
G O D M A N C H E S T E R P A R I S H N E W S

The Vicar's Letter

Dear Friends,

I have felt inspired – if that is the right word – to return to the theme of music in church life which I touched on last month. Since writing that short piece, I have found myself wondering just why it is that Christians in particular have such a strong urge to express their faith in worship at least partly through the medium of music. Most religious rites, of almost any faith one can think of, involve some form of chanting or intoning, but the Church of Jesus Christ has made worship almost (but not quite) synonymous with music.

I mentioned that when I write about music I do so with absolutely no qualification whatsoever save that of finding it indispensable, and I do recognise that for whatever reason there are some whom music does not touch or move at all, although this is rare. Some years ago I had a very curious experience that demonstrated – to me at least – the power of music to change us. Yoko and I had booked to see the musical *Les Misérables* in London, but on the day I had one of my very rare migraines. We went to see the show anyway, and I enjoyed it through the fog of pain that anyone who suffers from migraines will know. However, whenever the music became particularly stirring, the pain instantly and completely vanished. As soon as the music subsided to a quieter mode, the pain returned. This happened several times in the course of the evening, and was quite unmistakable – it was the music, and nothing else, that was causing the pain to lift briefly.

This is perhaps an unusual example, but the power of music to move and sway us is undeniable. For this reason, various branches of the church have at many points in history regarded some kinds of music as definitely undesirable, 'pagan'. Many years ago – in much happier times – I visited Zimbabwe, and was surprised and saddened to learn how the first white missionaries had banished drums, essential to most African singing, from the church. It is only in recent years that they have found their way into much African worship. I will never forget the vibrant sound of the cathedral choir in Harare, singing with drums in a church building that looks in many respects very European.

Some years ago I heard a recording of the late Pope John Paul II addressing a youth rally in his wonderful Polish-accented English. 'It is good to pray,' he said, and there was a polite response of applause from the crowd. 'But,' he went on, 'it is better to *sing!*' Cheers and whistles. 'Or rather, to pray singing.' Reflective quiet. The Pope may have been thinking of a famous remark of St. Augustine: 'Those who sing pray twice.' I do not think I am alone in finding it hard to pray at times, especially on my own. I have found that – if I am sure no-one can hear me – singing a hymn, even alone and badly, makes the prayer much easier.

All this leads me to the tentative conclusion that music offered in the praise of God is in fact a gift *from* God – that there is something that God has planted in us that draws us to approach Him with sung hosannas and alleluias and with trumpets and drums and great organs and flutes and choirs and voices sweet or otherwise and cymbals and banjos and you name it. 'Christians have a song in their hearts,' begins the preface to a well-known hymn book (Mission Praise?) which I can't remember or find at the moment. The song is always in the end one of joy, because God is always in the end our fountain of endless life-giving joy, but the song can sustain us also in times of great trial and grief. According to St Mark, after Jesus had celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples, they all sang a hymn before going out to the Mount of Olives and to Jesus's betrayal and death. Our music is not there to put us in a trance – although it may entrance us – or to be an escape from reality, but to draw us deeper into the heart of the living God, who laid the cornerstone of the earth while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy. May we too ever sing for joy – well or badly, it matters not, though we are always grateful when it is done well. I believe God then sings with us.

With love, David

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This month's cover

Since this time last year Godmanchester's War Memorial has been restored, cleaned and, where necessary, the names of the war dead have been re-inscribed. It is now in excellent condition and with its fresh look will create a splendid centrepiece for this year's Remembrance Sunday parade. Many thanks to photographer Terry Turner and page designer Colin Thirlwall for capturing the moment.

Mothers' Union

At our October meeting Daphne Meats came along, armed with an assortment of cakes and lots of other equipment, to show us some methods of icing cakes for Christmas. She started off by showing us how to make sugar bells for the top of cakes and we were fascinated to learn that one uses caster sugar and a small amount of water. This makes a mixture rather like damp sand and one can fill bell moulds and turn them out as one does sand in a bucket on the beach. When they have dried enough, the inside can be scraped out leaving a hollow bell. A small hole in the top allows a piece of thread to go through so they can be used for tree decorations. Next we learned how to use ready-to-roll icing both for covering a cake and for making decorations using various clever cutters. We finished the afternoon by each making a rose out of icing. We all very much enjoyed this activity and were variously pleased with our creations. It was a truly relaxing and fulfilling afternoon and we hope that Daphne will come back next year.

At our next meeting Joan Walton will give a slide show entitled 'Angels from the Realms of Glory'.

Jean Morgan

Wives' Group

There was a good turnout for the Wives' Group October meeting – we were particularly delighted to welcome a few husbands – and it was probably entirely due to the presence of our

speakers and not to the fact that it was the AGM...

Barbara took us swiftly through the AGM; she thanked the committee for their support and was pleased to report that they have all agreed to stay on for another year, although no-one was willing to take on the role of Chairman, so Barbara agreed to carry on – many thanks, Barbara! She looked back briefly on the group's activities over the past twelve months – for some reason, the largest turnout was for the trip in March behind the scenes at Hotel Chocolat! The group's finances are looking healthy and thanks are due to Jean Lenton for her sterling work as Treasurer. We are continuing to raise funds for our Charity of the Year (East Anglian Air Ambulance) and look forward to welcoming Barbara Magee again in December when we will present her with a cheque. Finally we remembered with affection Ann Sodeaux who sadly died earlier in the year.

Then it was on to the real business of the evening: a talk entitled 'Our Time in the Trenches' presented by Bob and Claire Hurd. Claire opened the proceedings by confessing that she has been interested in World War I since studying it at secondary school and Bob caught the bug from his daughter. They showed us a series of pictures taken on their various trips to battle sites and cemeteries – Claire concentrated on the area around Ypres and it was very moving to see how the citizens have rebuilt their town and how they honour their war dead. One of Claire's favourite places is Vimy Ridge, where a huge memorial to the Canadian troops who fought in the area was unveiled in 1936.

Bob's part of the talk centred on the area around the Somme and his pictures included the Newfoundland Memorial Park, the Thiepval Memorial and the Tyne Cot Cemetery, the largest Commonwealth War Grave in terms of the numbers of men buried there. The memorial there commemorates nearly 35,000 British and New Zealand servicemen who died in Ypres and whose graves are unknown. This was a moving and thought-provoking end to a fascinating talk, which, I think, brought back memories for many people there.

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The next meeting is scheduled for 13 November and is called 'Advent Surprises.' All are welcome to join us in the Church Hall at 8.00 pm.

Kate Robinson

Operation Christmas Child

Filled shoe boxes

Please remember to bring your filled shoe-box to the 9.45 am Eucharist on Sunday 15 November when they will be blessed during the service before being taken to our local distribution centre. You will have noted that The Samaritans – the charity which organises the sending of the boxes – asks for a donation of £2.50 towards administration costs if possible. Please speak to me if this causes problems as I can pay for you on line. My phone number is 374590.

Joan Jackson

Men's Social Club

Our next meeting on Tuesday 3 November at 7.30 pm will be a combined one with members of The Friends when we will hear a talk by James Blatch – see details on page 12.

Peter Dawe

Charity of the month

The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help

This Association is the leading national charity committed to helping and supporting those who serve in our Armed Forces, those who used to serve, and the families of both. SSAFA Forces Help provides assistance to anyone who has completed one day's paid service in the Army, Navy or Air Force, including those who completed National Service. SSAFA also helps the dependants and immediate relatives of ex-service men and women, as well as members of the Reserve Forces and Territorial Army.

SSAFA supports the ex-service community through a network of volunteers who visit people in their homes to assess the difficulty they are

facing. These volunteers are known as Case Workers and they assist people with problems that may be practical, financial or emotional.

As well as providing case-workers across the country, SSAFA Forces Help has a Housing Advisory Service that offers free, confidential advice on a range of housing issues. In connection with this the charity runs a care home in the Isle of Wight, bungalows for disabled ex-service men and women and other special accommodation for individuals and families.

To contact the Welfare Team or Housing Advisory Service call 0845 1300 975

To find the contact details of a Branch in your area or to learn more about the support SSAFA provides to the current serving community visit ssafa.org.uk.

In this month of November we especially remember with pride not only the fallen, but all those who have served our country, and continue to do so, in postings throughout the world and especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is very appropriate that our charity of the month is able to contribute to funds that support them. Please give generously.

Who's who in the parish

Bizz and John Thackray



John and I met across a crowded room at a dance on the shores of Lake Garda. Our holiday romance has lasted almost fifty years – it was obviously meant to be! Funnily we both came from the same area, John from Huntingdon and I came from Newmarket. We married in 1962.

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We bought our first home in Hemingford Abbots, a bungalow that now has a garage larger than our entire home! After two years we bought 'Whiteways' and lived there very happily for some thirty four years and our four sons, Nick, Mike, Rudi and Martin were all born there. They went to the school at Hemingford Abbots for the first part of their lives and then went on to St Faith's School in Cambridge.

With us both being really people persons we became totally immersed in village life, made many friends and feel we were fortunate for our family to grow up there. If you cut Bizz open Hemingford Abbots would be there.

John had been a Churchwarden at Great Stukeley at the princely age of 18 and then PCC secretary at HA for seventeen years. He had also been Churchwarden there and later held that position here at St Mary's for six years.

We were both on the first HA flower festival committee, serving lunches as well. John was chair for six festivals.

The Thackrays have been local builders for many years. I see the records show a Matthew Thackray had a builder's yard in West Street Godmanchester in 1791 – a stone's throw from where we now live. John was a JP for a number of years until 1969, which he enjoyed. Bizz was seriously in to flower arranging and had her own business for some time; she still judges at the Great Stukeley and Elsworth shows, something she dearly loves. She was a founder member of the Huntingdon NADFAS and Clerk to Hemingford Parish Council for six years, but mainly a Mum.

John has been on many Church Committees ranging from the PCC, the Bishop's Council, the Deanery, Diocesan and General Synod and Church House: from the Ely Cathedral Restoration Appeal to voting for the ordination of women at General Synod. At Church House he was on the House and Accounts Committee and helped oversee the £4 million restoration of Church House in time for the Queen's visit in 1992.

In 1986 we had our place in Spain built, which, with our family and some of our friends has given us real pleasure and fun.

We are fortunate that two of our four sons live locally so we see our grandchildren a lot and love that. John played cricket and hockey for Huntingdon Seconds: now our grandchildren, five boys and two girls, so far, (another little treasure coming in November) follow their 'sporty' grandfather, note not grandmother! John has always had the countryside at heart and enjoyed shooting with his father and friends for many years but now enjoys bird-watching more.

For us both to come to Godmanchester seems to be our final chapter and somewhere where we feel like coming home, long may it continue!

Bizz and John Thackray

St Anne's celebrations. A last word from Neil Follett.

As I sit at my desk, three and a half thousand miles away, at the start of what promises to be a beautiful Fall, I cannot help thinking about the events which have brought us to this tremendous anniversary.

The ground for St Anne's was laid, quite literally, 25 years ago when the builders of the new development on London Road set aside an area of land for a school. It could be bought for just £1 but there was a proviso. If a school had not been built and opened by the year 2000 the land reverted to the builder for more housing.

Five or so years later, when I was Vicar of Godmanchester and a Governor of what is now known as the Community School, it became clear that the school on Post Street could no longer meet the demand for places as the town continued to grow. The Governors, myself included, argued for a significant enlargement of the existing school. Those wiser than ourselves argued that the town needed a second school. It was a difficult decision but, once the option of a second school had been adopted by the County Education authorities, I began to pray that this would be a Church School.

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In the years to come, we met with significant opposition, initially from the Community School and then from other local churches (surprisingly). Public meetings in the town were organised and we met vociferous hostility. Comments, such as ‘we don’t want religion rammed down our children’s throats’, were shouted by some who possibly regret that now.

The members of the Parish Church were press-ganged into a massive letter writing campaign: first to the county, then to the government. I attended numerous meetings in Cambridge and I remember clearly the morning when approval was given for a church school. I remember it for the principal support came from the Muslim and Sikh communities. The matter passed through government channels until it came to rest on the desk of the Education Secretary, Dame Emily Blatch, by chance a local MP. We met on several occasions and I revisited that correspondence only this morning. Even at this late stage, some individuals in Godmanchester were campaigning hard against a church school. The matter finally came to rest on the desk of the then Prime Minister, Sir John Major, by chance our MP. I was leading a Parish Pilgrimage to the Holy Land when I was called to the phone to be told the news that a Church School had been approved. Jerusalem saw great rejoicing that night. All we had to do now was build the school

Planning meetings were held around the font in church, there was no room in the Vicarage for all the people and their papers. We had to take decisions as to whether we should have a large assembly hall and save by excluding other desirable features. Our view was always that we should allow for growth; for initially only 120 places were allocated as ‘demand was unclear’. On one afternoon I wanted to step outside to see Halley’s Comet pass overhead but my attention was peculiarly drawn to the advantages of pre-stressed concrete!

As I left the builders to ‘get on with it’, my focus turned to staffing. The most important appointment was, and still is, that of the Headteacher. The response to our advertising was overwhelming. Clearly the challenge of establishing a new school from scratch appealed

to many in the profession. I gathered the short list of candidates on the foundations of what is now the school hall to show them what would be the layout. It was cold, made even colder because the one candidate I had particularly wanted to attend, was absent. I should not have worried. She had already done her homework the preceding weekend.

After several days of tough interviewing in Cambridge by a panel of informed and conscientious professionals, it was my privilege that Friday evening to telephone Mrs Kenna at home and offer her the appointment. We were all delighted when she accepted on the spot. She started as Headteacher a term before the school opened, initially based in the Vicarage dining room where she met prospective parents, before moving to a more suitable office in Huntingdon – for the school was far from complete at this stage. All through that summer of 1999 decisions had to be made; were we to have a school uniform, if so what colours? What if the school buildings were not ready? What was the school to be called? Above all, what was to be the ethos?

The last question was possibly the easiest to answer for all through the preceding years, as we laboured to bring St Anne’s to fruition, the ethos had become clear. As I said at the opening ten years ago this week ‘as a Church can only live and thrive when Christ’s teachings of love, care, forgiveness and understanding are given pre-eminence, so only can a Church School succeed when it excites learning and demonstrates these essential tenets of the Christian faith.’ That prayer has been answered in abundance.

I congratulate each and every one of you on your achievement over these last ten years. I am sorry I cannot be with you in person but I send you my best wishes, my warmest congratulations and my assurance that I shall hold you in prayer as I have done every day these past ten years.

May Christ continue to bless you and keep you in all that you do in His Name.

Father Neil

Founding Chair of Governors

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The above letter was sent to parents, staff, governors and pupils of St Anne's and is reproduced with the permission of Fr Neil and Anthea Kenna.

The Pals' Battalions Two Years in the making, ten minutes in the destroying.

In September, on the BBC News website, a short article was published reporting on the re-dedication of the plaque commemorating what King George V called 'the bravest little street in England'. Chapel Street, in Altrincham, Greater Manchester, volunteered 161 men to fight in World War One. Now 161 men from an inner city street may not sound an enormous number but the truth is that all those men – of which 29 never came home – came from just 60 houses. The First World War created what would become a unique and devastating opportunity for those men who wanted to fight with their friends.

Lord Kitchener – now famous for his legendary and much spoofed 'Your Country Needs You!' poster – wanted 100,000 volunteers to join up to swell the numbers of the existing British Army. General Henry Rawlinson, (Commander of IV Corp) suggested that men would be more willing to join up if they could do so with their friends and colleagues, but it was Lord Derby who snatched up this suggestion and managed to raise a Battalion (1914 standard = 1007 men, including 30 officers) of purely local men from the city of Liverpool. In fact, his recruitment drive went so well, Liverpool raised four battalions of volunteers.

Other cities and large towns followed suit soon after, notably Accrington, Derby and Sheffield. All raised what became known in the North of England as 'Pals' Battalions, battalions made up of local men who knew each other through work. There were regional variations to the Pals, Hull raised their own Commercial – men sharing an occupation, Glasgow had its Tramways Battalion and the Tyneside Irish were made up of men from a shared background.

Thousands of men flocked to join up, encouraged by the spurious newspaper tales of

enemy atrocities, and the fever of patriotism that swamped the country. There were other less publicized reasons for 'taking the King's shilling' – grinding poverty, dreadful living conditions, unemployment, boredom, alternatives to a custodial sentence, ill matched and unhappy marriages; all these gave men the push they needed to swap civilian clothes for khaki uniform.

During 1914 and 1915 these 'Pals' Battalions trained in the UK, living in tents or bunkhouses, assembling proper uniforms, learning the basic skills for becoming a soldier: skills such as charging a line of straw filled sacks with a bayonet affixed Lee Enfield rifle, tying your puttees to regulation pattern and removing the stiffening wire from your forage cap to affect an air of greater military experience.

In 1916, it became obvious to the Allied commanders that in order to relieve the pressure of the French Army's defence at Verdun, a major battle would have to be launched further along the line on the Western Front. The offensive was meticulously planned, and success required that every man fit enough be utilized. To meet the enormous and unprecedented demand for troops, this was to become the Volunteers' first battle, and they were brought to the Front Line in accordant numbers.

The Battle of the Somme started at just after 7am on 1 July 1916 when enormous mines were detonated under enemy lines, creating havoc on both sides, with flying debris causing casualties to all nationalities. At 7.30 am, the Officers blew their whistles and the troops went 'Over the Top'.

It was a disaster. On the first day alone, the Allies suffered 60,000 casualties, of which 20,000 were dead. The enthusiastic volunteers suffered losses unimagined: The Accrington Pals lost 584 of their original 720 men, the Leeds Pals 750 out of their 900 men and both the Grimsby and Sheffield Pals are estimated to have lost half of each of their battalions.

The consequences of these enormous losses were not just felt on the Front Line, but by the communities from which these men came.

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Families had patriotically waved off sons, fathers, brothers, uncles, cousins and sweethearts, and found in the aftermath of the Battle of the Somme that there were hardly any families left unvisited by the telegram that started 'Regret to inform...'. Whole communities were left with no men between the ages of 14 and 60 years of age for **years** afterward, and a whole generation of women became known as 'surplus' because there were no men to marry them.

I'm not entirely sure if the Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalion would, strictly speaking, be counted as one of the Pals' Battalions, but, like towns across the country, Godmanchester men volunteered and made the ultimate sacrifice. And just like the men of Accrington, Derby, Sheffield and a thousand other places in Britain and across the Commonwealth, some of them didn't come home. They are commemorated not only on our own War Memorial but on monuments in France, Belgium, Germany, Iraq, India, Greece and Italy.

The Pals' Battalion initiative has never been resurrected.

Claire Hurd

Our earliest magazines

I have been able to solve some of the queries which I mentioned in my article in September's magazine. The marriage recorded in our very first magazine was that of Vera Arnold's parents, Arthur and Charlotte. It is wonderful to think that we still have Vera, and also Sandra Sturgeon (Arthur and Charlotte's granddaughter) very much a part of our church family after all these years.

Molly Jones was able to give me some information about the Constitutional Hall. This was apparently on the site of our present Comrades Club and, in fact, Molly believes that some part of the original building was not demolished and remains part of the existing Club. Molly tells me that her mother was involved in the annual Cricket Club tea, which took place in the Constitutional Hall. Not only did she make sandwiches and help with the teas,

but she entertained by singing to the cricketers. Apparently there was also a gentleman who enjoyed singing for their entertainment, but since he always sang 'On the road to Mandalay' his efforts became a little predictable.

In addition to the Cricketers' Tea Party, there was a group of entertainers who came to the town once each year to amuse and bring pleasure to the people of the town. Their group contained singers, dancers and comedians and, after their performance had ended, they would find lodgings for the night with local people. Molly remembers they were often hard-pressed to buy themselves a meal at the end of the day. Let's hope that Gumcestrians of the time would not allow them to go to bed hungry! On the following morning they would leave to make their way to the next town they planned to visit.

I understand that St John's Church was in Huntingdon, in the little road behind Hodgson's, the fish and chip shop, but all that remains of it now is a small burial ground.

Joan Jackson

Bill Looker – A Short Biography

Bill Looker died on the 2nd September 2009.

What follows is an appreciation of his father By Charles Looker which was delivered at a memorial service in the church on Friday 18th September



Bill Looker was known as a Godmanchester man, but many will be surprised to learn that he was neither born, nor brought up in

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Godmanchester. His grandfather had been born on the family farm in Godmanchester, but chose to go into the milling business and at the time of Bill's birth, he and his sons had a flour mill in Luton. So Bill was born in Luton in 1922.

A sudden failure of the business meant that his father had to seek work in someone else's mill which took them to Glasgow where Bill spent his primary school years.

Another job change for his father took him to Ipswich where he went to Ipswich School. He was good at sport – a 1st XV rugby player and Captain of Athletics, but also good at languages. Throughout his life he was always eager to engage French and German speakers in conversation. In his teens, Bill was very keen on Scouting and he also developed an interest in farming. His mother was a farmer's daughter; he often visited his grandfather's farm in Bedfordshire and also the Looker farm in Godmanchester.

He left school at 16 and became a management trainee at United Dairies, doing various jobs to give him first-hand experience of all aspects of the trade. He enjoyed this; he was given a milk round with horse and float in Maida Vale where he met many people from the world of arts and entertainment, and he was given the job of making the first fruit yoghurt to be sold in Britain.

When war broke out, Bill was too young to join up, but he became a cyclist messenger with the ARP, running messages between air raid wardens. At 19, after training, he joined HMS Paladin, which set off for the Far East escorting troop ships. During his time on Paladin, it took part in the rescue of the crew of HMS Dorsetshire and the invasion of Madagascar. The Paladin continued through Suez to the Med, and its new base in Alexandria. It made a number of abortive attempts to relieve the siege of Malta.

While here he was selected to go to South Africa for officer training where, after passing out as a Sub-Lieutenant Bill's language skills briefly came in useful. French was still the diplomatic language and on two occasions, he was detailed

to communicate the intentions of the Royal Navy face-to-face with senior officers of defeated navies. Back in Alexandria, he took command of one of a flotilla of Z Craft, barge-like landing craft, to be delivered to Sicily.

He finally got back to England after three years away and had nine weeks leave before joining the HMS Denbigh Castle on one of the Arctic Convoys, taking supplies to North Russia. Towards the end of the voyage, the ship was torpedoed, but not immediately sunk. The crew were taken off and the officers remained on board being towed into the Kola Inlet. They finally got into a lifeboat just before the ship capsized. This was in 1945 and by the time Bill got back the war was nearly over, but he continued in the Navy for a further year.

After being demobbed, he went to study Dairying at Seale-Hayne Agricultural College in Devon, but cleverly made the transition from his original career of Dairy Management to Dairy Farming, closer to his real interest.

It was here that he met his wife-to-be, Penny, who was from Cornwall. After leaving college, they were married and Bill had dairy farm management jobs first near Lyme Regis and then at Cullompton near Exeter.

Meanwhile, back in Godmanchester, the family farm was now in the hands of John Looker, a cousin of Bill's father. John was a bachelor and had no one to hand the farm on to, but now there was another farming member of the family, so John invited Bill to join him in 1955. Early years in Godmanchester were hard work for him, and family holidays were virtually non-existent. Nevertheless, Bill's sociable nature meant that he became widely known in the Town. As a result of this, he became Chairman of the Comrades Club and was responsible for the building of the large extension to the club which is now used by them for dancing and entertainment.

Penny was also a very active member of the community. She was Secretary of the Local History Society and Commandant of Huntingdon Red Cross, but her main area of activity became the Church, both in the Parish (Churchwarden),

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the Deanery (Lay Co-Chairman) and the Diocese (Bishop's Council). Bill naturally supported her and was a Sidesman and a founder member of the Men's Group.

In 1972 their daughter, Judith married Tim Ireson, but in 1978, she was found to have breast cancer and died as a result of this in 1983. It was then that her children, Katherine and Jeremy, came to live with Bill and Penny. Penny had been looking after them through some of Judith's illness and Tim's job would have made caring for his children very difficult.

Bill had a piece of land between the bypass and the Town that he decided to make available for recreation by letting it at a peppercorn rent and, encouraged by his success with the Comrades Club extension, he organised the building of a sports pavilion on the site. The field was later named after Judith.

When the post-reorganisation Town Council was formed in Godmanchester, Bill was elected onto the council and became Town Mayor in 1988.

On his retirement from farming in 1987, Bill's interest in the George Cross Island Association took most of his time. He was keen on improving relations between Britain and Malta, which had deteriorated, so he enthusiastically joined in the foundation of the George Cross Island Association, which was for those who had fought in and around Malta, and he became the Association's first Chairman. Then came the idea for a memorial. As Chairman, Bill shouldered much of the administrative burden of realising this idea. The Memorial created was a large bell, which rings at noon each day, hung in a cupola which stands on the side of Valetta harbour.

At the end of 1991, Bill very suddenly found himself alone. Penny, like her daughter Judith, died as a result of breast cancer and Jeremy and Katherine left school and went away to college. Later, he remarried and went to live with his wife, Pat, in Hartford.

After a few years of happy marriage, Pat developed Alzheimer's disease. At first Bill was able to care for Pat himself, but as her condition

worsened and Bill became older, this became impossible and Pat had to go into residential care. Soon after this, Bill bought himself a flat at The Chestnuts. Pat died in 2006.

With increasing help from carers Bill managed to continue living in his own home and it was only twelve days before his death that he finally had to move into residential care. Bill died on 2 September 2009, seventy years and one day after the first shots of World War II, an event that had so much influence on his life.

Greenbelt 2009

The theme for Greenbelt 2009 was 'Standing in the Long Now'. I quote from the Greenbelt website an interesting explanation of what it was all about:

'The Long Now' The phrase was coined by the musician, producer and all-round interesting thinker Brian Eno...In 1996, Eno, Stewart Brand, Danny Hillis and others set up The Long Now Foundation designed to 'foster long-term thinking'. At the Foundation they take a different perspective on time – they want to signal that life is not about speed but about presence, not about 'faster and cheaper' but slower and deeper... In an age of 'do-it-now' and the instant decision, when waiting times are always coming down and the destination always trumps the journey, the idea of 'the long now' is deeply resonant for people of faith. In our traditions we keep alive the stories of iconic figures from past millennia because we know they will inspire us in bringing change to the present one. We mark a season of advent, consciously waiting for hope to be born and some kind of culmination of history. We recite a 4th Century creed which 'looks for the world to come' but subconsciously admit that it's turning out to be a pretty long now when after seventeen centuries it often seems no closer. We're all standing in The Long Now – and at Greenbelt 09, we're going to stop and notice it and wonder what it means. (More at <http://www.greenbelt.org.uk/festival/2009/theme>)

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Here's what this year's festival-goers from St. Marys' got up to...

Wow! Amazing! Went thinking I might be a bit long in the tooth, but came away totally rejuvenated (and to think I left the face cream behind!) by the speakers, especially Bishop Gene Robinson from Boston, and the worship. Thought myself very brave going to a Goth Eucharist at midnight (should have packed my cassock and black boots!)...must have looked as if I had a past life as one of the 'Goths' asked if I used to be a Goth; but also there were the most beautiful sessions of silent meditation. The sound bite I hold from the weekend ...is when Moses crossed the Red Sea the sea didn't separate with a great whoosh, like in the movies, but only enough for Moses and the Israelites to take one step at a time. Now the big question for me is 'can I come next year?'

Mary

Simon and I were a bit nervous about taking Alexandra (aged 2 1/2 months) to Greenbelt so we hedged our bets and Alexandra and I just stayed on site during the day and then went off to sleep at the Travelodge at night. This worked very well and we really enjoyed ourselves. It was lovely to spend time with our friends cooking at the tents and chatting, as well as the more dynamic activities on offer. Simon enjoyed going to the late night bands and the comedy club and I had a good night's sleep in order to enjoy myself during the day. A highlight for me was going as a family to a play about Ruth, which was done with mime and puppets and using masks. I also enjoyed listening to Bishop Gene Robinson whilst sitting on the grass beside the grandstand, feeding Alexandra. 'The long now' for me highlighted the importance of living life at a slow pace so that it can be appreciated. One of the authors at Greenbelt, Sue Palmer, has written a book '*Detoxing Childhood: What Parents Need to Know to Raise Happy, Successful Children*' about the importance of bringing up children in an environment where they are not rushed and have plenty of time to grow. The children's T-shirt has a picture of a tortoise on it with the slogan 'slow is good'.

Janie, Simon and Alexandra

This was my third year at Greenbelt. The highlight of my weekend has to be the headline band *Athlete*, they were absolutely brilliant. I'd vaguely heard of them and knew a couple of their songs, but I didn't think they were anything special before. And I have to mention the food at Greenbelt; it really isn't like any other festival food, which is pretty much all burger vans. You can get ANYTHING you want at Greenbelt. So yeah, if you get the chance to go to Greenbelt, go for it.

Jennie

It was very windy at the racecourse and Jon's one-man tent blew away, but we got it back. We found our usual hangout under the stairs and ate doughnuts and crepes and drank coffee and coke. We watched *Sway*, and the band *Athlete* was amazing!

Judith

I was pretty tired and moody most of the weekend ('That's true', say Jennie and Judith) and ended up falling asleep on the racetrack – there's a photo of that on the youth group notice board! I had a good time though.

Jon

The whole five days involved a lot of eating, meeting up with friends, and watching bands. I also made a silver ring and did silk printing with Mary and Jen.

Anissia

This year was a chilled-out and creative festival. There were so many really good live acts, like Indie-rock band *Athlete*, electronica duo *Royksopp*, beatboxer *Shlomo*, Hip-hop artist *Sway* and the *Hypnotic Brass Ensemble* – a group of 8 brothers from Chicago who played some really funky jazz. Mike whiled away the hours in the performance cafe with coffee while Jen went to a silver-smithing class and made her own ring (though she did get a bit enthusiastic with the blowtorch) and went to a silk printing workshop (actually printing on polyester, but you'd never know!). We went together to a workshop led by jazz band *The Apples* entitled

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‘The history of funk’, which was pretty, err...funky! We went over to see Jen’s auntie in Oxford on the Sunday while the rest of the group went to the whole-festival service and shared the ‘elbow bump of peace’, introduced to reduce the risk of passing on swine ‘flu! Already looking forward to next year.

Jen and Mike

September PCC Meeting

Minutes in full of PCC meetings are displayed on the south door notice-board. Here are some of the key points from the June meeting.

Salvation Army Hall

The Salvation Army Hall has now closed. The weekly Lunch Club is moving to the Baptist Church on Tuesday 22 September 2009. Jumping Beans has moved to St Mary’s Church Hall in Huntingdon.

Ashes Plot

It was felt that this issue will need to be investigated further and that a resolution in the near future was desirable. An article will be placed in the Parish Magazine as an initial step and there will be further discussions with the Fabric Committee.

Swine Flu Policy

David Busk reported that, following discussion with other parishes, the use of the chalice had been restored, as had shaking hands during the Peace and at the end of the service. This course of action met with the approval of the PCC.

Fund Raising Committee for the Church Roof

David Busk suggested that the Mission Action Plan Committee may become a fund raising committee in the future and that this may be the appropriate conduit for raising funds for the church roof. It was felt that strong leadership was required and that there should be a note in the newsletter asking for volunteers.

St Anne’s School

The 10th Anniversary Celebration service was felt to be a success.

Church Keys

Jean Morgan is compiling a list of holders of church keys. Keys will be tagged with a number.

Digital Piano

The PCC considered a report from Ken Diffey regarding the digital piano and agreed to purchase a digital keyboard as soon as possible. The acoustic piano will be located in the Church and the keyboard in the choir cupboard in the Church Hall. The Choir have agreed to contribute £400 towards the purchase of the keyboard. Fund raising will occur for the balance of the cost.

Maintenance of approach to the Parish Office

The approach to the Parish Office has been overgrown recently. A working party was arranged.

Application for Fairtrade Church Status

The Diocese is keen to attain Fairtrade status. In order to achieve this fifty percent of Parishes need to achieve Fairtrade Church status. Parishes need to use Fairtrade tea and coffee after services and at Church meetings, move forwards in the use of other Fairtrade products e.g. sugar, biscuits and fruit and be involved in the annual Fairtrade Fortnight.

The Youth Group have offered to provide Fairtrade goods, from their funds, as a one off starter for all the different church groups.

There was a discussion and a variety of opinions about the merits of supporting Fairtrade goods, following which the PCC agreed to the aim of becoming a Fair Trade Church and Parish.

Photo Board in Church

This is out of date. It was agreed that the Communications Committee would take on the task of updating the Photo Board.

Mission Action Plan

The Mission Action Plan is to be presented to the Archbishop of York, at Ely Cathedral on Saturday 22 November. The brochure is now ready for printing. A social event, a curry night, will now take place on the evening of Saturday

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14 November at the Vicarage to raise the money required for printing the brochure.

Finance Committee

The replacement photocopier is proving cost effective. The current situation with the Parish Office telephone was discussed and the PCC thanked Colin Thirlwall for his efforts in liaising with BT. It was agreed that all fees, including those for weddings, would be reviewed at the next PCC meeting. The application to Heritage Lottery for funding for work to the roof had been unsuccessful..

Trafford James had expressed his thanks to the PCC for the card and gift that he received.

Communications Committee

The recent Sponsored Ride and Stride for the Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust was successful and enjoyed by many from the Parish. Nicholas Leigh Smith made an appeal for prompt payment as there is the possibility that Barclays Bank will match any money raised.

Church Hall Committee

The PCC thanked all those involved in paving the area outside the Church Hall to alleviate problems with water. Plans are in place to relocate the boiler in the Church Hall.

Churches Together

The Churches of Godmanchester are hosting the Christmas Lunch in 2009. Volunteers will be needed to help in the Hall and also as drivers. It is hoped that children will also be involved. The PCC are committed to encouraging involvement from the Parish in this event.

Any other business

The Friends of St Mary's are investigating the possibility of concerts for 2010 to raise money for charities. They are hoping to invite one of the Forces' Bands.

The new vetting legislation was discussed. There is little clarity on this at present and further guidance will be awaited.

Andrew McKie is to update the details in the Parish Directory. Notices are to be placed in the

magazine and newsletter. Members of the PCC felt that it was necessary to ensure that all are happy for their details to be included in the Parish Directory.

Andrew Wright
PCC Secretary

The Friends of St Mary's Godmanchester in association with Men's Social Group 'Censored'

Former BBC Look East presenter James Blatch speaks about his life as an examiner with the British Board of Film Classifications. What do they leave in? What do they take out? And why?

**Church Hall Tuesday 3 November at 7.30 pm
– Tickets £3**

Please come to a Curry Night On Saturday November 14 st 7.30 pm in the Vicarage

Proceeds to finance a MAP Outreach leaflet
(already printed)

Tickets £5, or £2.50 for under-12s (bring your
own drinks) available after 9.45 Eucharist or call
436400.

Advent Carol Service 29 November

At 6.30 pm on Advent Sunday (29 November) we shall be holding our annual Advent Carol Service, at which we can once again commemorate the start of the Christian year, with familiar Advent hymns, readings from the scriptures and items from the choir.

The service will be followed by mince pies and mulled wine in the hall, provided by the choir. As usual, we shall be asking for contributions on the night (suggested minimum £1) to cover the cost of these refreshments. We hope that members of the congregation will give their support to this special service.

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**Our Annual Christmas Bazaar
will be held at St Anne's School
on Saturday 28 November from 2.00 – 4.00 pm**

Please come along and support us as this is one of our two major fund-raising events in the year,

We will be contacting previous bazaar stall-holders in the hope that they will be willing to run their stalls again this year,

If anyone else would like to have a stall or has an idea that would make our bazaar even more exciting for children, or for adults, please speak to us as soon as possible.

Linda and Trevor Weedon (Tel.413264)

And finally Whatever happened tothe three Follett boys? Recent correspondence with Neil informs us that Rupert has recently returned from a tour of duty in Afghanistan where his regiment suffered casualties, and is stationed in Antrim with his wife (a school teacher) and their three children; Jeremy is 'doing something lucrative' in the City of London and is married to his childhood sweetheart, Natalie, from Kimbolton. They have a two year old son and another due in March. And William, having seen action in Iraq, has left the Army and is now working in Dubai; he has just hit 30 and is depressed because he can't find a wife

Registers

Baptisms

4 October	Olivia Kirsten Varey
11 October	Henry Lill
25 October	Alexandra Isobel Prince

Funerals

19 October	Sylvia Dixon
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The Lectionary

1 November	All Saints' Day / All Souls' Day Isaiah 25:6-9; Revelation 21:1-6a; John 11: 32-44
8 November	3rd Sunday before Advent Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Mark 1:14-20
15 November	2nd Sunday before Advent Daniel 12:1-3; Hebrews 10: 11-25; Mark 13:1-8

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22 November	Christ the King Daniel 7:9-10; 13-14; Hebrews 10:11-25; Mark 13:1-8
29 November	Advent Sunday Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-end; Luke 21:25-36

Dates for your diary**November 2009**

Sun	1	All Saints	
		8.00 am	Holy Communion
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist
		6.30 pm	All Souls' Service
Mon	2	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones
		10.45 am	Churches Together Clergy Meeting
Tue	3	7.30 am	Morning Prayer
		12.00 noon	Churches Together lunch
		2.00 pm	Mothers' Union Meeting
		7.30 pm	Men's Group/Friends meeting – Film Censorship (see page 12)
Wed	4	11.00 am	Holy Communion
		2.00 pm	Signing Group
		7.30 pm	Home Group
		8.00 pm	Bible Study Group
Thu	5	7.30 am	Morning Prayer
		9.45 am	Holy Communion
		10.00 am	St Mary's Os – 5s
Fri	6	7.30 pm	Choir Practice
Sat	7		Healing Day
Sun	8	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist
		10.50 am	Act of Remembrance
		6.30 pm	Remembrance Day Service
		6.45 pm	Youth Group – Self-defence awareness Pt 1
Mon	9	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones
Tue	10	7.30 am	Morning Prayer
		12.00 noon	Churches Together lunch
		2.00 pm	Signing Group
		8.00 pm	Wives' Group:
Wed	11	10.30 am	Holy Communion
		7.30 pm	Home Group
		7.30 pm	Deanery Synod

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Thu	12	7.30 am	Morning Prayer	
		9.45 am	Holy Communion	
		10.00 am	St Mary's 0s – 5s	Comrades' Club
		7.45 pm	MAP Committee meeting	Vicarage
Fri	13	7.30 pm	Choir Practice	Church Hall
		8.00 pm	Crossroads Rehearsal	Church Hall
Sat	14	8.00 am	Churches Together Men's Breakfast	The Barley Mow
		9.00 am – noon	Churchyard clear-up	
		7.30 pm	Curry Night	Vicarage
Sun	15	8.00 am	Holy Communion	
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist	
		6.30 pm	Sung Evensong	
		6.45 pm	Youth Group – Self-defence Pt 2	Church Hall
Mon	16	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones	22 Porch Close (Tel: 436737)
Tue	17	7.30 am	Morning Prayer	
		12.00 noon	Churches Together lunch	Baptist Church Centre
		7.30 pm	PCC Meeting	Church Hall
		2.00 pm	Signing Group	18 Windsor Rd
Wed	18	11.00 am	Holy Communion	Woodley Court
		2.00 pm	Time to Talk	QE School
		7.30 pm	Home Group	37 Post St
Thu	19	7.30 am	Morning Prayer	
		9.45 am	Holy Communion	
		10.00 am	St Mary's 0s – 5s	Comrades' Club
		8.00 pm	Planning Meeting for Shalom	Vicarage
Fri	20	7.30 pm	Choir Practice	Church Hall
		8.00 pm	Crossroads Rehearsal	Church Hall
Sat	21	9.00am - noon	Churchyard clear-up	
		2.00 pm	Archbishop of York receives MAPs	Ely Cathedral
Sun	22	8.00 am	Holy Communion	
		10.30 am	Parish Praise	St Anne's School
		4.30 pm	Switch-on Huntingdon Lights	Town Hall
		6.30 pm	Sung Evensong	
		6.45 pm	Youth Group – Youth Alpha Course	Church Hall
Mon	23	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones	22 Porch Close (Tel: 436737)
		7.30 pm	Worship Group Planning Meeting	10 East Chadley Lane
Tue	24	7.30 am	Morning Prayer	
		12.00 noon	Churches Together lunch	Baptist Church Centre
		2.00 pm	Signing Group	18 Windsor Rd
Wed	25	9.45 am	Holy Communion	McCartney House
		7.30 pm	Home Group	37 Post St

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Thu	26	7.30 am	Morning Prayer	
		9.45 am	Holy Communion	
		7.30 pm	Churches Together AGM	Huntingdon Community Church
Fri	27	7.30 pm	Choir Practice	
		8.00 pm	Crossroads Rehearsal	Church Hall
Sat	28	2.00 pm	Church Christmas Bazaar	St Anne's School
Sun	29	Advent Sunday		
		8.00 am	Holy Communion	
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist	
		11.30 am	Holy Baptism – Reuben Downer	
		6.30 pm	Advent Carol Service	
		6.45 pm	Youth Group – Film Night	t.b.c.
Mon	30	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones	22 Porch Close (Tel: 436737)
		8.00 pm	Worship Group Christmas Planning	10 East Chadley Lane

The Editorial Committee Meeting for the December Magazine will be held on **Sunday, 15 November 2009**. Would you please ensure that material is with one of the following by that date and if possible not **later than Friday 13 November**

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