

Old Malden News



The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist, Malden

March 2025

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Old Malden News

**The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist Parish Church Malden**
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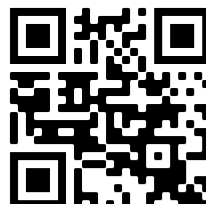
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To receive the Parish Mailing please scan the
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Services for March



St John's is OPEN

St John's is open for worship so please see the Parish Mailing for details. Live Streaming of services will continue so you will be able to see services live via our YouTube Channel.

Sunday 8am - Said Eucharist

Sunday 9.45am - Sung Eucharist

Wednesday 11am — Said Eucharist

Coffee hosted by Mothers' Union after the first Wednesday service of the month.

Please make sure you are signed up to our mailing list to get up to date information regarding the services.

<http://eepurl.com/gNz4Tf> or scan the QR Code

Vicar's Letter

Dear Friends, Lent is almost upon us and then we will journey through Holy Week to the joys of Easter. Given how late it is this year, I am hoping that the weather will lift our spirits soon and Spring will get underway with gusto. I've had enough of damp, grey days!

Some would say Lent itself is grey and bare, but it is actually what we make of it. Sure the tone of Sunday's services changes and the Church is rather austere looking inside, but stripping back the usual colour and exuberance makes room for spiritual reflection and renewal. This year we have a more concentrated Lent programme that relies on our tried and true stalwarts, like our Lent Group and Lent Lunches to help us make the most of this opportunity to recharge our spiritual batteries. This year we look to Paula Gooder and her book, *The Joy of the Gospel*, to inspire us to look at how we can effectively share our own faith with others. The first session is Wednesday 12th at 12:00pm in the Coffee Lounge and continues over six sessions into Holy Week. **There hasn't been any take up for another group on an evening for those who work during the day, but this is still possible if wanted.** The course book is available online through Church House Bookshop or I can order you a copy if needed. My hope is that we can explore what our faith means to us and help us see how we already live this out as we seek new ways of sharing this with those around us. The Frugal Lent Lunches are our way to support the Bishop's Lent Appeal that funds initiatives in the Holy Land and Zimbabwe. This year is focussed on charities working with children and young people traumatised by war and conflict.

This year we also are taking part in the Church of England's official Lent offering, *Living in Hope*, with its daily reflections and weekly themes enriching our Sunday Sermon Series for Lent. The themes are: *Week 1: **Imperfect** – Exploring how we hold on to hope in lives that are messy and a world that is imperfect.* *Week 2: **Together** – Exploring the ways joining with others allows us to find hope ourselves and offer hope to those who need it.* *Week 3: **Trusting** – Exploring what it means to trust in the hope God promises, even when we feel uncertain about the future.* *Week 4: **Noticing** – Exploring how we can deepen our hope by noticing signs of what God is doing.* *Week 5: **Courage** – Exploring how being rooted in hope can give us courage to face difficulties and seek change.* *Week 6 – Holy Week: **Transformed** – Exploring how God can transform even the most broken situations.* It will likely be a challenge given that the lectionary is the same as usual, but we're up for a challenge! A load of useful resources are available from the website accessible either from the recent Mailchimp mailing from me or directly online <https://www.churchofengland.org/fait-h-life/what-we-believe/lent-holy-week-and-easter/living-hope-resources-lent-2025>

Alongside these we are offering **God Talk**, an informal drop-in discussion about God and faith for anyone who would like to chat about anything they might like to explore. This takes place on **Saturday March 29th, April 5th and 12th at 10:00am in Church**. Saturday mornings from March 8th will see us starting the day with **Celtic Morning Prayer** provided by the

Northumbria Community in the Lady Chapel at 9:00am through Lent.

Through Lent normal parish life carries on. We have spent several months looking at Parish Governance and implementing the changes necessary to make us more effective. Alongside this we also have the continuing challenges of funding the **Restore Project** as the team continues to work on our National Lottery grant application for **Phase 2 of the project**. At about £250,000 this is the most expensive part of the restoration work and we have yet to discover any other grant-making body that can provide the level of support the National Lottery Heritage Fund does. Now that the Government is ending the reclaiming of VAT for works on Listed Places of Worship, this has made the mountain ever harder to climb, so please keep praying!

With these demands on our time and energy, we have drifted attention away from our Mission Action Plan and really need to refocus. In order to do this I am hoping to open the discussion across the Parish about **what our Vision is**. I have mine and I imagine my predecessors had theirs, but what matters is what you want, what does St. John's mean to you and what direction should we be travelling in? We need a consensus that takes into account different ideas and possibilities. Without a clear Vision we merely drift along year after year getting nowhere.

Personally I am inspired by the energy of the new Committees. I also value the informal mission statement that emerged at a PCC meeting months ago, **"Sharing God's Love with Everyone!"** If this could be embedded into what we do and how we plan and evaluate our worship, outreach, discipleship, and how we use our resources; we might well unleash real potential that helps us make a greater impact supporting the work of St. John's. So with this in mind, I will host a **focus group twice during Lent in Church (March 20th and April 3rd @ 8:00pm)** to share thoughts and ideas. I would like especially to encourage those who might not otherwise take part, with representation from our younger families and individuals! I am keenly aware that we are in the middle of a time of transition. Numbers are going down as fewer people are engaging in our worship. This has a knock on effect with our mission and outreach, limiting what we can do to serve the wider community. I hope this can change and that we can tap into the goodwill and opportunities the Restore Project are opening up for us. In order to make the most of this, I need to know what you think and what works and doesn't work so that St. John's can evolve to meet the demands of our changing society. So please do join me and make the most of what Lent has to offer while we can.

Many Thanks,

Michael

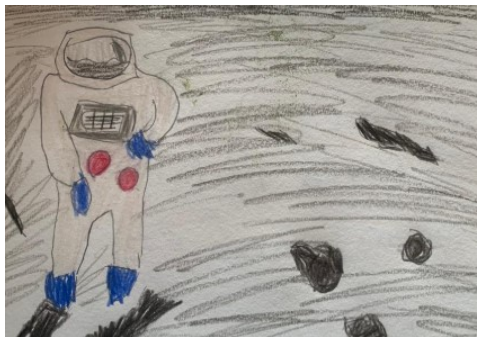
Malden Parochial News

Excellent learning in year 2

Kiara, aged 7, in year 1 at Malden Parochial is a member of the St John's congregation. When children complete very impressive work they are sent to Mrs McMullan, the head teacher for a good work bag. Kiara's teacher Miss Newman was really impressed with Kiara's diary entry about going to the moon, which she wrote as if she were Neil Armstrong. Kiara has included commas in a list and exclamation marks, which shows an impressive understanding of appropriate punctuation.

Dear Diary

Today I went to the moon. I went with Buzz Aldrin. I saw planets, stars and the night sky. I was feeling amazed. I was doing fun things, finding moon rocks and moon walking. There was no gravity! I was the first person on the moon! I was on TV, it was on the BBC news! I needed a space suit and a helmet. It was the best day ever!



In her diary entry, Sally aged 6, included Neil Armstrong's thoughts and feelings in her diary entry about the visit to the moon, showing a real understanding of the genre of diary writing.

Dear Diary

I went to the moon. I was brave to go to the moon. I was the first person to walk on the moon, there was no gravity.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH – March

If you are celebrating St David's Day on March 1st – then you may be tempted to make some Welsh Cakes: delicious with a cup of tea!

Very easy to make:

8oz of plain flour

2oz castor sugar

4oz butter or margarine

2oz currants

1 large egg

½tsp mixed spice

½tsp baking powder

Splash of milk if required



Rub in dry ingredients, add currants

Then add in large egg and splash of milk if too dry (or add another egg)

Roll out then using cutter in rounds to 1/4 " thick on floured board

Grease heavy frying pan/griddle on medium heat

Cook for about 4 mins each side – but check they don't burn!

Sprinkle with castor sugar.

Our changing vocabulary

It is funny how little things set off a chain of thoughts and in this instance, it was a conversation I was having with my daughter. She and her family had just returned from a trip to Germany and she was extolling the way in which each house in the village they stayed in had a huge log pile – of big logs - stacked under the eaves of their house. I suggested that they might be referred to as faggots. I subsequently decided to check on the precise meaning of “faggot”. I was nearly right since a faggot is a bundle of sticks for firewood. However, the word above faggot in the dictionary was “fag”.

I had always thought of “fag” as meaning a cigarette or, indeed, a junior boy in a boarding school who was a sort of unpaid skivvy for an older boy. In both of these I was correct, but according to the worldwide web, the word “fag” is a derogatory term that should be avoided when talking about some members of society.

This then led me on to think of other words that have changed their meaning during the passage of time. One which came to mind occurred during a walk with friends along a beach near Bournemouth. At some point, I bent down to tie up my laces which had become undone and I referred to the thong of my shoe. This was met with a look of dismay/surprise/consternation from one of our number who politely informed me that a “thong” was a fairly flimsy item of underwear and what was a doing talking about such things – she then waved at a scantily dressed person on the beach, wearing such a garment.

In view of the many pitfalls that clearly surround current usage of elements of the English language, perhaps the best way of avoiding these would be to adopt a vow of silence and then one could not fall foul of them.

Malcolm Sutton

Dear Friends & Neighbours,

1st Old Malden Scout Group has been an active part of the local community for 75 years, and the local children have been core members at all levels of the Scout Group. Lately, we've been fortunate to have seen an increase in children and teenagers joining all areas of our Scouting Group.

Due to this gain in numbers, our associated 14-18 year old section, Titan Explorer Unit, is looking for another adult to join their team.

NO experience is needed, we're a very friendly and supportive group. You just need some free time on Tuesday evenings from 8-10pm (term time only) to work with an amazing group of young people.

Please consider reaching out to friends or family members who would benefit from this opportunity.

We would also greatly welcome more adult help at all of our sections: Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. Please contact us on Gsl@1omscouts.org.uk for more information.

Thank you in advance



Another Tea and Cake Concert

Last February the Maeldune Consort gave a “Tea and Cake Concert” in St John's Hall. Judging from the feedback received, both the music and the refreshments were much enjoyed by the sell -out audience, on top of which over £600 was raised towards the Restore Project.

Thus encouraged, we plan to give another Tea and Cake Concert in the Hall, on **Saturday 22 March at 3pm**. The theme this time is “Agony and Ecstasy”, exploring expressions of love, lust and loss in the music of the 16th and 17th centuries. Love can be passionate and romantic, but also dangerous and tragic, all aspects we'll cover in our programme, in music ranging from the charming, seductive and mournful to the earthy and humorous.

As last year, our instruments will be viols and recorders. Our excellent soprano Susana de Oliveira will be joined by tenor Tristram Clucas.

Space is limited, so **do please reserve your place(s) in advance** by emailing me at c.benson87@ntlworld.com and pay **£10** at the door.

Chris Benson



Maeldune Consort

Voices, viols and recorders

Agony and Ecstasy

**A concert of Renaissance music exploring
themes of love, lust and loss**

including Tea & Cake



St John's Hall

411 Malden Road, Worcester Park KT4 7NY

Saturday 22 March

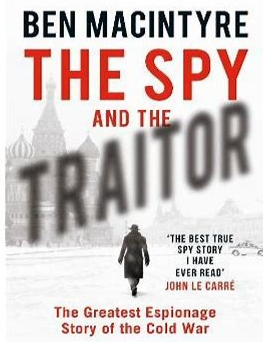
3 p.m.



**Tickets £10 (reserve in advance, pay at the door)
in aid of the St John's Restore Project**

www.stjohnsoldmalden.org.uk/restoration-project/

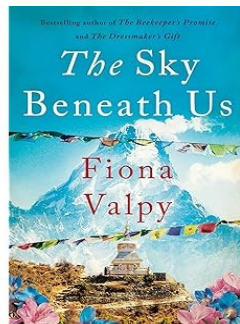
**To reserve tickets email c.benson87@ntlworld.com
or phone 07881 425 277**



Our choice for our February meeting was Ben Macintyre's **'The Spy and the Traitor'**. Set in the time of the Cold War, it is a story of betrayal, duplicity and raw courage and was reputed to have changed the course of the Cold War. It is the story of Oleg Gordievsky, a respected KGB agent who came to detest both the KGB and the Soviet Government. Whilst in Copenhagen, he was approached by an MI6 officer and so became a double agent. Safe houses, secret exchanges, duplicity and suspect agents fill the pages. Who can

one really trust – certainly not the TUC leader Jack Jones, or Michael Foot, one-time leader of the Labour Party who passed on to the KGB information on nuclear weapons debates and political insight on various 'hot' topics. It was not thought that he passed on any state secrets, as fortunately, he did not have access to any at the time. However, he did earn about £37k from information given. When Gordievsky returned to Moscow, the situation had become so dangerous for him that he appealed to MI6 to initiate the escape plan, Operation Pimlico. The escape signal was a Safeway supermarket bag displayed on Kutuzovsky Prospekt near a bread shop. After the signal had been received by a MI6 officer, he would walk past Gordievsky, make brief eye contact, and then eat a Mars bar. You could not make it up! Told in Ben Macintyre's inimitable style, one can almost hear him reading the words as if in the documentary. Find out what happens to Gordievsky and his family in this daring escape. If you can make it past all the Russian names in the first part of the story, you will find the second part of the book extremely tense and very absorbing. A good score of 8/10.

Our choice for March is Fiona Valpy's latest novel: **'The Sky Beneath Us'**. We have already read two of Ms Valpy's novels: *The Beekeeper's Promise* & *The Skylark's Secret*. This new novel was inspired by the



author's research trip of a lifetime which she made to Nepal which was the inspiration for this book. The main character of the story is retracing the footsteps of her great-great-aunt Violet after having discovered her long-lost journals. Violet was a plant hunter in the 1930s and was dreaming of setting up her own exotic garden. However, things do not go according to plan – either for Violet or her gt-gt niece.

We have selected two books for April – both quite short:

Small Things like These by Claire Keegan and Orbital by Samantha Harvey (Booker prize-winner 2024)

For May, The Running Grave by Robert Galbraith.

So we have a busy reading schedule: additional books which you may consider are:

The Bookseller of Inverness by S G MacLean

The Bee Sting by Paul Murphy

I'm not scared by Niccolo Ammaniti

Pachinko by Min Jin Lee

Midnight Blue by Simone van der Vlugt

Alvesdon by James Holland

Death at the sign of the Rook – Kate Atkinson (pback 27th Feb 2025)

Precipice by Robert Harris (pback April 2025)

The Glass Maker by Tracey Chevalier (pback May 2025)

Our next meeting will be on Thursday 6th March at 8.00pm in the Church Coffee Lounge. Marilyn

St John's Knitting & Crochet Group

This January, we celebrated our 17th 'Birthday' in a traditional way with balloon, card and fancy cakes. Just think of all those crochet squares, blankets and jumpers we have knitted/crocheted! We also remembered 'Granny Mo' who was such an inspiration to so many, especially when we first launched the group.

So have you ever wanted to learn to knit or crochet? Any New Year's Resolutions? We have had some new 'beginners' recently and they are doing very well.

If you come along to St John's Knitting & Crochet Group which meets on the last Thursday of the month in the Church Coffee Lounge, you will learn what you need to get started. Our March meeting will be on Thursday 27th March from 2.00pm - 4.00pm.

Open to all - do come and join us! Learn to knit, follow a pattern, take up crochet! Or bring your embroidery or tapestry! Or just come along for a friendly chat and cup of tea.

Marilyn





**There are boxes on the church porch bench for
your donations to the Foodbank.**

**Foodbanks are now vital to so many people
and our support is really important.**

Please donate if you are able.

Tinned meat, Long-life milk, Coffee, Rice, Pasta
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Pot Noodles, Oils, Ketchup and mayonnaise,
Sanitary towels, Toilet paper, Washing up liquid,
Household cleaning products, Washing machine
tablets, Shaving foam , Men's and women's
deodorant, Tinned potatoes, Crisps and treats,
Tinned tomatoes, Shampoo and conditioner, Tooth
paste and toothbrushes, Biscuits, Jam , Pasta ,
Cereals, Pulses, Baked beans , Soup ,Tea.

Plough Pond: A Historical and Ecological Treasure of Old Malden

Plough Pond, nestled in the heart of Old Malden within the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, is the oldest surviving pond in the borough. Kingston granted royal borough status in 1927, is one of the few royal boroughs in England. The borough's emblem features three salmon, symbolizing the historic importance of the River Thames to the town's prosperity and heritage. These iconic fish have been part of Kingston's identity for centuries, reflecting the town's deep connection to its waterways. But this is for another day, back to Old Malden and our historical pond.

A Glimpse into the Past

Historically, Old Malden had 8 noticeable ponds, Church Road was home to three ponds, including Plough Pond. Another notable pond was located near the Hogsmill River, just behind Downfield Block near the railway track at the end of Sheephouse Way. Additionally, South Lane once boasted two more ponds, one of which stood where Millais Road now lies. Over time, urban development and changes in land use led to the disappearance of these water bodies, leaving Plough Pond as a vital link to the area's history. With the development of our Chalet-type Wates houses and other Art Deco gems across our ward, linked to the arrival of the new train line and suburban extension, our landscape has changed dramatically. However, some key features remain if you observe closely, offering glimpses into Old Malden's storied past.

The Splash: A Practical and Historical Feature

One of the unique features of Plough Pond was its "splash," a shallow paved section designed to allow carriages and carts to pass through the water, washing mud and dirt from their wheels and the hooves of horses. This practical feature was a common element in village life during the 18th and 19th centuries when roads were often unpaved and travel could be muddy and arduous. Numerous old postcards and photographs of The Plough Inn and the pond highlight the splash, showing it in place until the late 1950s. While the exact date of its removal remains uncertain, it was no longer a prominent feature by the mid-1970s following the extension and resurfacing of Church Road over 30 years ago. The last major improvement to the pond, which included dredging, cleaning, and the installation of new fences, appears to have been carried out in 1977. Although the splash feature is no longer present, it remains an important part of local memory, with historical



accounts and photographs serving as educational tools for local schools and visitors alike.

One of the most significant features of Plough Pond is its close connection to The Plough Inn, a historic public house dating back to the 15th century. As a well-known coaching inn, The Plough served travellers journeying through the area, offering food, lodging, and a place to rest their horses. Over the centuries, The Plough has accumulated a treasure trove of legends and folklore. Tales abound of notorious highwayman Dick Turpin stopping by for a drink and making use of the secret tunnels rumoured to run beneath the inn. Some say there's a hidden room behind the fireplace, an escape route used by fugitives and smugglers alike. Who knows, you might even find the tunnel rumoured to connect the inn to the cottages across the road! One thing for sure, the two cottages used to be one, and a secret room was discovered during renovation years ago. Further research into the legend of the Plough Green cottages and their history could reveal even more fascinating details.



The Ecological Importance of Ponds

Natural ponds like Plough Pond are critical for supporting local habitats and promoting biodiversity. They provide essential breeding grounds for amphibians, insects, and birds while supporting a variety of plant species that contribute to a balanced ecosystem. Ponds act as natural water reservoirs, helping to regulate local microclimates and reducing the impact of urban heat islands. They also serve as important stepping stones for wildlife, offering refuge and hydration in increasingly developed areas.

In urban and suburban settings, ponds help filter pollutants, improve air quality, and support pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Their presence enhances the aesthetic value of the area, providing serene and calming environments for

local communities. Encouraging residents with sufficient garden space to create their own ponds can further aid biodiversity and contribute to a healthier ecosystem. Small garden ponds attract frogs, dragonflies, and birds, creating miniature ecosystems that can help counterbalance the loss of natural habitats due to urbanization.

Ponds also play a key role in flood prevention by capturing and holding excess rainwater, reducing pressure on drainage systems and mitigating local flooding risks. In areas like Old Malden, where historical water features once played a vital role in managing surface water, restoring or maintaining ponds can help combat modern environmental challenges.

It is essential to educate the public on the benefits of having ponds in their neighbourhoods and gardens. By promoting pond creation and conservation, we can foster greater appreciation for these natural features and their invaluable contribution to ecological balance.



Old Malden Conservation Area

Old Malden's charm and historical character were officially recognized in 1971 with the establishment of the Old Malden Conservation Area, ensuring the preservation of its unique heritage. The conservation area encompasses landmarks such as the medieval Church of St. John the Baptist, Plough Green, and its surrounding 19th-century cottages. The area around St. John the Baptist Church holds significant historical and archaeological importance, as highlighted in the Kingston Local Plan 2019-2041, which identifies it as an Area of Archaeological Priority. This recognition underscores the potential for

undiscovered historical treasures, from ancient artefacts to remnants of settlements that once thrived here.

Recent Restoration Efforts

Although the pond was drained and cleared in the 1990s, not much has been done since. Over time, the pond's footprint reduced, and issues such as the introduction of non-native plants and species emerged, disrupting the fragile ecosystem and biodiversity balance of this natural habitat.

Recognising the urgency of the situation, I engaged with our Biodiversity Officer and agreed that swift action was essential. We embarked on what would become one of the most successful engagement and consultation efforts in years within RBK, gathering over 200 responses and valuable feedback from local residents. Securing an NCIL grant, we felt it was our duty to protect this delicate ecosystem while ensuring it remained a safe and thriving space for future generations. The newly designed platform has been carefully levelled with the walkways and widened to accommodate wheelchair users and residents with reduced mobility. This ensures everyone can enjoy the tranquil surroundings of the pond. I am keen to ensure that what we do is not just secure by design but also always designed from the ground up with accessibility in mind.

As we restore Plough Pond, we are not just preserving a piece of Old Malden's history but ensuring it remains a place of beauty and purpose for generations to come. Just as St John's Church has stood as a beacon of faith and continuity in our community, this project reflects our shared duty to protect and renew the landmarks that shape our local heritage. By caring for this historic pond, we honour the past while creating a lasting legacy for those who will walk these paths after us.

Cllr Mike Massimi

email: mike.massimi@kingston.gov.uk

TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH ~ JANUARY

I was privileged to be invited to the Kingston Tamil Heritage and Harvest Festival on the 19th January, organised by the Tamil Heritage Group as part of their celebrations in January. And what a wonderful celebration it was. It may have been cold outside, but the welcome was wonderfully warm, and Richard Challoner School Hall was full of enthusiasm ~ and colour. We were treated to some beautiful dances, some of them clearly telling stories, with amazing dancers, both young and old. And we were all treated to traditional refreshments as well. It was a delightful occasion, and I was so pleased to be sharing with members of our large Tamil community in the Royal Borough.



Bobby Child

R I P Faith Bowers who died on 19th January.

From Marilyn: Faith was a member of the Reading Group and the Knitting & Crochet Group. We valued her contribution to both groups - during Covid we held the Reading Group via Zoom and continued to do so after Faith and Brian moved away so that they could still be 'part of' St John's. Faith was a prolific knitter and created many toys, gloves and mittens and even sent a box of lovely little knitted dolls which we were able to sell at St John's Christmas Fair. We shall miss them both.

From Christine Barley: Faith was a very caring neighbour for twenty-eight years. She was full of practical suggestions when I was a brand new mother. One piece of advice she gave me about having a new baby was to stimulate the baby all the time. I remember chopping down a shrub in our front garden and Faith popped out to have a chat. Faith was often involved in editing work and was always interesting and informative to chat to. Brian and Faith had friends all over the world, connected through work or through their faith, who often came to stay with them. Faith and Brian enjoyed guiding their friends all over London and attending conferences worldwide. Brian and Faith are succeeded by 2 sons their daughter in law and 3 grandsons. We miss them and are thankful for the time we had to get to know them.

From Pauline Armour: I became good friends with Faith and family when they started to come to St John's (although they were neighbours I did not get to know them then). Soon they were getting involved with all aspects of St John's, Faith became an active member of the Mothers' Union, and was hugely supportive when I became the Branch Leader. I had many happy outings with them, afternoon tea at Richmond Park, Garden Centres and lovely Lunches at the Denby pottery centre. We became great friends and most weeks we would go somewhere. Sadly when Faith and Brian moved to Kent we were not able to meet up, but would have monthly phone calls. I will miss our 'catch-ups'.

ST. JOHN'S SUNDAY LUNCH CLUB

St. John's Sunday Lunch Club has been running very successfully for 14 years and is very popular. Membership of the Club is for anyone within the local community who lives alone and would like to have their Sunday lunch in the company of other people. The Club takes place on the first Sunday of every month at St. John's Church Hall.

Club members are very grateful to the volunteer cooks who produce a two-course hot meal each month. Thank you very much to Ian and Heather, Iluska and family, Beth, Judy, Chester, Deborah and Alastair who cooked for us last year. The Herbert and Savage families also cook for us and set up the hall with tables and chairs beforehand. It is lovely to see the young children helping the older guests. We also thank our other helpers from the wider community who especially take over the chore of washing up. A big thank you to George, Heather, Angela, Jean and Lyn.

It would be great to have more people come forward to help with cooking, either as an individual or a team of friends/families. We cater for around 30 people and all expenses are paid. Gaps in the rota this year are 6th April, 6th July and 7th September.

Please contact Pat Lovegrove 02089427699 or patlovegrove@gmail.com .

TEA AND CHAT

A reminder that Tea and Chat runs every Thursday afternoon from 2.00 – 4.00pm at St. John's Hall, rain or shine. We have many who attend regularly and we are always open for anyone to 'drop in' for a cup of tea (and more often than not a piece of cake too) and we have come to know a number of lovely people from the local community.

We have four teams who take it in turns to be 'on duty' and ensure there are always at least two helpers each week. If anyone else would like to help out at this outreach event please contact Beth Owen or Pat Lovegrove.



Alex and Amanda Herbert and Dave and Beth Savage with their families.



Getting Wet for a Purpose

What is the “Swimathon 2025”

The Swimathon is organised annually in aid of Cancer Research UK and Marie Curie. The challenges are many and a sponsored swim can be tailor made according to ability, age and willingness to swim “forever” (at least it feels like that). The major challenges are to swim either 5km or 15km. In the Malden Pool, which is 25m long, 600 lengths are equal to 15km. I did the Swimathon before Covid and swam 3 x 200 lengths and managed to raise just over £1,000.

I have now enrolled for the 2025 challenge. However, with my advancing age (67) my body told me that I was mad to try 200 lengths in one go. So I listened and I am now doing 120 lengths over 5 consecutive days (=15km) in the last February week.

Like every family, cancer has affected my family and friends and we are thankful for the excellent local hospitals helping us to fight this horrible disease.

Why Swim?

I have always loved water and swimming in the sea, lakes and in pools. A holiday is not a proper holiday without being able to jump into water somewhere - as long as there are no nasty critters in it, of course. During lockdown, a group of friends and I used to pop down to West Wittering to dip into the bracing sea in blowy weather, but it was fun nevertheless. Recently I swam in the Strait of Singapore off Sentosa Island, salty and warm and with a view over the container ships and oil refineries in the distance, but the water was clean - I hope. I also swam in a small pool on the 46th floor in a hotel in Kuala Lumpur with a clear view of the top of the Petronas Towers - a swim with a view!

In September 2023, I slipped on a wet paving stone in a graveyard on the Island of Islay - while perfectly sober! - and broke my right femur. The ambulance took a while to find this remote spot and the next day I was helicoptered off Islay to the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley. Here I received excellent, quick treatment and my 3 weeks' stay in NHS care enabled me to observe the absolute and unquestioning dedication of all staff - senior consultants, nurses and cleaners alike. When in the care of the excellent physio unit back at Kingston Hospital, I was encouraged to go back to Malden Pool as soon as I was able to. The feeling of sinking into the warm water and just floating, with the weight taken off my bad leg, was heavenly. Whilst I initially just swam one or two lengths in the slow lane, I quickly built

up strength and dared to venture into the “medium lane”. (The fast lane is predominantly for “torpedos” half my age).

Swimming is the best exercise we can do, especially in our “silver” years. Whilst movement is easier due to the reduced body weight, arm and leg muscles are built up through water resistance. Many of us are going to “Falls Prevention” or “Better Bones and Balance” classes and we all know how easy it is to slip and fall, especially at home. So any exercise that strengthens legs, shoulders, hips, arms and wrists is worth its weight in gold! Yes, getting into your swimming gear, showering, and then spending an hour in the water initially doesn’t sound very appealing, especially in winter, but once you’ve done it a few times, it becomes second nature. Lane swimming is rather a lonely affair and when in the pool it is not easy to talk to people, so it’s not the most social of activities but the regulars in the pool recognise each other now and one is even able to strike up a short conversation before the “lane” calls again.

So I tend to focus on “endurance” rather than speed and I plod along at my own speed (dictated by my laboured breathing), and going on and on like Aritron. One of my German friends says that she finds lane swimming so mind-blowingly boring that she counts the tiles at the bottom of the pool..LOL.

At the end of February I will swim 15km from Monday to Friday (every day 120 lengths, mainly front crawl) for which I need approximately 1 hour 45 minutes pure swim time each day. However, I expect to get a bit slower towards the end of the week.

If you would like to make a donation, please visit the website I have set up:

<https://www.givengain.com/url/ap/94919>

(Please note the website prompts you for specific sums but you can enter your own amount!) - Or put some coppers or a cheque in an envelope and put it through our letterbox at 14 Manor Close, I will then pay the donation in your name or anonymous if you wish so. Maybe I'll even see you some time in the pool!! Thank you for reading this. Get wet, swim and stay balanced and healthy. Thank you.



Volunteers Needed

The Restore Project team are looking for volunteers to help tell others about the project, and why we are doing it.

The team needs YOUR help

- putting together a dedicated web-site, leaflets and brochures.
- distributing leaflets and brochures to local shops and businesses, emailing information.
- liaising with the Grants Committee to see what supporting literature grants require

If you can help please contact

[<administrator@stjohnsoldmalden.org.uk>](mailto:administrator@stjohnsoldmalden.org.uk)



The Men's Thing

Spring/summer programme of talks held on the 2nd Saturday of each month in the church extension. Tea, coffee biscuits etc. available from 10am for a 10.30am start.

March 8th— Chat session to discuss future talks etc.

April 12th - A talk by Benjamin Jackson - Hog's Bristle, Tin Foil and Soot: a Brief History of Early Sound Recording 1860 – 1924.

May 10th- A talk by Harvey Howlett on his father's life in the motorcycle trade.

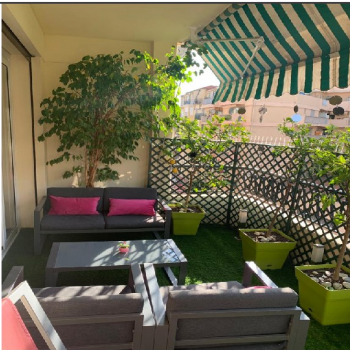
June 14th- A talk by Malcolm Sutton - " A young engineer in "Nepal".

St. John's 150

2025 marks the 150th anniversary of the consecration of the main nave of our church. The enlargement of St. John's was the vision of The Rev. Chetwynd Stapylton. We will be celebrating this in the summer and also on 7th December – the actual date of consecration. In the summer there will be a historical-cum-choral event. This will take the form of a historical narrative by Alastair Daniel with a number of large –scale anthems of the period performed by a much augmented choir. This is due to take place on Saturday 14th June at 7.30pm. It is also likely that there will be a flower festival which will run until the Patronal Festival the following week. The organ recital on 11th October will also focus on music from the same period. Finally, on Sunday 7th December there will be a cathedral style Choral Evensong with the same choral forces to celebrate the day and bring events to a fitting climax. Do put these dates in your diaries and let's take this opportunity to celebrate our heritage.

Barry Eaton.

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On the Road to Marrakech



Between 19-26 January, over 100 storytellers from across the globe gathered in Marrakech for the Third Marrakech International Storytelling

Festival. I am very lucky to have worked a couple of times in Marrakech alongside the city's young storytellers since the last festival in 2023, and so I was very much looking forward to this return visit and having the opportunity to rekindle friendships. What I didn't realise about the festival and this visit, and I suspect that this was true of many tellers as they arrived in the city, was that our week was to be rather dominated by an attempt at the world record for continuous storytelling.

The site of the attempt to establish a new record was a traditional tent pitched on the edge of the Jemaa-el-Fna square, a location which has a thousand-year-old tradition of storytelling. A small stage was placed outside the tent for the times of day when it wasn't too hot or too cold, and I was fortunate enough to tell both in the tent and outside on the square. Sadly, the first 14 hours of storytelling were discounted by Guinness World Records as the strict rules governing the event hadn't been followed closely enough – that left my initial half-hour of telling in the tent not counting towards the record. However, I was then invited to contribute to the final story-round of the record attempt, with a group of us telling a series of ten-minute stories in quick succession.

In the picture of the tent, you can see a clock facing away from the interior (and towards the small stage). In a record attempt, awareness of the time is obviously important, but being in a Muslim country added the complication that we had to pause every time there was a call to prayer

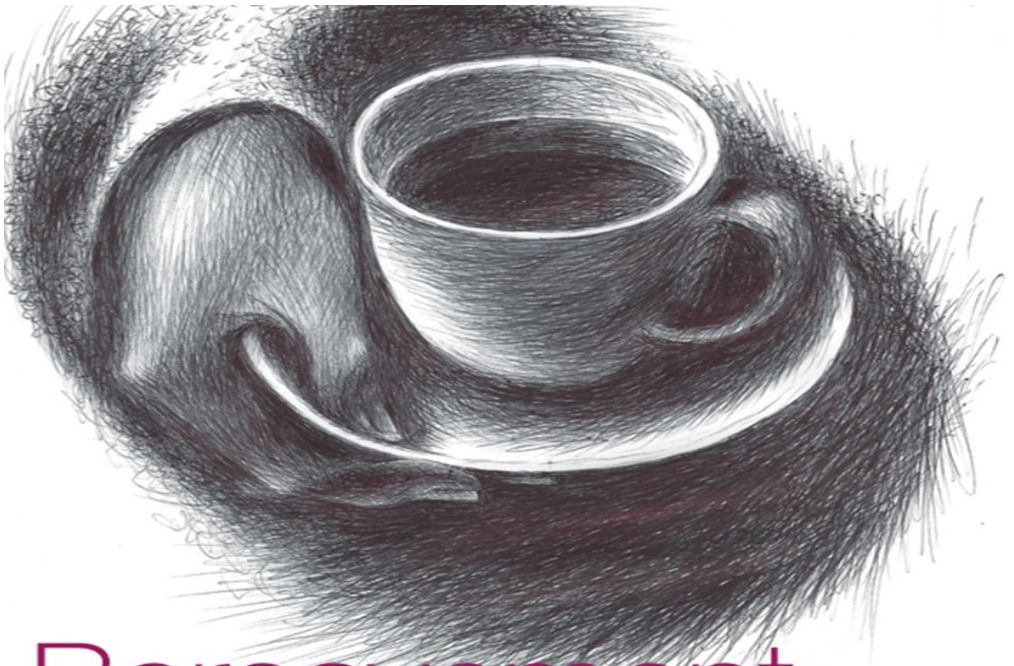
from the minarets, and that pause meant switching storytellers according to the rules – an additional reason to watch the clock. For my ten minutes, I kept one eye fixed on that clock, while the other scanned the audience as I told a 17th Century French fairy tale. I felt that I needed to apologise to the main organiser because I went over my ten minutes by two seconds, but she forgave me (thank goodness) – actually, I think that I was the storyteller closest to telling for ten minutes. In the end, the record was broken, with a continuous storytelling of 80 hours and 34 minutes, and an official from Guinness World Records presented the certificate at a banquet on the Saturday night of the festival.

I will be honest and say that I was very cynical about the purpose of the Guinness World Record attempt. This is because I could see little relationship between the attempt and storytelling as I understand it, which is to say a meaningful and imaginative exchange of ideas between people. However, while it is true that, during the record, people were in the audience to make up the necessary numbers according to the rules rather than because they wanted to hear stories, I have to admit that the world record has provided a starting point for conversations since my return from Marrakech. Those conversations have then allowed me to go further in discussing the world of storytelling and raising awareness of the art. So, for the moment, I am happy to trumpet the achievement and enjoy being part of a world record-holding group of tellers from around the globe.

Alastair K Daniel is a storyteller and consultant on the educational uses of storytelling.

www.storyteht.co.uk





Bereavement Café

In partnership with Princess Alice Hospice , St John's runs an informal support group for all those experiencing the loss of a loved one. The next meeting will be in the coffee lounge at St. John's on Tuesday 18th March 2:00- 3:30pm.



With things opening up again please help raise much-needed donations for St John's Old Malden - Repairs Fund when you plan ahead and arrange things to do! From booking staycations and getaways to tickets for concerts or other fun activities, remember to use #easyfundraising to raise FREE donations for us. Book now: <http://efraising.org/fx3w1QPP7u>

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