

Old Malden News



The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist, Malden

July 2020

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Vicar's Letter

100 days of lockdown have proven to be an immense, and unexpected, challenge for all of us. Many of the things that we have long taken for granted as part of our everyday lives have been taken away from us. For those with children at home, it has been an opportunity to have more family time and to grow even closer, with the added challenges of home schooling and keeping boredom at bay. I think all of us can give thanks for the wonders of modern technology! It has allowed us to keep in touch with loved ones far away and to keep most of us at St. John's in touch too. As we ease out of lockdown, technology will remain important as many members of our congregations may not be able or feel safe venturing out to a service once we get the "green light" from the Archbishop. We are still waiting for official guidance at the time of writing, but it shouldn't be long. The Churchwardens and I remain committed to opening up St. John's in a measured way that keeps your safety as our top priority. Plans are that the Church will be open Sunday afternoons from the 5th of July, so do check the website for the latest details as we moved towards this milestone in St. John's life.

Although the word "unprecedented" has been used throughout the Coronavirus epidemic, quite rightly, it doesn't quite fit with the history of St. John's or any other of our sister churches of any great age. One has only to read the list of vicars in the Church porch to see that there have been gaps, with three priests taken by plague in succession alone. Epidemics and widespread fatalities have brought the worship and life of St. John's to a standstill in the past, only for the Church to recover and continue its rhythm of worship and pastoral care with renewed vigour. Covid has not brought St. John's to a standstill, with much continuing in new and different ways, but it has deprived us of much that we love about St. John's, most importantly of all being together. The challenge will be to bring that back as safely as possible for as many people as possible.

The reality for churches across the country is that the weeks and months ahead will be crucial for the future of the Church as a whole. I imagine there will be renewed interest in coming to Church, but that this is likely to be short-lived. Christianity in Britain has been on a downward trajectory for over a century and that is likely to continue. No one is realistically expecting that Covid will lead to any sort of mass conversion of the nation. For many congregations there may very well be fewer people returning to Church, as people have found other things to do with their time and may no longer feel the need for Church as they once did. This is especially critical for those on the fringe of church life. I can't say hand on heart which way this will go for St. John's, but remain somewhat optimistic. For other parishes Covid will mark the end as parishes are amalgamated and some church buildings even closed. This is a concern in the Deanery and the Diocese,

though we are in a more secure position as one of the largest congregations in our Deanery. We are very fortunate in this, but this comes with responsibility as well.

So what's to do? We are looking at a deficit in Parish finances of £18,000 by the end of December. This is largely due to the loss of collections at services including weddings and baptisms, as well as not being able to raise money through our summer and Christmas fairs. Our monthly expenses have of course dropped, but we are still facing a shortfall. The Finance Committee and I agreed that we would honour our commitment to the Diocese to pay the £72,000 Parish Support Fund we agreed to pay for this year. This holds to the principle that we pay our way, but also that we are contributing to the wider Church enabling ministry in poorer areas of the Diocese. If a parish in an affluent area like ours cannot help support mission and ministry in more vulnerable places, then we have lost sight of an essential part of the Christian message. The shortfall may have the knock on effect of kicking the repairs needed of our historic building into the long grass and making them more expensive down the road. So I would like to thank everyone who gives regularly to the Church and encourage all of us to do what we can to plug the gap. Information is available via our website about ways to support St. John's.

Our Annual General Meeting has been postponed until October. Understandably we haven't been able to plan this as effectively as we would like, given that so much is sorted out in person. All of what we do depends on volunteers and those willing to give of their time to do all the jobs, both big and small, that keep us ticking over. Many hands make light work and there are opportunities to help St. John's if you are able. We will need three new members of the PCC to take things forward, as well as three representatives on Deanery Synod. Both are crucial for shaping the life of the Church. PCC meets monthly (and is a jolly time to be honest, full of laughter and a sense of purpose) and Synod three times a year. This is a critical time for St. John's and for the deanery, so please do think about what you might offer in the way of support. You can speak to me or any member of the PCC for further details if you wish.

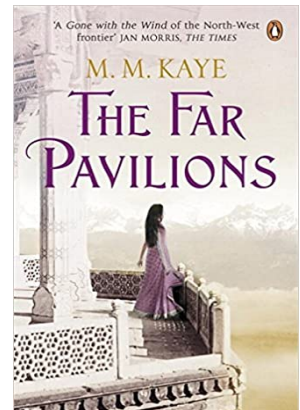
Everyone has something to offer and everyone has the possibility of making a difference. St. John's needs you to help us make this transition as we navigate the uncertainty of the future. We have been here for over a thousand years, let us do all that we can to keep bringing hope and light in this special place to a wounded and frightened world that needs it as much as ever.

With every blessing,
Michael

St John's Reading Group

July 2020

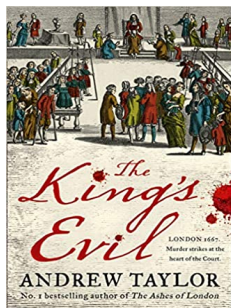
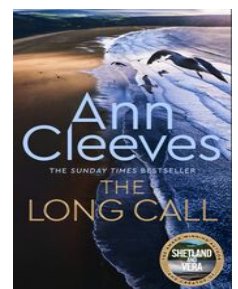
Another month has flashed by – and we held another 'virtual' Reading Group to discuss the book of the month, **The Far Pavilions** by **M M Kaye**. This is truly an epic novel – both in length and subject matter. It relates the story of a young officer during British rule in India, Aston Hilary Akbar Pelham-Martyn. His parents died soon after his birth and he was brought up by the wife of a servant named Sita. So he grew up speaking many languages and totally immersed in Indian culture. Escaping the 1857 massacre in Delhi, Ash and Seta go to the borders of the Punjab to a fortress palace 'The Palace of the Winds'. With palace plots and jealousies, Ash's life is in danger and so he decides to escape, having befriended young Juli, whom he was to meet later. Ash joins the army and does well, although often in trouble because of his views on injustice. It is a story of romance, danger, conflict and terror. A good read during lockdown! It scored an average of 8/10 and was a popular read.



For July we are reading **Persuasion** by **Jane Austen** – her last fully completed novel, published in 1817 after her death. I have just finished it and really enjoyed it. The heroine, Anne Elliot was an interesting character – thoughtful and mature. Persuaded by others when she was just twenty to give up Frederick Wentworth, Anne now has an opportunity to listen to her own feelings. Some wonderful characters in this masterpiece.

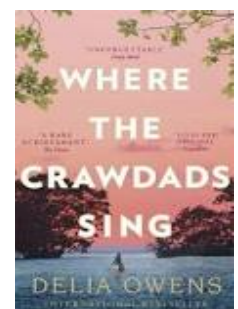
We have some choices for the next few months.

For August: **The Long Call** by **Anne Cleeves** – the first in a new series of novels set in North Devon.



For September: **The King's Evil** by **Andrew Taylor** (James Marwood and Cat Lovett No.3 in the series) Historical suspense set during the reign of Charles II.

For October: **Where the Crawdads Sing** by **Delia Owens**. A murder mystery, romance and a celebration of nature, set in North Carolina. A coming of age story of survival which has led to it becoming a very popular read.



So, the sun is shining at the moment – so I'm off to the garden with my next read: **Lockdown** by **Peter May**. (Have to have a contrast after Persuasion.)

Marilyn Burkett

Celebrating Pride by Harvey Howlett



The poet Audre Lorde said “When we speak we are afraid our words will not be welcome but when we are silent we are still afraid.”

The end of June would have been London Pride, that annual moment when, for just a day, it is ok to celebrate being LGBTQAI+ without too much fear, but as with so much else this year it is of course postponed and virtual. As we came to mark Pride this past June I could not help but reflect on how this month has brought together so many different strands of history.

June is Pride Month for the LGBT+ community because the end of June is the anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising also known as the Stonewall Riots. It is an important piece of history as it marks the moment when the LGBT+ community in New York had had enough of police raids and police brutality and a group of queer folk gathering in the Stonewall Inn fought back, over several days and nights. It was a turning point in civil rights for LGBT+ people in the US and indeed globally.

Within a year the small groups of people fighting back against police brutality in New York and San Francisco had become an organised protest movement around the world. The first Pride Marches took place 50 years ago, on the anniversary of the original uprising. The change led to active civil rights movements for the rights of LGBT+ people – rights that are slowly being recognised and respected around the world. Today, the original Stonewall Inn building and Christopher Park in New York’s Greenwich Village are now designated national monuments in the USA.

It is very easy to see echoes of the Black Lives Matter protests in what I have just set out. Rightly so because the original Stonewall protests came out of the civil rights struggle against racial discrimination in the USA. Indeed the intersection between the black community and the LGBT+ community were particularly apparent in the mixed group of gay and trans people gathered in the Stonewall Inn for whom enough was enough. To borrow a Jamaican phrase – they were tired of being tired.

The tendency of humankind to discriminate against one another on grounds of colour of skin, the culture of their background, the gender they own, or the people they fall in love with continues unabated. Too many nations still criminalise and indeed kill people, just because of who they love, or who they are, and many continue to do so in the name of faith. The worldwide Anglican church has as one of its marks of mission the call to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation. And yet even this week the Bishops of the Church of England have acknowledged just how much the evil of racism continues to live within our Church and the same church remains in open conflict over the acceptance of LGBT+ people.

As the writer James Baldwin put it “we can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.”

So, on Pride weekend this year, although there was no celebratory parade, I raised a glass to all those who came before me and fought, quite literally, for freedoms I take for granted. But in doing so I am committed to stand with all those who are continuing to live with oppression and to join the fight to end discrimination in all its forms.

Inspirations for Julian prayer meeting,

Monday 15th June 2020, from Ursula Hodges

I was thinking of how, in lockdown, we have been encouraged to walk. We have seen trees come into leaf, spring flowers appear, heard birdsong around us. The parks, woodlands, even the streets around our homes have been our companions when friends and family could not come to see us. While we could not enter our churches, our churchyards and church gardens became places of prayer and reflection.

The following quote came to mind:



“In the company of flowers we know happiness. In the company of trees we are able to think, they foster meditation”.

Quotation from John Steward Collis by Max Adams in “The Wisdom of Trees”.

And now, as our “normal” life begins to reclaim us and we leave the trees and woods behind, I came across this poem:

A blessing for the woods, By Michael S. Glaser

<https://www.sunshinepress.com/tmagic.pdf>

And a final thought from Richard Hendricks, Ards Friary:

A moment, a breath, a sacred pause
between the storms... Dwelling in the sacred
place of now, not dwelling in the past's
regret or the future's anxiety but touching
the deep peace that exists always untouched behind the storm.

Before I leave, almost without noticing, before I cross the road and head toward what I have intentionally postponed— Let me stop to say a blessing for these woods: for crows barking and squirrels scampering, for trees and fungus and multi-coloured leaves, for the way sunlight laces with shadows through each branch and leaf of tree, for these paths that take me in, for these paths that lead me out.



Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

“What has Mothers’ Union to do with Parliament?” you ask.

Well, quite a lot actually. The organisation has been held in high regard by Parliament since 1909 when members were asked by the Government to contribute to a Royal Commission on marriage. After many years of lobbying and consultation, in 1929 the MU was instrumental in helping to raise the marriage age of girls from 12 to 16. Over the years, Mothers’ Union has had a hand in the passing of many Bills which were important to their ethos and still today members are frequently asked for their opinions on matters pertaining to children and family life. Several current MPs are members of Mothers’ Union: one of the first was Sir Peter Bottomley, way back in the early ‘80s.

Members of the Mothers’ Union Policy Unit are said to ‘have a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other’ and are pro-active in, for example, bringing Early Day Motions to be debated in Parliament. Notable successes have been the right to request flexible working for those with families of children and/or elderly relatives, and the right to request paternity leave. The Bye Buy Childhood Campaign highlighted the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood and resulted in the CEO of Mothers’ Union being asked by the Prime Minister to head a review of the subject, *Letting Children be Children*, which considered many disturbing issues such as the lack of regulation of social media concerning children and the way children are targeted as consumers.

More recently, the Government published draft guidance on Relationships Education to be taught in primary schools, and Relationships and Sex Education to be taught in secondary schools. Mothers’ Union was consulted on the draft and asked to comment and amend before the draft reached the Bill stage in Parliament. All the MU amendments were taken on board and were contained in the final regulations.

Work with refugees and raising awareness of human trafficking and modern-day slavery is on-going.

Two of the Five Objectives of the Mothers’ Union are ‘to promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children’ and ‘to help those whose family life has met with adversity.’ *That* is what Mothers’ Union has to do with Parliament, and indeed with governments worldwide.



Members with their families and MPs outside No 10: St John's Liz Pullen on left

Facing our closed west door 24 wild Bee Orchid flowers

are open



Photo 30 May /20



Come and look at them and take heart

By June 8th 2020 Bee Orchids were flowering on eight of the sites shown on last winter's plan - and the flower-count was growing daily. The colour spots identify where each photo was taken.

The grassy area that gets the most sunshine produced the most flowers.

It was one, single petal of the orchid flower that evolved to mimic the shape of a female bee. The two other petals changed to look like a bee's antennae. The pink three-petalled "flower" that the fake "bee" is sitting on evolved from its three green sepals.

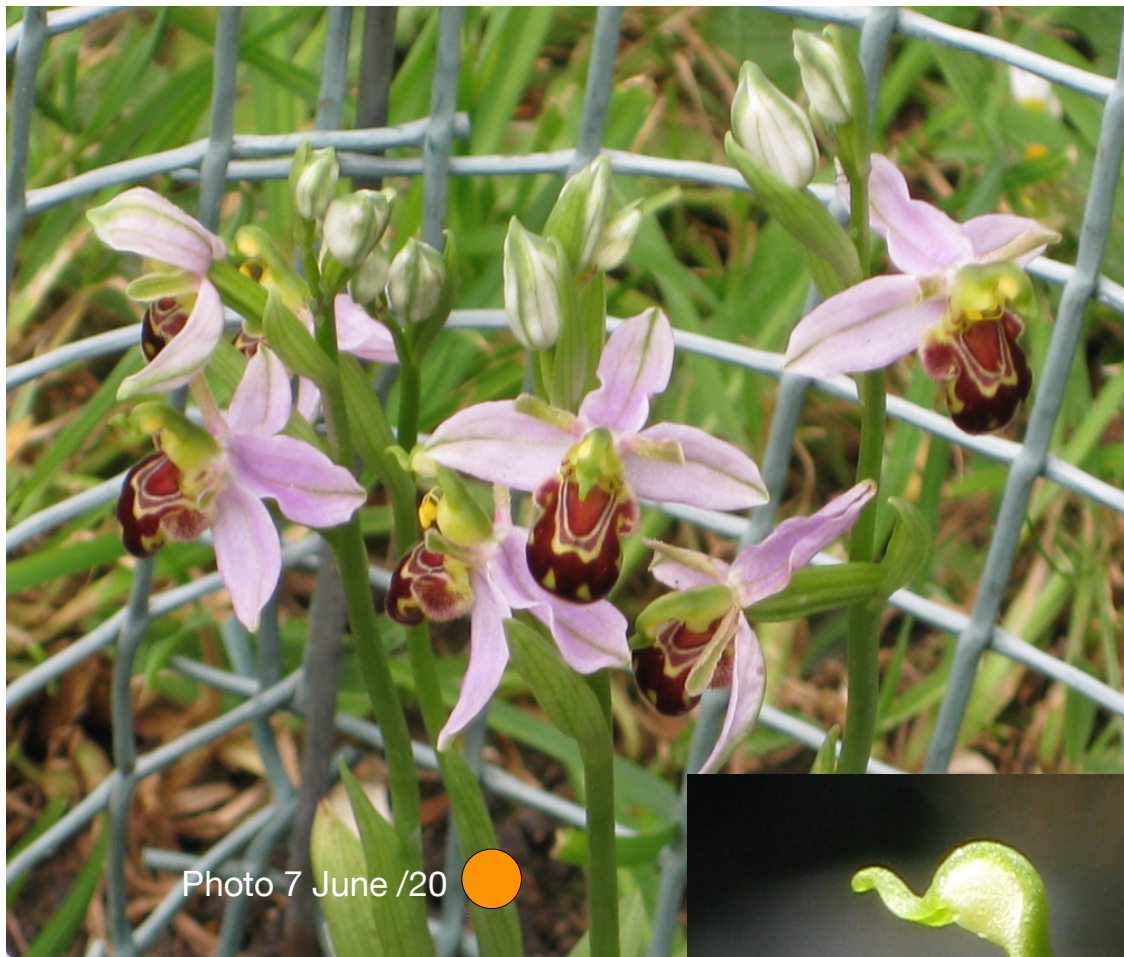



Photo 7 June /20



Close to where people walk, three sites are empty. But trampled orchids have usually reappeared in the following November.

These are **wild** flowers. They **choose** to grow close to us. Their exquisite beauty should be caged as little as possible.

On this site, (marked ) seven flowers are already open on four flowering stems. Other sites all have



At that time there must have been huge advantages for orchids to go to such lengths to trick male bees into transporting their pollen. It must have taken millennia for petals to evolve to look like a female bee.

But today, evolution enables pollinia more often than not to pollinate Bee Orchids without any insects at all.

Long green seed pods can be seen swelling under each flower ready to disperse seeds - by the thousand.

Last year the plants were contorted by aphids. Instead of insecticide, an artist's brush, dipped in weak detergent is being used to paint these off regularly this year,

Our project aims to discover if our orchids will multiply in 2021 not by seed but, for example, by rhizomes underground. So, to be certain, all seedpods will be removed in July.



What have you been doing during 'lockdown'?

Gardening, reading, going out for walks, listening to music, tidying up, throwing things away, playing the piano, knitting, DIY? I know that the possibilities are endless – but I'm sure that we have all acquired new skills. Even ZOOM and Skype and logging on to other social media groups have encouraged us to use our computers for more than just emails.

In addition to all of the above, (some more than others I must admit), I have taken advantage of several on-line courses. All have been free of charge – even better. I have signed up for the Faraday Institute Summer Course for Science and Religion this week but have just completed an on-line course for Railway History & Heritage from The University of Strathclyde. This interesting course explored the roles of drivers, firemen, signallers and clerks as well as the navvies who built the railways. Some of my 19th century family members worked on the railways – one as a 'steam riser' so I now know what that entailed. The course lasted for four weeks and you are able work at your own pace.



However, this week, I have just started another course with The University of Strathclyde entitled 'Working Lives in the Coal Mines: Mining History and Heritage.' Our Industrial Revolution was literally fuelled by the coal for which these men risked their lives. The course follows the development of the industry but also what it was really like to be a miner: the hardships, the risks to health

but also the joys of being part of a very close-knit community. The Pit Bands became a great tradition in coal-mining areas (my grandfather played the cornet in his pit band). Legislation was also very important because before 1842, children under 10 years of age were employed in the pits. Only after 1910, were working hours reduced to an 8-hour day (instead of 10). The growth of unions was also important to protect the workers' rights of pay and conditions.

If you have any railway or coal mining ancestors or even if you have an interest in 19th century social history, then you may enjoy these courses. For further information, go to

<https://www.futurelearn.com/partners/university-of-strathclyde>

Marilyn Burkett

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