



# PARISH NEWS

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December 2018/January 2019

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# LETTER FROM THE VICARAGE:

## A HOLY SEASON OR THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING GREATER?

I am writing this letter at the start of November. In the last few days I have noticed the return of a strange annual phenomenon: people asking about 'my busy time of year'. It is the same every winter, and probably the same for all clergy: well-intended small talk which assumes that the run-up to Christmas will be particularly hectic for Vicars. I do my best politely to disabuse my conversation partners by insisting that Holy Week has more services than Christmastide and that with the possible exception of August I have a fairly steady cycle of teaching, pastoralia and admin around the whole calendar. But despite these efforts, each November the trope returns: am I ready for 'my busy time of year?'



I wonder where it comes from? Why do people think it? It seems to be a seasonal variation of the idea that the Vicar only works on Sundays, or the assumption which I sometimes encounter at weddings that I spend every minute of every Saturday marrying people. After much musing, I believe the origins of the misnomer lie in the fact that December is not because it is a time when Vicars are necessarily more busy but because it is a time when more people are likely to see a Vicar: it is that period when folks who might not attend regular worship go into churches for carols, concerts, Christingles, and so on. Of course, these are important and special moments, but the challenge of Christmas is to remember that the baby Jesus becomes the adult Jesus, and that sporadic attendance will be rewarded with spiritual returns if it becomes more regular and more frequent.

Thus my encouragement this Advent and Christmas is to observance of a whole season – and to recognise that season as the start of a larger calendar. Our publicity card has been deliberately shaped to underline this: starting on Advent Sunday; moving through the beautiful Carol Services to Crib Service chaos to the mystery of the Midnight and the family worship of Christmas Day. And then we must not give up under the slump of post-turkey blues(!), rather continue with the arrival of the wise men (cf. the diary for our special Epiphany Carol Service in St Mary’s on 6 January) and the conclusion of the greater Christmas season at Candlemas in early February. In this vein, note how our publicity card does not contain a Christmas image but an Epiphany image, taken from St Michael’s north aisle: Jesus is not a babe in arms but a growing child when he greets the kings bearing gifts; he has moved on too.

So as we enter another Advent, may I encourage you to make a ‘New Church Year Resolution’? – to commit in the twelve months ahead to enter more fully into festival and holy days, pressing beyond even the greater Christmas season; through Ash Wednesday and Lent; through a daily observation of Holy Week; through not just Easter but to Ascension Day, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday as well; through Michaelmas, All Saints and so to another conclusion at Christ the King. Get these dates into your diaries! And if next November I have fewer comments about ‘my busy time of year’ then I will know it to have been a successful twelve months indeed.

Wishing you a happy Christmas – and beyond!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letter 'K' being particularly prominent.

# PARISH NEWS CENTRAL PRINTING - UPDATE

Thank you so much to all the people who have sent in their subscriptions along with lovely notes of encouragement for the success of the centrally-printed version of Parish News. We are very optimistic about the future and appreciate that we have been given the opportunity to have a printed version for the next two years, with the backing of the Parochial Church Council.

A reminder from last month:

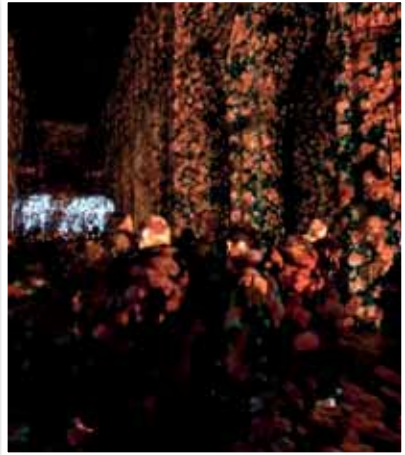
- centrally-printed hard copies will be available to subscribers from a box at the back of St Michael's Lady Chapel (£10 p.a.), or St Mary's (£10 p.a.), or by post (£17 p.a.);
- those who wish to subscribe to central-printing should send a cheque payable to 'St Michael's PCC' to Sandie North, 23 Deva Close, St Albans, AL3 4JS - or leave it in the communications box at the back of St Michael's Lady Chapel.
- Provision of central printing is a trial, the success of which is dependent on getting 50 paying subscribers. As at the middle of November 40 people have subscribed to this means of distribution: please encourage others to sign up too.

It all depends on YOU the subscriber for us to be able to carry on printing long into the future.

**Sandie North and the Editorial Team**

# REMEMBRANCE AT THE ABBEY

Over two nights at the end of October St Albans Cathedral opened its doors to share a light and sound installation by artist Peter Walker, to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War. The entirety of the abbey was given over to breath-taking projections of poppies and the sound of poetry being read aloud for the whole evening.



I confess I was a little sceptical when it was suggested to me that we should go along to see this installation. This important anniversary has been commemorated on so many platforms over the last year that I did wonder if there could possibly be another way to impart the emotion and sacrifice of WWI. I was thrilled, however, to discover that the experience created by Peter Walker was nothing short of amazing. From the outside the building was flooded



all over by red lighting. As you entered the Nave you were completely bathed in a projection of poppies, from the ceiling to the floor. While I had heard about what I was going to see, I can't tell you how affecting it was to be utterly covered from head to toe by these bright red, softly swaying poppies. Against the screen at the far end of the Nave was an image of the famous wartime poet Wilfred Owen.

As you moved through the Cathedral you saw in turn a rolling image of the names of men and women from the town who have lost their lives in conflict. It took nearly a full hour to roll through all the names and loop back again. In the Lady Chapel red clouds flew over the ceiling while the poetry of Charlotte Mew, Lt William Noel Hodgson MC, Wilfred Owen and John William Streets was read aloud in a recording by Eddie Redmayne. Then as you walked down the south ambulatory, endless petals fell from the ceiling. It was beautiful and touching and made a far-away event feel present and solid.



We arrived early and had to queue outside for quite a long time but that was nothing compared to the hour-long queues all the way down the north side of the church, up through Wax House Gate, down George Street all the way to St Albans School later in the evening. As we were leaving I had to feel for those still queuing but I knew what they were waiting for and that they'd forget all about the rain and cold once they were inside.

**Kerry Wells**



# MEMORIES OF A FIVE YEAR OLD BOY AT ST MICHAEL'S JMI SCHOOL IN WW2

At the start of World War Two I lived with my family in Walthamstow and remember being fascinated by the barrage balloons in the neighbourhood and watching one being inflated and then floating off up into the sky on the end of its cable. Walthamstow was a high risk area for aerial bomb attacks, so it was decided to evacuate my brother Keith and I to St Albans in September, 1939. Although there are stories of the trauma that many children experienced when separated from their parents by evacuation, I have no memory of the transfer, let alone any trauma associated with it.

We were billeted with a Mrs Boots in her house in Grange Street immediately behind the Bus Station in St Peter's Street. She was a kind lady and allocated various duties to us. My job was to stir the porridge for breakfast and to light the gas mantles as there was no electricity in the house. I also lit the fire and helped it to catch by holding newspaper in front to provide a forced draft.

Keith and I shared a large bed in a first floor bedroom which was also used at nights by the house cat who slept on the bottom of the bed. Another lodger slept in a bedroom accessed through our room. He was always very quiet and never disturbed us. Often in the morning we would find herbal tablets had been left for us which we loved, as sweets were already very scarce.

We were allocated to St Michael's JMI School which was some distance from our new home and involved crossing two main roads. Keith was two and a half years older and Mrs Boots asked him to look after me on the way to and from school. Needless to say, as soon as we

were around the corner he ran off to be with his friends and I never saw him on the way home either. On the most direct way to school lived a large bully so I found alternative streets to avoid him. I enjoyed going to school and we learnt how to dance in the Bottom School which is how I met my heartthrob called Jean. She was a brunette and I thought she was lovely.

My memories of living in the neighbourhood are full of interesting activities which shows that Mrs Boots believed it was safe for a five year old boy to wander at will even though it was wartime. The bus station provided a great source of interest as it had large areas of unbroken paving which was perfect for keeping a top going for long periods of time. Bus tickets became a collector's item and any number including a seven was particularly sought after. On the other side of St Peter's Street from the bus station was St Peter's Church which appeared to me to be very large and I felt sure it was St Albans Abbey. Only many years later did I discover my mistake.

I enjoyed exploring the neighbouring countryside which had its terrors and excitements. Nearby Bernards Heath fascinated me as it had a house set within it with no road access, just a footpath, which seemed curious. The road to Harpenden also passed through it in a cutting and one could sit on the bank and watch the vehicles pass by below. One day I was exploring the wood and an older group of boys appeared carrying air guns. They lined the tops of the dell that I was in and ordered me to turn around so that they could fire at my backside. I was absolutely terrified and burst into tears and pleaded with them not to! I'm glad to say they thought I was not worth bothering with and let me off.

On another occasion I was playing on the fields at Batchwood and a large felled tree trunk featured in my games. The next morning I heard some bombs had been dropped on St Albans including Batchwood. After school I rushed up to see if I could find any shrapnel but too late; it had been completely cleared by other children. What amazed me was that the tree trunk had been blown clean over the fence into the next field, and the crater forms a hazard on Batchwood Golf Course to this day.

The war was now well under way and the Americans were with us. For us young children it was a case of 'Got any gum chum'. Opposite the church in St Peters Street they had taken over a shop as a food distribution centre and one morning I was standing outside watching their activities as they unloaded a lorry full of loaves. I must have looked a proper waif as one of the GI's turned to me and gave me a loaf which I carried home in triumph. It did not happen again even though, somewhat hopefully, I stood watching them some days later.

The Battle of Britain was in full flow and one day I stood in the street outside our house and watched a dogfight in the sky. One of the planes was hit and the pilot baled out. As I watched he floated down to earth, spinning round and round, and I felt certain he looked directly at me each time he spun around.

School still continued and whilst going there and back I found a lot of interest. There was cow parsley, the stems of which made good peashooters for hawthorn berries. There was a high retaining wall in Folly Lane which had a path running along the top and the main path along the bottom. I used to walk along the top, imagining the parallel world which I could not see but which was concurrently happening on

the lower path I could have taken. In St Michael's village there was a blacksmith's forge which was open to the street and I well remember seeing a horse shod; the blacksmith beating the glowing iron into shape and then offering it up to the raised horse's hoof accompanied by the unforgettable smell of burning bone.

One winter's morning on the way to school there was fairly deep snow and packed ice on the roads. As I made my way down Folly Lane a large lorry with a trailer passed me on the way up the hill and hanging onto the back of the lorry was a boy I knew. He then decided to drop off, having reached his home, but slipped on the ice, fell and the trailer wheels passed over him. I believe he lived but was a cripple for the rest of his life.

Keith and I were not long at St Michael's School because our Dad moved to Slough from Walthamstow and was able to find a house where the family was re-united in May, 1941. Altogether my first experience of school at St Michael's had been a happy one.

Little did I then know that in 1965 St Albans would become my home town and St Michael's the village where I would raise a family and live for over 50 years.

**Albert Bedwell**

# DIARY FOR NOVEMBER 2018

## 25 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)

Last of the Seven Churches Sermon Series (see September's PN for details) : Laodicea - the self-centred one

6.30 p.m. Taize Service (St Michael's) – reflection, music, stillness

27 9.00 a.m. Service of Celebration for St Michael's School Expansion – led by Bishop Alan (St Michael's church)

9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

# DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2018

## 2 ADVENT SUNDAY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's) - followed by mulled wine and mince pies!

6.00 p.m. Holy Communion (St Mary's)

6.30 p.m. Advent Carols (St Michael's)  
Evocative words and music as we look towards Christmas

4 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

8.00 p.m. Advent Quiet Evening (St Michael's)  
Icons, candles, silence; drop in anytime; ending with Compline at 9p.m.

8 7.30 p.m. St Albans City Band/St Michael's Choir Christmas Concert (St Michael's)  
See separate article on page 17

9 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. Compline (St Mary's)

11 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

8.00 p.m. Advent Quiet Evening (St Michael's)

16 THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)

9.30 a.m. All Age Communion and Children's Nativity Play  
(St Michael's)

6.00 p.m. Community Carols (St Mary's)  
The traditional service of Nine Lessons and Carols;  
readings to be led by groups that meet in St Mary's  
Schoolroom. Sherry and mince pies afterwards.

17 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)

18 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

8.00 p.m. Advent Quiet Evening (St Michael's)

19 9.00 a.m. St Michael's School Christmas Service (St Michael's)

23 FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)

4.00 p.m. Community Carols (St Michael's)  
The traditional service of Nine Lessons and Carols;  
congregational and choir carols with readings to  
be led by groups that meet in the Parish Centre and  
Memorial Hall.

6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)

24 CHRISTMAS EVE

4.00 p.m. Crib Service (St Michael's) Ideal for children – please come as a character from the story: shepherd, angel, donkey, star.

11.30 p.m. Midnight Mass (St Michael's)

Seasonal wonder and hearty singing, with carols sung by St Michael's Choral Scholars from 11.10 p.m.

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)

30 SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

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 2019

6 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. Epiphany Carol Service (St Mary's) With music led by St Michael's choir

8 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

9 8.00 p.m. Parochial Church Council (Parish Centre)

10 8.30 p.m. onwards Men's Night (Lower Red Lion)

- 13 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)
- 15 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
- 17 8.00 p.m. onwards - Ladies' Night (Portland Arms)

- 20 SECOND 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)
- 22 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

- 27 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)
- 29 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

## DIARY FOR FEBRUARY 2019

- 3 CANDLEMAS; A festival of light to mark the close of the greater Christmas season  
 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)  
 9.30 a.m. All Age Communion and Christingle-making (St Michael's)  
 6.00 p.m. Holy Communion (St Mary's)



# ST ALBANS CITY BAND CHRISTMAS CONCERT AND ST MICHAEL'S CHOIR

SATURDAY 8 DECEMBER 2018 7.30 P.M. AT ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH

A seasonal concert bringing together the talents of St Albans City Brass Band and St Michael's Church Choir. Music will include traditional folk tunes collected by Cecil Sharp and Ralph Vaughan Williams and music by Saint-Saëns and Eric Ball.

Tickets will be £10 in advance (£12 on the door) to include tea and mince pies during the interval, available from the following website:

[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/brass-voices-tickets-52411697799?utm\\_campaign=new\\_event\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=eb\\_email&utm\\_term=viewmyevent\\_button](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/brass-voices-tickets-52411697799?utm_campaign=new_event_email&utm_medium=email&utm_source=eb_email&utm_term=viewmyevent_button)

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# ANOTHER ST MICHAEL'S SCHOOL

If you are travelling on the M25 between junctions 5 and 6 and happen to glance to the south, you will see a large Gothic edifice on the hills opposite. That is my old school - St.Michael's. Sadly, it went the way of a lot of smaller girls' schools and is now a block of luxury flats.

Founded in 1886 by the CMS, it was a Home and school for the children of missionaries. When I arrived in 1951, it had become an independent establishment for girls, modelled on the boys Public Schools. It was divided into Houses with senior girls taking on responsibilities as prefects.

Living conditions were spartan, rules strict and religion central to our lives. Children nowadays would not believe such a regime existed, let alone tolerate it. I will mention just a few of the 'character-building' activities that took place.

We will start with the run before breakfast; galoshes on our feet, but no coats. Our beds we had stripped, leaving each item separately on a chair for the bed to be made after breakfast. Then there was chapel; a brief service before the start of lessons. We all did the same academic subjects, including Latin. Happily there was also Art, Music, Singing and Dancing and most girls had piano lessons.

Sport was a major part of school life and every afternoon we played lacrosse or netball in the winter and tennis or rounders in the summer, There were no showers and washing after games was often in lukewarm water. We then 'dressed for dinner' in our Sunday dresses -

Sunday sacks, incredibly unflattering ! Up to two hours of prep took us through to evening chapel (Compline on Saturdays), supper and bed.

We lived and slept in Houses. Dormitories, named after well-known missionaries, were barn-like and only divided by curtains for senior girls. Talking after lights was forbidden and punishable by being awarded bad marks against your House.

School food can only be described as plain. However, we enjoyed Spam fritters and the different forms of 'stodge' . Vegetables must have been boiled for half an hour, and I only realised when I left school that spinach could be edible!

Saturday mornings were taken up by hymn practice, hair washing, shoe cleaning, mending, and detentions if you had one. After this was FREE TIME! For those involved, games matches took place on Saturdays. If you were lucky your parents could take you out for the day.

I'm afraid I dreaded Sundays: Matins, where the chaplain once preached for 25 minutes, Scripture prep, Sunday walks, lunch followed by an hour's silent rest on your bed. Home letters then had to be written (there was trouble if yours was not in the post on Monday morning). Evensong happily had no sermon and was followed by the usual regime of supper and bed. If you went to 8 o'clock Communion, you could be excused Evensong but if you were in the choir it meant

three services. To my mind too much formal religion is a mistake and many girls were put off for life.

There was a very strong choral tradition in the school and singing in the choir was my salvation. We had an inspirational Head of Music who introduced us to major choral works including the Messiah, the Passions of Bach, the Brahms Requiem and much of the lesser choral repertoire. My love of singing choral music has given me a lifetime of pleasure.

I am not going to comment on our headmistress; sufficient to say she ruled the school with a rod of iron and was not my favourite person!

Do not think we were unhappy. We were not, We were happy girls who worked hard and played hard and it is only in retrospect that I wonder how we tolerated it.

**Maggy Bedwell**

# CHRISTMAS IN FINLAND

In the early 2000's I lived in Finland for several years working for a mining company. It was a lovely time in my life and I remember with great fondness both Finland and the many friends I made there. Christmas is a very special time of year in the



Nordic countries and Finland is no exception. While it hasn't always snowed by Christmas in the south of Finland, around Helsinki, most of the country is blanketed in picture-perfect snow and, with sunset in the South at 2.30pm and near 24 hour darkness further north, there is a proliferation of lights and seasonal atmosphere.

Finnish Lapland is where Santa Claus is traditionally said to live, and the Finns are understandably very proud of this as a national idea. As in many other European countries, it's really Christmas Eve that is the main event, with present-giving and celebratory dinners. It is also often a time when people visit the graves of loved ones, leaving candles and lanterns. After dinner on Christmas Eve Santa arrives, leaving presents for all the children in the house. In contrast to our busy party atmosphere, in Finland the days around Christmas and afterwards are a very quiet, contemplative time in the main, reserved for family and saunas. Consequently, I always came away from the season feeling rested and revived in a way I rarely do here at home. Now I think about it, I could really do with making my Christmas a little more Finnish in future.

Hyvää Joului!

Kerry Wells

# SINTERKLAAS – THE NETHERLANDS

We celebrate Sinterklaas in Holland on 5 December. This is when we get our presents (no presents at Christmas). It has been told that Sinterklaas (Saint Nicholas – dating back from the middle ages) comes from Spain and enters Holland each year in a steamer over the river into Holland with his horse and his helpers called Black Peters. The Saint wears a long red robe and a mitre (like the Pope) and holds a golden crook. The Black Peters have hats with feathers on the side and a ruff collar and wear colourful costumes.

The entry of Sinterklaas on his big boat is a big thing in Holland. Children will be watching it on tv and there will be a daily news update especially for them throughout November and December. We put our clog, shoe or wellie by the fireplace (or radiator) and sing a traditional song, leaving Sinterklaas a glass of brandy and a carrot for his horse. Black Peters come in the night through the chimney and put your initials in chocolate (chocolade letter) in your shoe/clog/wellie and lots of traditional sweets. On the evening of 5 December there will be a knock on the front door and a big jute bag will be left by Sinterklaas full of presents for the family. Often there is a satirical poem for each person to accompany their present, saying how good or bad they have been during the year.

Special delicatessen and sweets will be eaten around 5 December such as spekulaas and almond cakes, marzipan and chocolate.

Currently there is a debate in Holland about the appearance of Black Peters as this is being classed as racist. Politicians would like to see multi coloured Peters rather than black. Surely the Peters are black because of the soot in the chimney?.....we will await what the Dutch will do about this tradition.

**Gerdien Kendall**

# CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

Sandie North invited contributions on the question of the giving of Christmas presents, an issue which pops up every year and has no easy solution. The secularisation of Christmas has become so advanced that we are now tired of this and seek a simpler solution – which may regrettably include not giving any presents. This is partly because we are so time-poor; I sense it is especially the case with young people and young families whose lives seem to be endlessly taken up with commuting, holding down several jobs, taking children to distant schools – and finding the time to play on their smartphones which, it is widely reported, takes hours every day. I am absolutely with Sandie that time is one of the greatest gifts one can give. Make a gift last all year by going to visit a friend in need every week? Let's remember some positives: there are those who do just that, all year including Christmas – Centre 33, The Salvation Army, FEED, Lunch Club and others. We as a church are fully involved in all those initiative.

It is said that within the royal family HM The Queen insists that only one simple gift be given – how that operates in practice I am unsure. However, it is a good starting-point, even if it is easier to convince adults than children of its merits.. A sensible link to make is to over-consumption (guilty): society is rightly looking at our scandalous waste of the Earth's resources and it may be that we care to keep that in mind as we choose gifts – and food and drink? The celebration of the first Christmas was a small and simple family affair and we are wise to cling to that in our thinking. However, what is a family today? There is so much fracture in the family unit that some must find it impossible to know where to look. Family as a unit is often much more cherished among ethnic minorities: I think of the strength of the family I have seen among my Jewish, Muslim and Hindu friends who

are quite happy to use our festival as an opportunity to reinforce their links – and their gift-giving can be lavish.

The nicest gift I – or the Parr clan in general – had last year was Bronwen’s idea of a holiday together in a rented cottage in Devon in June. Yes, expensive and privileged but it could easily be something much simpler: a family meal, as Sandie mentions, in a restaurant with the date agreed in the diary several months ahead – and no excuses (mmm ... ). It could be a visit with transport organised to a National Trust property. It could be a picnic in a park where one group offers all the catering. Since I dislike last-minute shopping, I buy gifts with individuals firmly in mind all through the year as and when I see something – often when I am away on holiday and see something unusual or unique to the area. Then I squirrel them away at home.

Young children will be the sticking point in all this: they are caught up in what they see as the magic of the lights, the TV advertisements, the sounds and smells. We cannot legislate for them, I fear. And what about birthdays? Treat those occasions the same way?

Enough!

**Phillip Parr**



# KEEPING TRADE FAIR

Most newspapers and current news bulletins mention trade and tariffs, and the unfairness of current arrangements; America versus China, sanctions against Iran and Russia and, of course, Brexit. Another hot topic is the problems of the retail sector and the death of the high street store. In the middle of all this, voices raised to champion fair trade to give the world's poorest countries a fairer deal are being drowned out and Traidcraft, founded by six fair trade pioneers in 1979, is in financial difficulty and was heading for closure in December.

Traidcraft CEO, Robin Roth says 'Traidcraft has transformed shopping in the UK, and now you can find fair trade everywhere, from online shops to petrol stations. But as times change, so must we. When new markets are searching for goods that are ethical, vegan and organic as well as fair trade, we need to be there.' Part of Traidcraft's core mission is to make as transparent as possible the cost, price and profit associated with every product sold in an effort to make mainstream business do the same – 'trade disruption', but from a positive point of view. This mission is definitely ongoing.

Following the announcement of possible closure, there has been a legal consultation process and a group of staff, supported by consultants and well-wishers, has produced a plan the board has just accepted. Traidcraft's 67 staff will be reduced to 12 in 2019, with 10 more on extended contract during the transition period. They will focus their activities on established partners who are predominantly in Christian churches. The 4,300 volunteer Fair Traders, 85% motivated by faith, will be able to work with the new company and other consumers ordering online. However, the range of products will be smaller, with core grocery and fewer craft items. They will encourage co-operative

and bulk buying to save on packaging and deliver discounts through a membership model. Traidcraft has supported farmers and artisans in the developing world, and many of these will be affected by the changes. Traidcraft Exchange has launched an appeal to support these producers but here is one of their responses to the news of possible closure:

**Noah's Ark, India:** 'One time Traidcraft was our largest buyer and the business...we have also increased our staff and run different projects, the most important of which are related to health and education...we may have to reduce our staff, close the projects...At this point I can say that we very much need Traidcraft business for our survival.'

As a church, we support Traidcraft by using its coffee after our services and by ordering goods online, so please contact me at: [Chiesa@btinternet.com](mailto:Chiesa@btinternet.com) or 07917 184021 if you are interested in the latter or the activities of Traidcraft Exchange. If enough people order only one or two things regularly, it makes a difference. You can see the range of products on [www.traidcraftshop.co.uk](http://www.traidcraftshop.co.uk).

Val Chiesa

# TIMON OF ATHENS

“I am Misanthropos and hate mankind” Granted, this doesn’t sound like the Tag line for the jolliest of Shakespeare’s plays, but let me reassure you that there is lots in Timon of Athens to truly enjoy and find amusing. Widely regarded as Shakespeare’s least popular and least performed play, this RSC production directed by Simon Godwin, (native St Albans boy no less) concludes the three “Ts” Season in the Swan and is in repertoire with Tamburlaine, Marlow’s epic blood fest terrifically performed, with Jude Owusu in the lead role, and Tartuffe in a brilliant update by Anil Gupta and Richard Pinto.

The play is something of a tricky creature. The original written in approx.1604, probably in conjunction with Thomas Middleton. It lacks a clear five act structure, and has several plot inconsistencies that never materialise, which has led scholars to believe it is both incomplete and written with someone else. However, far from this being a stumbling block, what this actually does is give a brave director and editor the licence to mould the script in to what they think works best. It need not, I suppose, be handled with quite the same reverence as other Shakespeare texts. An audience would be rightly miffed, if “To be or not to be” was cut, or Lady Macbeth died straight after the killing of Duncan, but because Timon is something of an unknown quantity, by, rejigging not rewriting, a clearer, more relevant story can begin to emerge. The initial edit by Simon and Emily Burns, was already in 3rd Draft before we started rehearsal, and it is still very much a work in progress, which makes it a tremendously organic process that all of us actors can feel we have a small amount of ownership over. With Simon acting as the skilled plastic surgeon wielding a sharp scarpel, we can hopefully make the best and most truthful Timon we can.

The story beings among the elite of Athens. Timon, played by the wonderful Kathryn Hunter, famous for her amazing portrayals of some of Shakespeare’s most well known male and female parts, and

incredibly physicality, entertains and lavishes gifts upon various friends and creatives of Athenian society. An aserbic philosopher Apemantus warns her of the perils of leading such a shallow and excessive life “What need these feasts pomps and vainglories” and her loyal servant Flavius warns that the coffers are running dry, but Timon holds on to her Credo that “WE ARE BORN TO DO BENEFITS” . Even when she is made aware that she has no money, she maintains her belief that she is “wealthy in her friends” and they will help her out of her temporary penury. No spoiler to let you know the friends once the money is out, all disappear like “swallows in winter”, and refuse to lend her money, despite all she has done for them. Timon mortified by the cruelty of mankind renounces society and heads off to the wilderness to live in a cave. Finding a stash of gold, (lucky her!) some of the city folk begin to creep back to her and get very short shrift. However, she does give gold to Alcibiades, a soldier that she might destroy the city that has done Timon such wrong. This is simplifying things a lot, and there are some truly beautiful scenes, as she is visited by various people, and you see her the sometimes funny often heart breaking rebuffing of a life and people she once held dear but now wishes to destroy.

It is wonderful to be up in Stratford. For any actor the RSC holds a mythic status, and sitting in the “Dirty Duck” surrounded by photos of Richard Burton, Vivienne Leigh, Lawrence Oliver, Peter O’Toole, etc etc you can not help but feel both sick with anxiousness and excitement at the same time To be treading the same boards as such illustrious stars feels slightly surreal and a hugely thrilling!

It would be lovely to see some friendly faces so if you fancy a trip to Stratford do come and see the show, and hopefully “Ere (you) depart we’ll share a bounteous time in different pleasures”. The play runs from 7 December 2018 until 22 February 2019 at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon. Tickets will be available on the RSC website.

**Imogen Slaughter**

# BONFIRE IN THE Paddock

We enjoyed a lovely evening at the bonfire party last weekend. It was a great opportunity to meet other families and for the children to play and enjoy the event in a safe setting. Huge thanks to everyone that helped organise it.

Ellie Johnson





## Articles for the Parish News

If you have an article or notice for the *Parish News*, the deadline for production for our February 2019 edition is

**Saturday 9th February 2019**

Please send contributions to the magazine's editors

Sandie North – [sandrich2@btinternet.com](mailto:sandrich2@btinternet.com)

Kerry Wells – [jkwells79@yahoo.com](mailto:jkwells79@yahoo.com)

with a copy to

John Mole – [jdmole@hotmail.com](mailto:jdmole@hotmail.com)

Or leave them for our attention at the Parish Office.

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