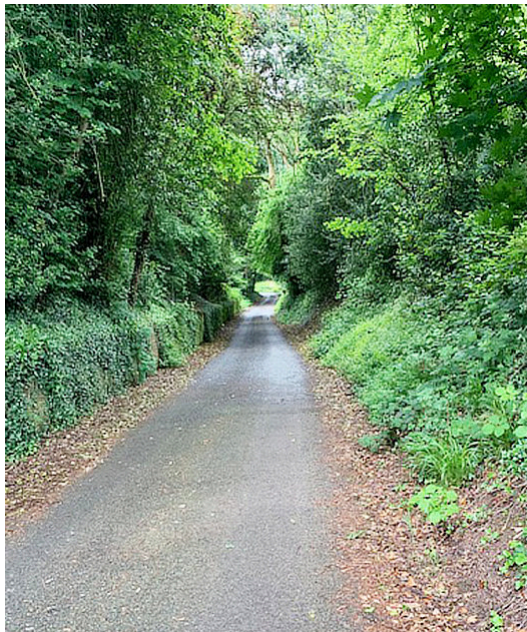
As a marker for you, the 'chapel' having long disappeared, the site was alongside the Flint Cottages, now occupied by a detached house as shown in the photo. Looking at some local maps, the one for 1925 and the one for 1947 feature a 'mission room', but a map for 1898 shows no such building. Given Grandad Sygrave's age I deduce that the mission room was set up early in the twentieth century. Roger says that the chapel was made of corrugated iron just like the one in Bedmond, the Church of The Ascension in the Anglican Parish of Abbots Langley.

Grandad Sygrave's story was about his duty to take candles up in preparation for services at High Street Green.



The site in High Street Green of 'The Mission Room'

Let us speculate, was he alone or accompanied when he went to the chapel? One can imagine the walk, or did he bike, going uphill along Queen Street under the Nicky Line. He would turn into Highfield Lane, known in those days as the 'dark lane' because of the bushes and high canopy of tall trees. You can get a sense of this from the photo of the lower part of the Lane these days, which extends to Queensway and is now called Woodhall Lane.



Woodhall Lane today, originally the lower section of Highfield Lane

This old lane bounded the grounds of Highfield House and now, higher up on the other side of Queensway, it is still there, very much opened up through the loss of trees and some of the medieval hedges.

This would have been some trek, week after week in those days without cars. The route, stretched from his home via St Paul's Church steeply uphill 1½ miles to get to the chapel, of course much better the return downhill trek. As to timing, a Parish magazine for December 1928 may give a clue; 'Mission Room Sunday School at 2.30pm and Evensong and sermon at 8.30 pm'!

To meet the needs of the burgeoning population a number of new churches were built. The Holy Trinity Church in Leverstock Green was opened in 1849, followed in 1869 by St Paul's Church on Queen's Street in 1869, St Mary's in Apsley in 1871 and St John's in Boxmoor in 1874. The setting up of the mission room at Adeyfield and the chapel at Piccotts End along with the growth of non-conformist churches all can be seen in this context.

The population of the Hemel Hempstead Parish in 1801 was 2,722, by 1841 it had doubled and by 1901 it had doubled yet again. Higher birth rates, improved medicine and sanitation and more secure food supplies, coupled with a significant reduction in infant mortality and economic development, affected our town as was the case elsewhere in the UK during this century.

What happened finally to the 'mission room'? Speculating again, but hoping to find answers for a later edition of STOMP, the demise could have happened with the closure of the old St Paul's Church in 1959.

Roger Sygrave, born in 1945, and living further along High Street Green, has a clear memory of seeing the building. Arriving in Hemel in 1964 and living lose by I have no recollection of the building. Should any reader of this issue have more information about our erstwhile tin tabernacle please let us know.

Gordon Gaddes

HANGING BASKET



This poem was written shortly after a visit to a beloved elderly aunt, a visit up North which had moved me greatly

A warm July day, 2005

Scarlet, crimson — a touch of yellow,
mass of leaves green, yet
a touch, mysterious, of red a mixture,
full-out, slight decay, a touch of death.

Analogy for life — a life, but whose?

Basket of life — beauty and hope.

Basket within, the fade of death,
but, overwhelming, the beauty and the strength,
the flowing, the movement, the colour.

Creation, in glory illustrated in basket,
discourse of life and of being,
of commitment, of interest, of other.

Life of being, basket of life
perfect, beauteous, wind-swaying life.

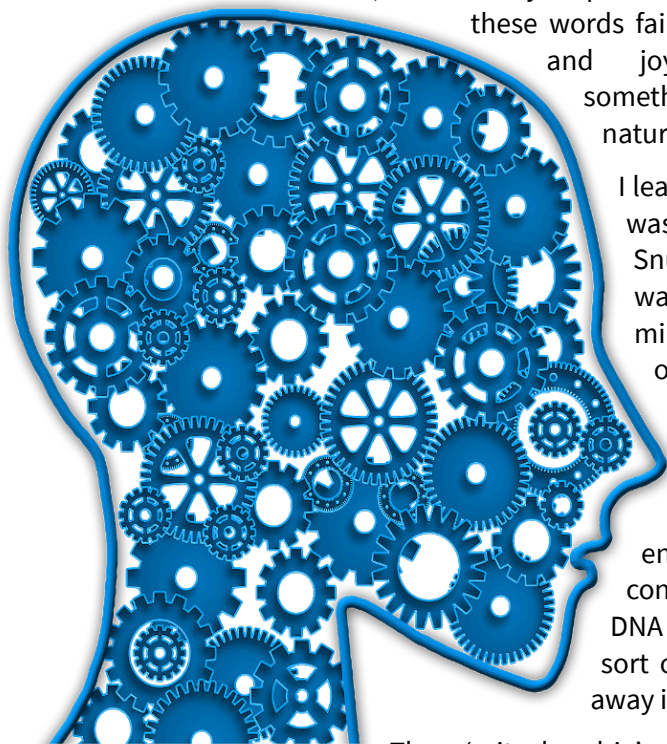
Gordon July 2005

GOD IN THE SCIENCES

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Wonders of the Living World

What are the best metaphors we could use to describe biological things? You might be used to hearing phrases like 'your genetic blueprint' or 'survival of the fittest', but are they helpful or even accurate? Some of these words fail to capture the wonder and joy of understanding something new about the nature of living organisms.



I learned that one researcher was using the phrase 'The Snuggle for Existence' as a way to convey the idea, familiar to biologists, that co-operation is at the heart of the living world. For example, every cell more complex than a bacterium contains minute energy factories, each one containing their own piece of DNA – which makes them a sort of miniature cell, hidden away inside the larger host cell.

These 'mitochondria', as biologists call them, turn raw materials from the host into chemical energy. In this way, everyone benefits: the mitochondria now have a safe place to live, and the host receives the energy it needs. There are many more examples of organisms working together to produce something that is more than the sum of its parts, where often the individual parts could not survive on their own.

The Map of Life' is a way of describing the regularities we see in biological processes. Eyes, legs and wings have emerged in the living world again and again, and why not? If the properties of light and gravity remain constant, we should expect living things to find the same solutions to seeing or getting around. When we look at these organisms' family trees, we see they share a common ancestor that had no eyes, or no wings.

These structures have developed completely independently, or you could say that the paths of the living world have converged on the same solution. That's not to say they had a conscious goal, but that the world has certain properties, and those properties have channelled biological processes in certain directions.

None of these stories give us definite evidence for God. Science simply provides data, which can often be interpreted in several different ways. Perhaps the world just happens to be full of mathematical regularities, maybe there's an overarching physical law we don't yet understand, or perhaps there are multiple universes and ours happens to be the one in which life has arisen. But I believe that the observations scientists make about the living world are compatible with the existence of the God described by Christian faith.

“QUOTATIONS”

Only one petition in the Lord's Prayer has any condition attached to it; it is the petition for forgiveness.
– *Archbishop William Temple*

Many people will be surprised when Jesus comes again – but nobody will be mistaken. – *Anon*

~ The Christian is one who has forever given up hope of being able to think of himself as a good man. – *Leslie Newbigin*

To spend an hour worrying on our knees is not prayer. Indeed, there are times when it is our duty, having committed a problem to God in prayer, to stop praying and to trust and to do the necessary work to arrive at a solution. – *Oliver Barclay*

~ What built St Paul's Cathedral? Look at the heart of the matter – it was that divine Hebrew Book, the word partly of the man Moses, an outlaw tending his Midianitish herds, four thousand years ago, in the wilderness of Sinai! It is the strangest of things, yet nothing is truer.
– *Thomas Carlyle*

Cricket is the game which the English, not naturally being a spiritual people, have invented to give themselves some concept of eternity.
– *Lord Mancroft*

GOD IN THE ARTS

The Rev Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a look at ‘Dust Motes Dancing in Sunbeams’ by Vilhelm Hammershøi. It is found in Ordrupgaard, Copenhagen

‘Tis the gift to be simple

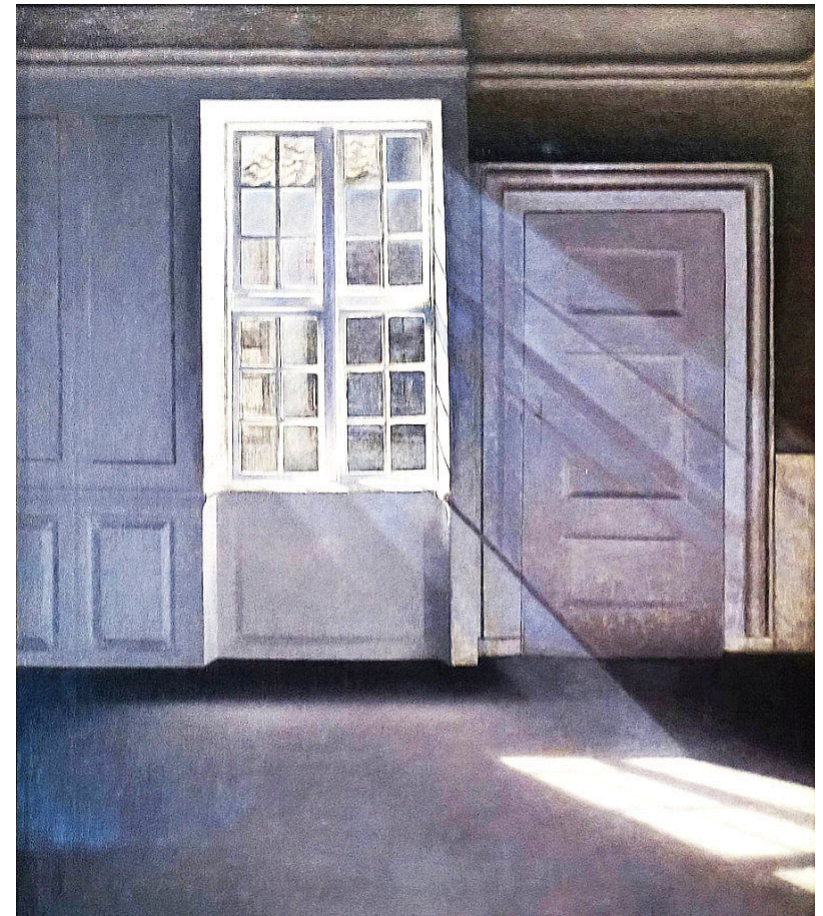
Have you ever read a book by Robin Meyers, ‘Morning Sun on a White Piano’? It is subtitled ‘simple pleasures and the sacramental life.’ Its theme is that we can easily pass life by, as we search for it. We shun the ‘ordinary’ and the simple in pursuit of more worthwhile endeavours because we equate the ‘ordinary’ with the mundane and unrewarding.

The Shaker melody ‘Tis the gift to be simple, ‘tis the gift to be free’ is the origin of the popular hymn ‘The Lord of the Dance.’ It says: Look closely at the simple things of life and find in them depth and divinity. The 17th century Dutch artist Vermeer created masterpieces out of the ordinary – a woman reading a letter or pouring water into a basin. Critics have described his work as ‘the timeless contemplation of the ordinary.’

Over 200 years later, a Danish artist found his inspiration in that same world of the simple and the ordinary: Vilhelm Hammershøi. He lived a reclusive life in Copenhagen with his wife, painting only a few pictures a year. Hammershøi died of throat cancer in 1916 at only 52 years. The theme of most of his paintings is limited to the world of his apartment at different times of the day and night.

His painting, ‘Dust Motes Dancing in Sunbeams,’ was painted in 1900. We are shown quite simply an empty room with a wall, a window, a floor and a door. There is no handle on the door. All is stillness and peace. And all is shadow until the winter sun streams into the room, catching in its rays the dust and lighting up the floor. It is the miracle of sunlight bringing life into the stillness. An ordinary aspect of creation, but lighting up a room and bringing wonder in its wake. One critic has called it ‘a hymn to an everyday marvel.’

In this and in all of his paintings, Hammershøi seems to be saying: Accept the simplicity of the present, find beauty there and live in that beauty. For him the grass is never greener in the next field – it is here and now in the world we have that we find beauty and meaning.

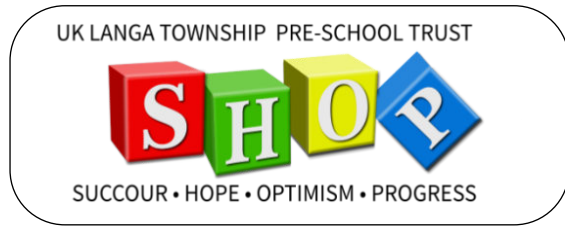


Dust Motes Dancing in the Sunbeams by Vilhelm Hammershøi

John Keble’s hymn ‘New ev’ry morning is the love’ says that ‘the trivial round, the common task will furnish all we need to ask.’ The artist is echoing that truth on canvas, telling us that the ordinary and common things of everyday life can provide the backcloth against which we can live and act.

When we are young, that backcloth stretches out to embrace the wider world and time: it is full of potential and promise. As we grow older, that world shrinks to our home, our church, our town. If illness comes, our world may be bedroom or the hospital ward. In that smaller world life can seem trivial and ordinary. But wherever we are, Hammershøi invites us to pause, to ponder and to find there beauty and light which will bring us ‘daily nearer God.’

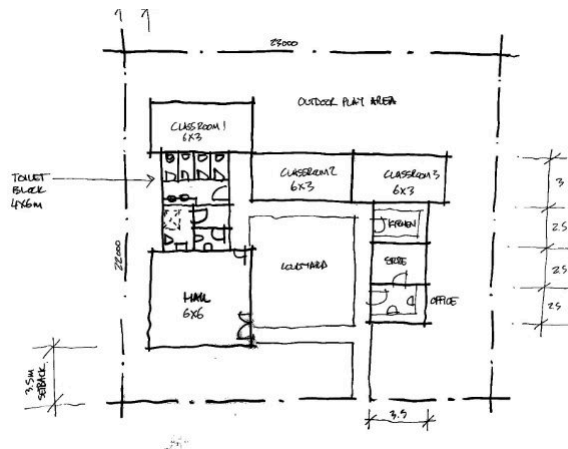
NEWS FROM LTPT



As a UK -based charity run by volunteers we have been working for 13 years to support early child development in Langa Township. Worried about how to give better support, LTPT linking with the Clueit Foundation, has set aside a fund to provide a resource centre for the Langa Early Child Development Forum (LECDF).

However, there are many hurdles to cross – including confirmation of the land to be used, the architect's drawings, the planning permission, the choice of a contractor, the assessment of LECDF's operational plans, and the establishment of the supporting legal and financial details. Let us see if we can cross all of these hurdles and in the time available to us!

In the meantime we now have the latest revised sketch from David Talbot of Platform (see page 2 of our Newsletter 47). The LTPT budget for 2024-2025 covers a contribution to pay for this building.



New Track Suits Purchased

With the rigorous Cape Town winter approaching 65 tracksuits have been supplied by Lorrienne Engel to top up those supplied last year through the donation of Quentin Baum and his friends.



Diary Date

Motown at The Gatsby, Thursday 26 September. More details in June

EDITOR'S INTERVIEW

Lynne Sygrave

Lynne Sygrave, née Pain, is a Watford girl born in 1948, but destined to spend most of her life happily in Hemel Hempstead, seen by her Mum in those days to be the 'back of beyond', with 'all those little lanes'! Lynne, the only child, has a memory of lovely parents and a closely-knit family. Her Mum was one of seven siblings five girls and two boys and all these relatives feature in Lynne's early years. In fact, a feature of her life is one of stability, loyalty and long-term continuity. An interesting example of this to me is that seventy years on she still meets friends that she made at the fee-paying Lonsdale prep school, affordable to her master butcher Dad, which she entered aged four. Later she went to the Stanborough Park Infants School in North Watford, then transferring into its secondary stream. This fee-paying school had been set up by the Seven Day Adventists and here she met Roger Sygrave from Hemel Hempstead, this to be the start of a move up the Gade Valley and they then being over 60 years together!



During these early years of family, friends and schooling Lynne, around ten years old, developed a passion for riding which lasted for a couple of decades. She talked about riding in Bricket Wood and in Ashridge, of working as a stable girl, which got her some free rides, and of leading small groups of riders trailing through Ashridge Forest. She talked also about her love for ballroom dancing, not shared later with Roger, although they did try a bit of Latin American together.

Knowing Lynne as a devout and Church-going Christian I was interested to learn about the roots of her beliefs. She said that her parents did not go to church, but were ethical people with good principles. Her first church going when aged seven was at Christ Church St Albans Road Watford where she attended Sunday School and also Brownies and Guides. Then we discussed the impact of school assemblies through to secondary school, the orderly marching into the hall, the lesson reading and the hymn singing. This was the background for so many of us in our generation, times and things never to be forgotten.

Stanborough Park School was a boarding and fee-paying multicultural school, Lynne's memory of it including many children from other countries including Scandinavia and the Caribbean. Studying up to 'O Levels', but before getting the results, Lynne had moved on, joining the Accounts Department of Watford Town Hall where she was to work for the next six years on pay roll, accounting and general administration. During this period she studied at Watford College for a Local Government qualification.

We reflected on our times, so different for young people these days of course, our times when marriage at an early age in one's twenties, or even earlier, was usual. We decided in those days it was a simpler life, indeed we did not feel that we had missed anything by marrying young. So, this brings us to the major lifetime moment for Lynne aged twenty, marrying Roger Sygrave at St Mary's Church, The Revd Brian Andrews officiating. This was a culmination for them both, they having first met at Stanborough Park School. They had been together since their mid-teens, she staying for weekends with the Sygraves in Hemel Hempstead, going to the youth club in the old St Paul's Hall followed by drinks with friends at the White Lion Pub, down the road on Queensway, and going to services at St Mary's on Sundays. This was to be a great initiation for the next half century of Lynne's life, now the Watford girl permanently moving up the valley to 'yer 'emel'!



Leaving work in Watford Lynne joined the Manufacturing Accounts Department at Dexion where she was until 1974 when Jonathon was born, followed three years later by Debbie. During the time at Dexion, after an initiative by the company, Lynne became a blood donor, continuing for forty years, and eventually becoming a bone marrow donor.

After Jonathon and Debbie were born Lynne became a full time house wife, a luxury not afforded to most of today's parents! This she found to be very happy and rewarding time. Then 1985 saw the start of a thirty - year journey at Maylands Primary School, her children's school. First, she was employed for several years working one to one with children with special educational needs, this was followed by work as a class teaching assistant also becoming the Staff Governor, finally by six years in the office during which time she became the school's secretary. Indeed, after retirement, they brought her back for three further periods, and she remained a school governor for Special Educational Needs until 2023.

During these decades Jonathon and Debbie were growing up and getting on with their lives. Now Debbie is with Dave and Davey the dog in Heath and



Reach and Jonathon and Louise are in Shoreham with two children Sam(15) and Molly(11). Grandparental duties continue to prevail, of course to the mutual delight of all concerned.

Also, there has been so much going on involving St Mary's Church. Not only will one find Lynne all over the place helping out most of the time, but she has been a Sunday school teacher, Baptism visitor, currently she is the Secretary of the Friends of St Mary's, the head flower arranger at the request of Freda Wilmore as she was dying, and she is the hyper efficient member of the treasury team recording and making payments on our behalf, which I greatly appreciate.

What a lovely story, and what a privilege it is for me to be able to listen to such a story discussed in such an open and friendly way. Lynne's life has been, and is, one of giving to family, community and church.

Gordon Gaddes

TUNNELS

Lester Amann considers the work of King Hezekiah.

Of all the remarkable engineering projects in the world, one is surely the Channel Tunnel. This undersea railway subway is the longest in the world and connects Kent, England with Calais, France. It is over 31 miles (50.46 km) long and was opened just over 30 years ago, in May 1994.

After six years of construction, this massive enterprise created three tunnels, running parallel to each other. Trains go through two large tunnels with a smaller service tunnel for ventilation and access. Every day, about 500 trains go through the tunnels carrying passengers, cars, lorries and coaches.

The Bible tells us of another amazing tunnelling project. King Hezekiah wanted to fortify the city of Jerusalem against the invading Assyrian armies and needed to protect the water supply. Using simple hand tools, and digging through solid rock, the completed tunnel was 1,750 feet long (533 m)! It still exists today and tourists with torches can shuffle along the cold, wet and narrow passageway from one end to the other. Close to the tunnel is an original written inscription which describes how the tunnel was excavated. Two teams, one starting at each end of the curving channel met in the middle. Apparently, their direction was guided by men listening to hammering sounds as they gouged through the rock.



Hezekiah's tunnel, still a popular attraction for visitors to Jerusalem.

King Hezekiah's tunnel was indeed an incredible engineering feat and accomplished without modern machines and sophisticated technology. His vision and careful planning saved the people from their enemy. (2 Kings 20:20)

At the end of his eventful life, a eulogy was written that King Hezekiah did what was right and what was pleasing to the Lord his God. His accomplishments were done in a spirit of complete loyalty and devotion to his God.

We may well ask, when our time draws to a close, if such a fitting tribute will be given to us.



FOR YOUR DIARY

ART IN THE NAVE 2024



Art in the Nave 2024 will once again focus a bright spotlight on the visual arts when it opens at St Mary's Saturday 24th August. The three-day festival, from 24th to 26th August (Bank Holiday) , now represents a major event in the Hertfordshire arts calendar with an exhibition and sale of high quality art works.

THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL

The Clergy

The Revd Canon John Williams 07522 504087:

vicar@stmaryandstpaul.org.uk

The Revd Dr. Luke Geoghegan

Parish Office

Norma Howie 07901 359117

admin@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Church Wardens - St Mary's

Rosamund Russell Tel: 01442 217754

stmarychurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Emmeline Lambert Tel: 01442 268705

stmarychurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Church Wardens - St Paul's

Gordon Gaddes Tel: 01442 257920

stpaulchurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Rosina Gaddes Tel 07720 897037

stpaulchurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Hall Bookings:

For St Mary's and St Paul's Halls:

Norma Howie 07901 359117

admin@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

SToMP Magazine

Editor: Gordon Gaddes

Design: Jeff Wallis

hello@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

www.stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

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