



Parish News

St Michael, St Albans with St Mary, Childwick Green

December 2017

1867 – 2017: celebrating 150 years of St Mary's Childwick

LETTER FROM THE VICARAGE

As the sesquicentenary (150th anniversary) of St Mary's, Childwick draws to a close, it seems only appropriate to include one last Childwick figure among the local notables explored by my *Parish News* letters in 2017. We have already seen how the Toulmins bought the estate from the Lomax family and, in turn, were bought out by the Maples. In 1906 Lady Maple sold the estate to Jack Barnato Joel as a base for furthering his passion for horseracing. Joel was from an East-End Jewish family and had flourished through South African diamonds and gold in the 1870s and 80s. When Jack died in 1940, the estate passed to his son, Harry 'Jim' Joel. Between them, Jack and Jim were among the most successful British horse-owners and breeders of the twentieth century. Jim was largely responsible for the current shape of the estate, selling off large parts by auction in 1978 and again after his death in 1992 at the ripe old age of 97.

Jim Joel is worthy of note in a church magazine not so much for his equine pursuits as his philanthropy. He established the Childwick Trust

in 1985 (registered charity no. 1150413), in order to 'provide funding to registered charities to assist people with disabilities, the elderly in need plus adults and children who are seriously ill. The Trust also helps towards the welfare of people involved in the horse racing industry. The Trust supports a number of Jewish charities within the UK and funds preschool education projects in South Africa.'¹ Mr Joel was also aware of the benefit brought by St Mary's to his estate workers and wider community, and – in an act of considerable inter-faith generosity – donated a quarter of an acre of land to the church and endowed a fund for the benefit of the fabric of St Mary's. The Joel Fund is a very useful support for St Mary's; without it, I am uncertain the church would have survived during the quarter of a century since Mr Joel's death.



Thus:

- firstly, an invitation to the last event of St Mary's 150th celebration: Alison Comely will be leading 'A Christmas Carol', a seasonal tour of St Mary's, exploring Christmas customs past and present, from 8.00–9.00 p.m. on Wednesday 6 December. This is a reprise of the brilliant talk that Alison gave in St Michael's two years ago. I can vouch for it being an excellent evening. Refreshments will be available afterwards.
- Secondly, an update: the November PCC approved in principle an application for a faculty (Church permission) for an internal toilet at St Mary's. Regular readers will know that this project has been in discussion for some months. We are also at a point where we need to drill down on the costs and benefits of this proposal. To this end, the PCC has established a small working party, in particular to consider the commercial and missional potential of St Mary's Schoolroom. In the spirit of Mr Joel's backing for St Mary's, this extension could be crucial to the flourishing of this little church as a community resource in the twenty-first century.
- Thirdly, encouragement to emulate Mr Joel's generosity: St Michael's worshippers will have recently received a copy of our 2017 stewardship campaign – do please review and respond to these documents if you have yet to do so.
- Finally, seasonal greetings. As we approach the time when we celebrate Jesus' birth into a Jewish family, a child for all nations and every age, I wish you all a very happy Christmas and jolly New Year, and look forward to seeing you at some of our wonderful festival services at both churches.

¹ www.childwicktrust.org

Kenneth



Wendy May
Florist

Bridal and Wedding Flowers
Funeral Tributes
Flowers and Presentation Arrangements
Local Delivery

Call (01727) 853695 to discuss your requirements

The advertisement is enclosed in a rectangular border. It features two identical illustrations of a bouquet of flowers in a vase, one on the left and one on the right. The text is centered between these two illustrations.

REFLECTIVE DAY AT ST MARY'S

On Saturday 21 October, despite warnings that the weather might be somewhat lively due to the tail-end of Hurricane Brian passing through, Guido and I joined a small but intrepid band that set off from St Michael's to walk to St Mary's. Fortunately Brian wasn't much in evidence, so we were able to enjoy the autumn colours and some cheerful conversation as we walked, meeting up with others on the road and then again at St Mary's in Childwick. After coffee and some treats in the Schoolroom (Bronwen Parr's flapjacks went down well), we went into the church for the quiet hour.

Kenneth introduced the quiet hour using three windows near the altar in St Mary's. They are long and narrow and not really visible during services, so we gathered round to look more closely. Like St Mary's itself, they are splendid examples of High Victorian art, gifted by the then estate-owner, Henry Toulmin, who built the church and Schoolroom. The three Pre-Raphaelite figures in the windows represent faith, hope and charity, at first glance apparently female but, on closer inspection, more androgynous in both feature and expression.

After studying the windows and reciting an initial prayer, Kenneth gave each person a photocopy of the windows, and invited us to sit in the body of the church for a guided meditation on each of the three themes and the relationship between them. We talked about love, rather than charity, as the third of these. He introduced each theme with a series of short readings, poems and prayers, before giving time for silent reflection between each one. The starting point was faith – a consideration of what it is and how the believer responds to it. The 'what' includes the content of the gospel and what God promises, and our conscious acceptance of that; however, faith resides in the heart as well as in the head so is not purely intellectual. The wooden cross – which the symbolic figure is clasping in the window – is the symbol of that faith in Christ: a reminder of the justification by faith alone that Martin Luther advocated 500 years ago.

After the first period of silent reflection, Kenneth read a number of short passages from St Paul's letters, in which St Paul links faith, hope and love together. In the second window, the figure of hope rests her left hand on an anchor and holds a resurrection lily in her right hand, showing how hope is attached to a bedrock of faith. Hope is forward-looking, so should encourage us to take action for future improvement and transformation, but this can be balanced by spending time in contemplation and silence.

In the third window, which depicts charity, there are two figures: an adult and a child embracing each other, showing how faith is made effective through love. Faith, hope and love are seen as the three principal virtues, supported by prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude to counteract the seven deadly sins. Love itself takes different forms in different relationships (expressed by four different words in Greek), but this is *agape* – the love God has for us and we for him and others, as opposed to sexual, brotherly or familial love, and it was *agape* that St Paul refers to in the short passages Kenneth read. This love is at the heart of Jesus' teaching.

Although we were in church, and the introduction to each meditation came largely from a Christian perspective, we had the chance to meditate on the three themes from any standpoint, starting with the study of the three windows and their context. Guido would describe himself as agnostic, but he found the guidance and time to meditate beneficial, so would encourage anyone of any faith (or none) to participate in future reflective days, for both spiritual and social refreshment.

Having fed the mind, we then fed the body with fish and chips back in the Schoolroom before walking back to St Michael's, this time slightly more wind-assisted. We hope that in the future there will be more opportunities like this to take time out of the usual busy Saturday routine.

Val Chiesa



RUMBALL
sedgwick
Chartered Surveyors

58 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts AL1 3HG
Tel 01727 854516
www.rumballsedgwick.co.uk

Your partnership in property
for valuations, sales, lettings, energy performance certificates,
surveys, building design and party wall advice
Contact Alastair Woodgate on **01727 854516**

NEWS FROM ST MICHAEL'S SCHOOL

The extension at St Michael's Primary School lower-school site on St Michael's Street was officially opened by the Bishop of St Albans on Wednesday 1 November. The addition of new dining facilities gives the youngest children in the school their own dedicated place to eat and play at lunchtime.

Mrs Alison Rafferty, headteacher, said: 'We are delighted to open the lower-school extension at St Michael's. The new building is entirely in keeping with the old Victorian school, while providing modern internal facilities.'

The whole school gathered on the playground for the ceremony, which included the singing of 'The Wise Man Built his House upon the Rock'. The oldest and youngest children of the school officially marked the opening of the new building by cutting a ribbon and then ringing the old school bell, which hasn't chimed in over 10 years!

Planning permission has recently been received to build two new classrooms at the top-school site next to St Michael's Church. This is an important milestone in the school's history, as it will enable us to take 30 children into the Reception class in September 2018 for the very first time, and will benefit the community as there is currently an increasing demand for school places in the centre of St Albans.



Images: Stephanie Trowell



Images: Stephanie Trowell



Images: Stephanie Trowell

LOWER-SCHOOL OPENING

A stir of excitement rippled through the crowd at the arrival of the Bishop of St Albans – who was wearing his purple gown – in St Michael’s lower-school playground, The brass band, which included Mrs Rafferty’s son, Mr Emeny as well as two other talented musicians, started playing. The school children waited patiently and quietly in the playground in their class groups. Reverend Padley, the architect, teachers, school staff, governors and parents were also present and the gathering overflowed onto the pavement.

Mrs Rafferty commenced the ceremony, followed by a sermon from the bishop that involved several pupils reading out parts of the story, and this was concluded with a prayer. The whole school sang ‘The Wise Man Built his House’ with actions and enthusiasm, which was lovely.

The eldest and youngest pupils in the school, Marcos Santos and Summer Hardy, were invited to officially open the building by jointly cutting the ribbon. We all waited with bated breath as Marcos and Summer then entered the building and pulled on the rope to ring out the school bell (which had been fixed by the builders during the work) for the first time in almost a decade! It was such a pretty sound for us all to hear. Everyone applauded. The children at top school then sang another super song as we left the playground.

This extension to the lower-school building will be such a vital space for learning and lunches alike. I am very much looking forward to having a tour of it with Mrs Rafferty tomorrow.

Suzy Jones Biggar



During



Before



After

Phillips - for more than just the funeral.

Head Office: Dartmouth House 68 Alma Road St Albans AL1 3BL 01727 851006	Parchment House 9 Victoria Road Harpenden AL5 4EB 01582 461100	Marshal House 67 The Quadrant Marshalswick AL4 9RD 01727 812244	Treeves House 52 Shenley Road Borehamwood WD6 1DS 020 8953 1444
---	--	---	---

  

Part of Dignity plc

DIARY FOR NOVEMBER 2017

- 26 CHRIST THE KING
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)
NB no fourth Sunday evensong at St Michael's – there are lots of choral services coming up in the following weeks!
- 28 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
- 29 8.00 p.m. Bellringers' AGM (Parish Centre)

DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2017

- 2 9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.
Churchyard Working Party (St Michael's)
- 3 ADVENT SUNDAY
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
6.00 p.m. Holy Communion (St Mary's)
6.30 p.m. Advent Carols (St Michael's)
- 5 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
- 6 8.00–9.00 p.m.
'A Christmas Carol' – a seasonal tour of the church and exploration of Christmas customs past and present, led by Alison Hook. Refreshments afterwards (St Mary's – last event in the Childwick 150th celebrations).
- 10 SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
6.00 p.m. Community Carols (St Mary's)
The traditional Christmas service of nine lessons and carols; the readings will be led by the groups that meet in St Mary's Schoolroom.
- 12 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
11.30 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
12.15 p.m. Lunch Club Christmas meal (Parish Centre)

17 THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
- 6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)
- 6.30 p.m. Community Carols (St Michael's)

The traditional Christmas service of nine lessons and carols; the readings will be led by groups that meet in the Parish Centre and Memorial Hall. There will be a retiring collection for Children of Peace, who run conflict-resolution programmes in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

- 18 9.30 a.m. Prae Wood School Christmas Service – infants (St Michael's)
- 10.30 a.m. Prae Wood School Christmas Service – juniors (St Michael's)
- 19 9.00 a.m. St Michael's School Christmas Service (St Michael's)
- 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

24 CHRISTMAS EVE

NB due to Christmas Day falling on a Monday this year, there will be changes to the usual Sunday pattern on Christmas Eve, when there will be no 8.00 a.m. service at St Michael's or 6.00 p.m. service at St Mary's. Instead there will be:

- 9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
- 4.00 p.m. Crib Service (St Michael's)

Ideal for children – please come as a character from the story: shepherd, angel, donkey, star. There will be a retiring collection for Keech Cottage, the local children's hospice.

- 11.30 p.m. Midnight Mass (St Michael's)
- Seasonal wonder and hearty singing with well-known congregational carols.

25 CHRISTMAS DAY

- 9.30 a.m. Communion and Carols (St Michael's)
- Festive celebration for all ages
- 11.15 a.m. Communion and Carols (St Mary's)

There will be retiring collections at the Midnight and Christmas Day services for Open Door and Centre 33, who support the homeless in St Albans.

31 SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR'S DAY

- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
- 6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)

DIARY FOR JANUARY 2018

- 7 EPIPHANY Recalling the star of Bethlehem and the arrival of the wise men
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
6.00 p.m. Holy Communion (St Mary's)
- 9 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
11.30 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
12.15 p.m. Lunch Club (Parish Centre)
- 10 8.00 p.m. Parochial Church Council (Parish Centre)
- 11 8.30 p.m. onwards
Men's Night (Lower Red Lion)
- 14 BAPTISM OF CHRIST
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
9.30 a.m. All Age Communion (St Michael's)
6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)
- 16 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
- 18 8.00 p.m. St Mary's Committee (Vicarage)
8.00 p.m. onwards
Ladies' Night (Portland Arms)
- 21 THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)
- 23 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
- 28 FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)
- 30 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

DIARY FOR FEBRUARY 2017

- 4 CANDLEMAS
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
9.30 a.m. All Age Communion with Christingles (St Michael's)
There will be a retiring collection for the Children's Society, which works to combat child poverty in England.
6.00 p.m. Holy Communion (St Mary's)

COURSE ON THE REFORMATION

St Albans Cathedral Study Centre organises a range of short courses, day courses, evening meetings and study groups. A number of us attended a short course (five evening sessions) on the Reformation, which was led by Kenneth in St Michael's Parish Centre. I hope this brief review will encourage you to consider attending some of what is on offer.

The Reformation is widely regarded to have begun in 1517, when Martin Luther is believed to have tacked 95 statements to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. Whilst these themselves are hardly considered to be revolutionary, they started a sequence of events, leading to the split in the Church that is still evident today. The Reformation ended in approximately 1700; Protestants controlled roughly half of the landmass of Europe at the peak of its success, but by 1700 this figure had declined to just one fifth. This is largely due to military power, particularly that of the Holy Roman Emperor. School children have often been taught that the cause of the Reformation was the wickedness of the Church, but the reality is far more complex. Ideas are especially important: for Luther, St Paul and St Augustine were central. Salvation comes by faith, from the grace of God and not from our own efforts. Man is predestined to gain salvation or to go to hell. The ultimate source of authority in the Church was scripture, not the Pope. There are also issues concerning the number of sacraments and the nature of the Eucharist. We were very fortunate in having Kenneth as our guide to lead us through these complexities, and to show the development of these ideas and how they interacted with historical circumstances.

Kenneth's presentation began with a survey of Europe in 1500, the state of the Church and the range of ideas. The invention of the printing press was particularly significant in the spread of new thinking. This was followed by sessions on Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, and how the divisions became entrenched. A session on the Church in England followed, and finally a survey of the part played by the Reformation in creating the modern world and the ideas we hold.

The lectures Kenneth gave were accessible to the large group, who attended from across the diocese. The notes he provided and used for his presentations ensured everybody could follow without background reading. For those using the course as part of the St Albans Certificate, there was a full reading-list and essay questions. Copies of a number of academic papers were available so that students could follow up on some of the issues raised.

I particularly liked the way Kenneth introduced us to the concept of history as a critical discipline. Whilst historians may try to be neutral, they are inevitably affected by their own frames of reference. This was beautifully demonstrated by comparing the history presented by a Roman Catholic and by a Protestant historian. If we read the works of some nineteenth-century Anglo Catholics (members of the Oxford Movement), we might see the Church of England as offering a middle way between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. This is doubtless what they wanted to see. Reality is rather different, in that the Church of England was closer to the reformed position of Calvin.

Finally, I would like to thank Kenneth for his hard work and for providing such a stimulating and interesting course. I liked the way he set himself aims at the start (good teachers should do this, in my opinion). Analysis of the course shows just how successful he has been! I suggest that church members look at the programme presented by St Albans Cathedral Study Centre. This is the fourth event I have attended and I can vouch for its high quality. The website is <https://www.stalbanscathedral.org/learning/study-centre>

Godfrey S. Davey

ST MICHAELS MANOR HOTEL



BEAUTIFULLY REFURBISHED THROUGHOUT

**Stunning new Orangery restaurant
with impressive lake & garden views**

Modern British dining at its best:

- full A La Carte menu
- weekly menu £21 for 3 courses
- afternoon teas throughout
- snacks in the garden or by the lake
- ideal for private parties
- perfect wedding venue.



Fishpool Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 4RY

01727 864 444 • www.stmichaelsmanor.com

MY TIME AS ST MICHAEL'S ORGAN SCHOLAR

I can say without hesitation that embarking on the St Michael's organ scholarship began one of the steepest and most rewarding learning curves I've ever experienced. For someone who had only just started to learn the organ, playing for whole services seemed like something far away from simply playing pieces or learning scales. Initially, I had very little knowledge of music in worship, as I was met with daunting new things to play, such as hymns and psalms. However, I was supported and guided by Richard Bond, whose knowledge, vast experience and good humour made sure I always felt at ease, even in my very first service when I managed to completely confuse the congregation, resulting in people singing different verses of a hymn at the same time. After the first few weeks, I gained in confidence, taking up larger portions of the service and playing for accompaniments at evensong. I even managed to get a round of applause after my voluntary – a rare moment for an organist.

Conducting the choir was another opportunity I had never experienced before, and something I found hugely satisfying, especially when I was able to take rehearsals and hear noticeable improvements in the way a piece was sung. As the year progressed, I was able to cover whole services, playing the organ as well as conducting the choir – something that had seemed out of reach when I first began. St Michael's also opened up a number of opportunities, such as playing for baptisms. I received much support and learned a lot from Colin Hamling during my preparation for various organ auditions, and he gave me the chance to be a registrant during the St Albans International Organ Festival. I'd also like to thank Kenneth for his constant help and encouragement, as well as the rest of the choir and entire congregation, for giving me an experience I will always look back on with fond memories, as I continue with my post at Hampton Court, the Queen's College, Oxford and beyond. I am honoured to have been the first in what will hopefully become a foundation for young organists.

Thomas Dilley



J & B NASH
Exterior & Interior Painting
And Tiling
Local Family firm
Reliable and Professional
Free Estimates No Obligation
Telephone: 01727-857090

DR BRETT GRAY

Congratulations to our very own Brett Gray, whose doctoral thesis was published earlier in the autumn. Its title, 'Jesus in the Theology of Rowan Williams', sounds deceptively accessible, but I can confirm that it's no light poolside reading. Brett brings all of Williams' writings on Christology together in one place and highlights common themes and areas of interest. In particular, he identifies Williams' investigations into the difficulty there is for us in properly knowing God, as well as his contemplations on what it means for Jesus to be both human and divine, amongst many other topics. If you'd like more details, a fuller review of Brett's work can be found in September's *Church Times*.

I wouldn't be surprised if this wasn't the last we hear from our erudite ex-vicar. I understand that, amongst his current theological interests, Brett is writing about the theology of marriage and procreation, whilst working as Chaplain and Director of Studies at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. We're very lucky at St Michael's and St Mary's to have been blessed with a series of gifted and outstanding clergy, and Brett was no exception to that rule, as this thesis shows. He is fondly remembered here and we wish him all the greatest success.

Kerry Wells



Geoffrey A Warwick Antique Restoration & French Polishing

Telephone - 01727 799747 / 07740 509226

- ☞ Over 20 years experience.
- ☞ All restoration undertaken using traditional techniques.
- ☞ Collection and Delivery Service.

www.geoffrey-warwick.co.uk

Geoffrey A Warwick, 139 Batchwood Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL3 5UE.

MY CAMINO EXPERIENCE

In last month's *Parish News* I wrote about the history of the Camino de Santiago. This month I'll try to describe my experiences. Although the principal entry point into Spain from France on what is known as the Camino Frances is the Pass of Roncesvalles in the north of the Pyrenees, pilgrims are permitted to start wherever they wish along that route. The only proviso is that, in order to receive one's Compostela (certificate to show that one has undertaken the pilgrimage for religious or spiritual reasons), it is necessary to have walked at least the final 100 km (62 miles) or ridden the final 200 km by bicycle or horse. Thus, most commonly for reasons of time-availability, over 60% of all pilgrims arriving in Santiago de Compostela start in Sarria, just inside the border of Galicia and 100 km or so from the end.

I decided to start from Pamplona, a cathedral city famous for its annual bull runs, which is over 700 km from Santiago. Pamplona is about 70 km into Spain from the start point I mention above. It is a very 'physical' 70 km, however. I wouldn't characterise any part of the Camino as being particularly easy, but the Pyrenean first section is a real baptism of fire. Lots of people drop out through injury, often caused by over-stretching their physical resources before they have 'walked themselves in'. It is also where many pilgrims discover the inadequacy of their footwear. 'I spent the final few days of my journey with a 'Camino buddy' from Broken Hill, Australia. He discovered his shoe problem the hard way. Because Australia is a long way from Spain, he stuck it out and walked 800 km in the wrong footwear. His feet were a battleground and VERY painful a lot of the time.

One quickly develops a daily rhythm and a momentum that works. It will be different for every person, which is why I preferred to walk alone. There are lots of opportunities to meet people at stops along the way and in the *refugios* – more of which later. It is said that the Camino teaches you what you need to learn – and that it may be different in every case. What is certainly true is that it teaches you it is important to walk at your own pace. Walking too fast or too far will invariably cause a problem due to sun, heat, fatigue or kit, especially footwear. The vast majority of pilgrims, rightly in my view, carry their kit on their back. I did, partly for reasons of authenticity, and partly mindful of the old soldiers' dictum that one should never be separated from one's kit. The advice is to carry no more than 10% of your body weight, and ideally no more than 8 kg (approximately 17 ½ lbs). I loaded up my 40-litre pack and weighed it: it came to 18 lbs, and at the outset I weighed about 80 kg so that was ideal. Incidentally, I lost 7 lbs overall, which I've still not replaced. There was one young woman who started with a 20 kg pack – including hardback books (but not for long) – and a chap whose pack weighed 15 kg because half of it was medical equipment for his regular injections.

I carried a silk sleeping-bag liner – but no sleeping bag. I started on 29 August and finished on 29 September, with one non-walking day spent in Burgos. With two exceptions, all the nights I spent on the road were in places where blankets were available. One blanket sufficed. The first of the no-blanket nights was only just bearable. The second one, my last night on the road, just outside Santiago, was okay. In addition I carried a spare pair of long trousers, a pair of beach shorts and a cotton T-shirt (my pyjamas). I also had two thin merino-wool, foundation-garment T-shirts (expensive, quick-drying, very efficient), two outdoor long-sleeved shirts made of high-tech, quick-drying material, a Peter Storm waterproof windcheater, two pairs of merino-wool

inner socks and two pairs of thick outer socks, and one long-sleeved, thin woollen jumper. In addition to a minimal toilet bag, I had a basic medical kit, including the essential and excellent Compeed foot-plasters. My pack had a 2-litre water bladder. I had two adjustable walking poles, a Tilley hat, walking shoes for the pilgrimage, tough outdoor sandals for leisure and a pair of lightweight flip-flops for wearing inside the *refugios*. Sunglasses and smartphone completed the ensemble.



A word about accommodation: all along the route there are overnight places to sleep. They come in different categories, just as pilgrims come in different categories. I have mentioned that I carried my own pack with me. It is possible to arrange for one's pack to be forwarded to the next night's accommodation. One can, therefore, walk with sufficient supplies for the day: food and drink and a waterproof. There are also people who are basically on a walking holiday arranged by a tour company: they may be on the Camino for one week and stay in hotels in the evening. It is easy to take an uncharitable, unChristian view of them, as – chattering away in their Lycra shorts – they stroll past the sweating, trudging pilgrim (*mea culpa*). My prayer is that one day they'll return and do it properly. And there are the cyclists. It would be nice to say that they signal their approach with a cheery ring of their bell, and return one's greeting of 'buen camino' as they carefully steer round you on the narrow path. But they often don't, leading to deeply uncharitable, unChristian thoughts from the same sweating, trudging pilgrim (*mea culpa*, again). I didn't see anyone on a horse, but I did see a man leading a grossly-overladen donkey (see above photo).

One step down from proper hotels are hostels: separate rooms, usually ensuite, with two to four beds, but if you turn up on your own the entire room is yours. I had approximately three nights in them (out of 30), for a treat. Down from them are *albergues*: invariably 'one up' bunk beds, mixed-sex sleeping accommodation, but usually single-sex ablutions, laundry facilities, outdoor drying, washing machine and dryer (at a price), eating area, maybe a kitchen for food preparation (I ate out all the time). The rooms accommodate up to about twenty people in total.



I prayed fervently that there would be no snorers (there was only one bad night in that regard, with a spectacular Italian gent – we were all quite openly laughing. A female pilgrim took her mattress onto the landing). In the category below *albergues* are the *refugios* (see photo on left). They may have fewer facilities, especially if they are run by the municipality. The important thing is the availability of a bed for those pilgrims who, like me, have not booked ahead.

My day started long before dawn, at about 6.00 a.m. I would rise in the dark and have a quick wash, etc. My pack would have to be repacked, silk liner rolled tight, everything put away neatly, and I would then give a quick sweep with the light from my phone to check nothing was left behind. Sometimes breakfast was available, otherwise I would walk on until I found a place. Breakfast was orange juice (the oranges were squeezed on the spot) and coffee and a pastry. I would start to walk before dawn, in the inky blackness, which could be a challenge as I had

no headtorch and two walking-poles – I had no spare hand for lighting the way. My cunning plan was to walk behind a pilgrim with a headtorch until there was enough ambient light to see by. Dawn comes late in western Spain, which is on Central European Time. My map would show me where there were shops, cafes and beds and I would plan my walking accordingly, setting off around or just before 7.00 a.m. I would stop for a second breakfast, like the Hobbits, but otherwise keep walking, taking on liquid as I went, through the tube from the bladder in my pack. Sports drink is better than water because it contains the minerals and salts which one would otherwise lose. Lunch was mostly a large, luscious Spanish tomato followed by a nectarine.

I would keep walking until approximately 2.00 p.m., when I would start looking for a bed. At this point, I had been walking for six hours or so, and covered about 4 km (2 ½ miles) per hour. I had two apps on my phone, one linked to GPS, so I knew the precise distance travelled on one and approximate heights ascended on the other. Distance covered was related to quality of the going and the gradient. On the Camino there is everything from tarmac to virtual scree, and the gradient varies from flat to approximately 1-in-4. The highest point on the Camino is Cruz de Ferro at 1550 metres, but there are plenty of other punishing sections. Some of it is brutal. And I was amazingly lucky with the weather. It rained on me three times, only once seriously. Mostly there were beautiful blue skies, as in the image below, at the Alto de San Roque (1270 metres).



Having found somewhere to sleep, had my credential (pilgrim passport) stamped and details taken from my UK passport, I would be shown to a bunk. Boots left in a rack, walking-poles deposited, I would unpack and take a shower. Next on the list was laundry: shirt and undershirt, socks, pants and hanky. I washed by hand and hung the items on the outside line, because every day there was good sunshine when I needed it. The socks never fully dried, so I strapped them on the outside of my pack until I needed them 24 hours later. Following this, maybe a rest, followed by a beer (to combat dehydration). Only then I would think about a meal. All along the Camino there are places offering a *menú peregrino* of three courses, usually for 10 Euros: first course, a mixed salad; second course, pork or hake and chips; and third course, a flan or creme caramel perhaps. Wine was included, which meant (in many places) the entire bottle of the local plonk (and it was okay).

One of the joys of the Camino is the people one meets – pilgrims and otherwise. The greeting on the Camino is ‘buen camino’. It means so much more than ‘have a nice walk’. The Camino teaches what one needs to learn. I learned that I must walk at my own pace – and live my life at my own pace. I had lots of time to reflect and to pray, mostly the ‘Jesus Prayer’. I learned that I am still pretty tough and can still endure – even on the wrong side of 70 and with only one good leg.



Journey's end

It is said that the Camino consists of three parts with differing characteristics: the first part, the Pyrenees, is physical; the second, the Meseta, the long, hot (in summer), flatter middle stretch, is mental; and the third, Galicia and the rise up towards Santiago, is spiritual. Certainly the arrival at Santiago in front of the cathedral is a very special experience, especially for those who have completed a long haul in one hit. I walked 437 miles in 30 days. I never dreamt I would be able to finish it in that time, without rushing, and at the cost of only two blisters. I truly ascribe it to the power of prayer, for I know that I could not have achieved it through my own efforts alone. My Compostela – the proof that I did it – now sits on my wall: evidence of a dream come true.

John Hayton



DJ&M PLUMBING SERVICES LTD

**Discounts
On All
Bathrooms
Supplied**

• **Complete
Bathroom, Cloakroom,
Shower Room and
Kitchen Installations**

- Local Family Run Business, Over 30 Years Experience
- Honest and Reliable Service
- Free Consultation/ Quotation for all Enquiries



- Electric and Power Showers
- Ball Valves and Overflows
- Blocked WC's, Sinks, Baths and Basins
- Repair/Renew Stopcocks and Taps
- Plumb in Washing Machines and Dishwashers
- Repair Leaking Pipes
- Outside Taps

Tiling ✓ Plastering ✓ Electrical ✓

Dean Herrington

07830 159010 01727 764217

info@djmplumbing.co.uk www.djmplumbing.co.uk

ST MICHAEL'S BONFIRE PARTY



Image by: Pauline Willey

I think everyone involved with the bonfire must have looked out of their windows on Saturday morning and thought 'Oh dear!', as the rain was the worst we'd had for some time. Thankfully by mid-afternoon it was a different story, and the air was clear and not too cold. As always, the children loved running around the paddock, especially in the dark with various LED identifiers. Although the attendees seemed to be a bit more spread out this year, everyone really enjoyed themselves and the atmosphere was very cheerful. It is a great tradition and a lovely autumn event for the family. Here's to many more years and fabulous hot dogs!

Danielle Argent



Image by: Graham Willey



Image by: Pauline Willey

THE BACK PAGE

When the chips were down
I looked up and saw the sky,
Cloudy at first, but then
The sky was blue again,
And I smiled.



Sandie North

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in each edition of the *Parish News* are those of individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the editor, the parish or the vicar. The advertising in this magazine does not imply an endorsement or promotion of the advertisement, nor its content, products or services.

Articles for the Parish News

If you have an article or notice for the *Parish News*, the deadline for production for our February edition is **Saturday 13 January 2018**

Please send contributions to the magazine's editors

Sandie North – sandrigh2@btinternet.com

Linda Withington – lmwithington@gmail.com

with a copy to

Katherine Crowdell – parishnewscopy17@gmail.com.

Or leave them for our attention at the Parish Office.

If you or anyone you know would like to advertise in the *Parish News*, please contact Linda Withington on lmwithington@gmail.com

The County Club St Albans

Has recently been refurbished, please view our new website!

Planning a party?

Birthdays - Christenings - Weddings - Funeral wakes -

The County Club is a members club, now open to non-members for functions

Ideal for any occasion and especially 30th 40th 50th and 60th's birthdays.

The Club has a purpose built function room, which holds up to 100 people, main bar area and restaurant.

We can supply catering for you in the form of a simple buffet to a 4-course meal and everything in between

All your requirements can be tailored to your specific needs and at very competitive prices

Private car park to the rear – Call or email Terry Hall for more information and booking details

29 Ridgmont Road, St Albans, Herts. AL1 3AG
Telephone: 01727 759445
Email: manager@thecountyclub.org
www.thecountyclub.org

TOE-TAL FOOTCARE



TOE-TAL FOOTCARE for all the family, for the treatment of corns, calluses, ingrown or thickened nails, nail trimming, and other complaints.

For an appointment that will last between 40 minutes and 1 hour, at a cost of £28, in your own home at a time to suit you.

Book now on **07799 033974**
Graham Spendlove MCFHP, MAHFP.

Qualified Foot Health Professional

FURNITURE OLD OR DAMAGED?

CONTACT

FURNITURE RESTORATION SERVICES!

OUR TRUSTED CRAFTSMEN ARE SKILLED IN:

- WOOD REFINISHING SPRAY/HAND
- BURN & RING MARKS REMOVED
- RESTORATION SERVICE FOR OLD & NEW FURNITURE
- LEATHER REFINISHING AND REPAIRS
 - STRUCTURAL REPAIRS
 - EST 2004

ALL WORK IS FULLY INSURED & GUARANTEED

CALL **01438 312666**
MOB **07787544739**

OR EMAIL FURNITURERS@AOL.COM
WEB WWW.FURNITURE-RESTORATION-SERVICES.CO.UK

20 HERNE ROAD, STEVENAGE, HERTS

Available for your event

The Swanvesta SOCIAL CLUB

The UK's Number 1 Anglo Cuban Band

Weddings Parties Fiestas our Specialities

Fully insured – Fully PAT Tested. Email or Phone for information and quotes

Call Anna on **01727 853597**

swanvestasocialclub@yahoo.com

www.swanvestasocialclub.com