

St Bartholomew's Church

Oxford Parish News

May 2020

www.stbartholomews.co.uk



SERVICES AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

All services and church meetings (other than those being held online) have been suspended until further notice.

A Sunday service and a message for the young people is being posted to the church website www.stbartholomews.co.uk each week .

There are other helpful resources on the website too, including: Prayer for the week, Noticesheet, Prayer Diary, Order of Morning and Night Prayer and this magazine should you wish to read it

Please look at the website if you can.

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue with a cup of tea or coffee! We are thinking about you in these challenging times.

The Editors

Cover photo: Rainbow over Otford photo by Jane Mucklow
www.janemucklowphotography.co.uk

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VIEW FROM THE (VIRTUAL) PEW

This month Christians will be celebrating the Ascension. Although this may not seem as immediately important as perhaps the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, it is still important nonetheless. And as preachers will tell you, Jesus never did anything without a reason. These reasons were often unclear to the disciples and followers of Jesus at the time. They sometimes had no idea what Jesus meant by what he said and did, but we can forgive them for this because they did not have the rest of the story like we do. Through the Ascension, Jesus gives his followers their very clear instructions (or mission).

Interestingly, just as we have a mixture of two similar, but different, stories at Christmas (Matthew's and Luke's accounts), so too we have a mixture of two similar, but different stories regarding the Ascension. In Matthew's account, Jesus gives 'The Great Commission' – 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them' ... 'and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.' (Matthew 28: 19-20). However, this is where Matthew's gospel stops. That's it. Jesus gives the disciples an explicit mission and that's the end. Matthew makes no reference to Jesus ascending.

So where do we get this idea? You might have guessed it: we get it from Luke's account. Now Luke tells us that Jesus blesses the disciples and then he is taken up into heaven (Luke 24: 51). Luke, unlike Matthew, makes no mention of a mission for the disciples. Acts 1: 6-11 (also written by Luke) gives a little more detail of the Ascension, but again makes no explicit reference to a mission for the disciples. Just that they will be 'witnesses' across the world.

It's interesting to try and ponder the difference between 'witnessing' and 'evangelism'. For me the difference is that 'witnessing' is simply spreading information. If someone asks about my faith, I tell them. Whereas evangelism, for me, is the spreading of information in order to convert. So, when I read these passages, one says to go and convert all the world, whereas the other is to just spread the news. What do you think? Are they one and the same?

But why is the Ascension important? Well, it gives us a satisfying ending to the 'greatest story ever told'. We've read chapters about a brilliant birth, magnificent miracles and profound and precise preaching. What we get from the Ascension, in very few words from Jesus, is Jesus telling his disciples to remember what he has done and taught, to spread the Gospel across the world, and (as if he needed to) he gives the instruction a stamp of approval, by ascending into heaven. Once again confirming his authority.

Ben Southgate
Member of the PCC



FROM ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

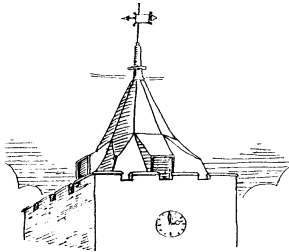


Registers



5th March

Ernest (Nobby) George **Brackett**
(aged 87)



CHURCH OPENING

During this time the church lobby will be open from 9am-12.30pm for the collection of Church Magazines and to drop off food for the Loaves and Fishes food bank. Please observe social distancing when approaching the church for either of these reasons.

SERVICES FROM ST BART'S

During this time of self-isolation, St Bart's will be providing a weekly Sunday service available online at www.stbartholomews.co.uk. If you are able, please join with us online, Sunday at 10am, to share together.

There are many other online resources provided by the Church of England at www.churchofengland.org

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

The APCM has been postponed. Good notice will be given of the new date.

Monthly Meditation—May

This year, May 17th is Rogation Sunday, when the Church traditionally prays for God's blessings on the fruits of the earth and the labours of those who produce our food.

I was lucky to have a rural childhood, and my church kept up the ancient tradition of a Rogationtide walk. Led by the choir, we stopped by fields of crops and animals, orchards and meadows, woods and streams. At each place we gave thanks and asked a blessing.

It is good to be reminded of our dependence upon those who produce our food and work in our shops and logistic companies, keeping us fed in difficult times and to be grateful for our beautiful countryside.

As I write this, we are still allowed out for some daily exercise, so why not use that time to do your own rogation walk, saying a prayer as you pass places that are meaningful to you. If you have to remain at home, ask for a blessing for what you can see and hear in your garden or through your open window or even the beautiful things you see on programmes about the countryside.

We remember and give thanks, Lord, for your mercy and loving-kindness towards us.

Bless this good earth, and make it fruitful.

Bless the wonders of creation.

Bless all who labour to provide us with our daily bread.

Bless the homes of our parish and all who live within them.

Bless our common life and our care for our neighbours. Amen.



IN MEMORIAM ... NOBBY BRACKETT



Nobby was born on 6th November 1932 in Whitechapel, within the sound of Bow Bells, and was proud of his cockney origins.

His schooling was severely interrupted by the

Second World War. During his National Service in the army, he was posted to Cyprus, and Egypt. Back in the UK, his duties included guarding Buckingham Palace and the Bank of England.

On leaving the army, he served as a guard on the London Underground, worked as a French Polisher, and made metal frames for chairs. He was very practical, and qualified as an electrician. As a result, he became a maintenance engineer and boiler man at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children in Hackney Road where he stayed for the rest of his career, finishing as Head Porter.

Nobby married his first wife Joan in 1955 and their children, Sandra and Butch, were born in 1956 and 1957. Sadly, Nobby and Joan went their separate ways in 1966.

It was through the hospital that Nobby and Mary first met. Their friendship deepened over many years and they were married in 1982 in Hackney Town Hall.

One of Nobby's main interests was looking after the kit for "Top Ten Eleven" football team comprising show biz stars, pop singers and ex-professional footballers. On one occasion, the producer of the TV series "Z Cars" wanted to borrow the kit for a programme and Nobby

ended up as an extra, playing football in the background!

Nobby and Mary came to Otford in 1996 and found a warm welcome. He soon struck up a friendship with Bill Ambrose, a Colonel in Nobby's old regiment, who introduced Nobby to St. Bartholomew's Church, where he began to play an active role.

Nobby was a member of the Otford Branch of the Royal British Legion, and he would lay a wreath at the Otford War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday.

At harvest time, Nobby and Mary would take gifts to St. Saviour's Priory in East London and later supplied clothes and bedding for families facing hard times.

In 2011, Nobby was a recipient of Maundy Money from the Queen at Westminster Abbey, in recognition of his service to so many people throughout his life.

Nobby had a heart for children and was known as "church grandpa". He often gave pocket money to children at church and at Easter he provided them all with Easter Eggs.

Nobby was very generous, and a gracious host. He greeted everyone with a warm smile and always had time to stop for a chat, especially when out walking with Mary and his beloved Scotty dogs. Close friends wrote in a card, "He brightened the lives of all who knew him".

We shall miss him greatly, but we shall always cherish his memory in our hearts, grateful for his friendship that has enriched our lives.

*From a Eulogy given by
Rev'd Richard Worssam*

A MINISTERIAL REFLECTION FOR MAY

This year the first May Bank Holiday has been moved as we were meant to be marking VE Day on Friday 8th May. At the time of writing this nothing has yet been mentioned so I do not know if there will be anything taking place. VE Day, or Victory in Europe Day, marks the day towards the end of World War II when fighting against Nazi Germany came to an end in Europe. Sir Andrew Gregory, chief executive of SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, said, "It is our duty to keep the events of the past alive in collective memory, including future generations - this is how we ensure that such a conflict never happens again. It is our hope that the nation takes a moment to reflect on the significance of this date, as a milestone that changed the course of history for the whole world".

Events which should have been taking place over the 3-day weekend across the country, included:

- the Nation's Toast in over 20,000 pubs to raise a glass to the Heroes of World War II
- bagpipers playing the traditional Battle's O'er at the top of the 4 highest peaks in the UK – Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike, Mount Snowdon, and Slieve Donard in NI
- bells in churches and cathedrals to be rung in a special 'Ringing Out for Peace'
- street parties and other celebrations

Obviously, any celebrations or remembrances will have to be done from the privacy of our homes and none of these activities will be able to happen.

However, as the day approaches let us think about what we can apply to our present situation. At the beginning of the war many

thought that it would not last long. As weeks became months then years many began to wonder if it would ever end. There were many times of despair, grief and worry. Families lost loved ones and many showed courage and compassion as they continued to work in very dangerous conditions. Then, the 8th May 1945 arrived – Victory in Europe Day! The celebrations lasted a few days, not surprisingly. The war had ended in Europe and peace reigned once again.

In the same way we are living in unsettled times; there is an enemy we are all trying to overcome. We are working together, encouraging each other in inventive and creative ways, supporting those who continue to work in very difficult and dangerous situations. However, there will be an end to this too. We will have a day, or days of celebration. As Ben reminded us on the first page, May is the month when we celebrate Jesus' Ascension and Pentecost – the coming of the Holy Spirit, who is with us today and every day.

*Mags Southgate
Lay-Reader*



RECIPES FOR MAY

SARDINE PATÉ AND ITALIAN BEAN SOUP

We have certainly had to shop differently in recent weeks in order to minimise the number of trips or deliveries required. I think the most useful freezer ingredients have been packs of frozen sliced onions or peppers which are the base for so many dishes. The recipes I've included here can be made from store cupboard ingredients or ones which have a long fridge life.

Sardine Paté (so easy it's embarrassing!)

Blitz around 150 grams of cream cheese, a tin of sardines and some lemon juice and black pepper. That's it and it tastes really good. Lemons keep well in the fridge, and I've discovered that the juice freezes well and defrosts very quickly. Some smoked mackerel fillets or a tin of tuna could replace the sardines.



Italian Bean Soup

8 oz dried haricot beans.

1 large chopped onion or a packet of frozen onions

2 tbsl olive oil

3 cloves garlic (you can also buy frozen chopped garlic)

2 tbsl tomato puree

1 tsp dried basil or thyme

Salt and pepper

Pasta or rice

2-3 oz grated Parmesan or strong Cheddar cheese

Boil up the beans with 3 pints of water, then let soak for two hours.

Fry the onions until nearly soft and add the garlic and fry together until soft. Add the tomato puree and herbs, then pour in the beans and cooking water. Bring to a simmer, and simmer for about an hour. Add salt and pepper, then puree half the mixture. Return to the pan and add 4oz pasta and cook for another 10-12 minutes. (I didn't have pasta so threw in a pack of microwavable rice and that was fine). Serve with cheese grated over.

Hilary Fothergill



FAITH IN THE FAMILY...

May: Jesus the way to the Father



Last month, we celebrated Easter, when we remembered that Jesus died on the

cross but came back to life again on that wonderful Easter Sunday. Shortly before he was killed, Jesus tried to prepare his friends the disciples for his death. He said that he would be with them for only a little longer; he had to go away somewhere that they could not follow. Then he gave them a new command:

“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you do this, everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

But his friends, who had been following Jesus for so long, could only think of one thing. Why couldn't they follow their Master to the place he was going? *Why do you think Jesus said they couldn't come along? (He knew that he was going to die on the cross.)*

They must have looked worried, because Jesus began to comfort them. He said, “Trust in God and trust in me, too”. *Have you ever had to trust someone when you didn't really understand what they were saying?*

Then he continued, “I am going to my Father's house. It has many rooms and I am going to prepare one for each of you”. *Can you think what he meant? (Jesus was going*

to heaven so that he could prepare a place for each one of us - when we die we can go there to be with Him forever.)

Then he said, “You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Well, the disciples were even more mystified, now. Thomas said, “How *can* we know the way? We don't even know where you are going.”

Jesus replied with a saying that has become very famous. He said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.” Jesus was explaining that he is like a gate on the pathway to his Father God and eventually to heaven.

Jesus said that if his friends truly loved him, they would obey his command to love one another. He also promised not to leave them alone, like orphans. He would send them his Holy Spirit to help, inspire and guide them. This is what happened later at Pentecost when, with the sound of a rushing wind, the Holy Spirit descended on each of the disciples like separate tongues of fire! By then Jesus had gone back to heaven, but on this momentous day, each one felt Jesus to be with them in a new and closer way.

The Bible story: Read the story above together as a family. You can find it in John 14:1-21. You could chat about it as follows:

Do you know anyone who radiates love in all they do?

I wonder how other people might be able to tell that we follow Jesus.

Jesus describes heaven as a house with many rooms. How do you imagine heaven?

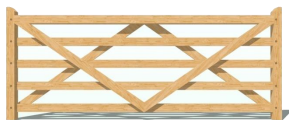
Have you ever felt God's Holy Spirit at work within you – perhaps guiding, comforting, teaching or encouraging you? What did this feel like? *This might be a good opportunity to share experiences.*

Off by heart!

How many family members can recite something off by heart? A poem from school, perhaps, a prayer or a Times Table! Challenge each other to learn:

Jesus said: I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me. **John 14: v 6**

Out and about



If you are on a daily walk around Otford, count

how many gates you see or go through. Look out for different types such as five-barred gates and kissing gates. Chat about how they give us a way through a barrier and access to a different area. Link with Jesus being the way to life in all its fullness. As a parent, share how knowing Jesus can give you access to peace, feeling loved and valued, a purpose in life, forgiveness and the way to find God.

Home, sweet, home

Play an old-fashioned board game together such as Ludo that has a 'Home'

section. Chat about what 'home' means to everyone – hopefully a place of belonging, of being at ease and a refuge. Link with the idea that life is a journey on our way to our final home with God.



Draw a picture of your home together, with family members looking out of the windows. You could write above and below, *"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching . . . and we will come and make our home with him."*

Can you find out how many rooms Knole House has? Perhaps you could visit it one day. Write the name down on a coloured scrap of paper and post in a glass jar for the future. Fill the jar with things to do at a later date!

Pentecost is Sunday 31st May

Don't forget to wear something red on this day to remember the flickers of fire that came down on each of the disciples' heads when they received the Holy Spirit. Can you find the story in a Bible or storybook?

Prayer

Dear Jesus,

Please help me to love others as you love me. Come and make your home within me!



Amen

Vicki Howie

EVENTS, PEOPLE AND PLACES FROM OTFORD'S PAST

When you could go to the Hairdresser!

Following on from Ed Thompson's article about 'Stan the barber' in the last magazine, here Ed reminds us of some other hairdressing establishments in Otford. This is derived from the article written by Ed which first appeared in the Otford History and Heritage Newsletter in the summer of 2018 and all the photographs are from Ed's collection.

The first official mention of a gentlemen's hairdresser in the village appears in the street directory of 1936 when W.G Jeffery had set up a business at Ivydene cottage in the High Street.



(Above, the first cottage converted into a shop prewar, photographed in 1943)

Village resident Elsie Browning remembers the first cottage to be converted into a shop: 'A large window was inserted across the front with a gay chintz curtain behind, with a notice on it to inform that umbrellas could be repaired or recovered: apply within. Here Mr Jeffery set up his barber's and hairdressing shop, when villagers forsook old Jonah of Gibraltar Cottages, who had hitherto dealt with the villagers' haircuts. As there was a gaping hole in the

floorboards under the barber's chair, this establishment became known as 'Sweeney Todd's'! In time, the barber's wife died, the curtain faded and the premises was none too clean. Particular customers had their haircuts on a Monday when the drapery round the shoulders was at its cleanest!' Village resident Gilbert Denton recalls 'The one time I went there was to have the black cloth replaced on my umbrella - he sneered but said the frame was OK. His shop was no advertisement to have a haircut; rather it endorsed the local belief Mr Jeffery only came in when he wasn't sheep shearing!'



(Left, 14 High Street where Mr Jeffery set up his barber's shop, photographed in 1955)

Naturally, as well as barbers' shops there were also a number of ladies'

'salons', the first of which opened either just before, or during the war at number 3 of the comparatively newly-built parade of shops on the Sevenoaks Road.

Miss Irene Waite, the sister of Peter and Cyril who ran 'The Castle Garage', (later 'Waites' on the Sevenoaks Road), ran the salon. According to an advertisement in a wartime guide to the village, she had excellent credentials, having previously worked at the well-known Peter Robinson of Oxford Street, London.



Above, the Parade of shops on the Sevenoaks Road, in 1955

In the meantime, a Mr Pryor had set up a gentleman's hairdressing business in the little lock up shop in the High Street next to Groves the Butchers. As Ed explained in the last magazine, he subsequently passed the business on to Stan Myers. A close relationship developed between Mr Pryor and Irene Waite; by 1948 and according to the local village guidebook there was not only a business alliance but a personal one too between them as the advert below suggests! Joint advertising of the establishments had begun in 1950.



In case you might be wondering what 'Jamal' was, according to 1940s adverts, it was a means of obtaining a 'machineless permanent freedom wave'. As contemporary publicity stated, 'No machinery! No wires! Only featherlight vapets to perfect lovely waves and curls, and you're free, cool and comfortable'. Such were the hair fashions of the times.

Telephone: Otford 32

"Irene"

(J. & I. PRYOR)

Ladies' Hairdressers
Permanent Waving Specialists

**3 SEVENOAKS ROAD,
OTFORD**

* * *

Gentlemen's Hairdressing . .

Our First Class Gentlemen's
Saloon is at

44 HIGH STREET, OTFORD
(Next door to T. GROVES & SON, Family Butchers)



Jamal

We should perhaps apologise for reminding our readers about village hairdressing establishments when under the present stressful circumstances all are closed. But if you have any memories of hairdressing shops in Otford, or indeed any other shops now long disappeared we would love to hear from you. Please contact us by email at info@otfordhistoricalsociety.co.uk

Please note all the history meetings scheduled to take place in the immediate future in Otford have been postponed. The next Otford and District Historical Society meeting will be in September. The 1940s Society has postponed the meeting scheduled for May and will review subsequent meetings in the light of government advice. The 'VE 75' Commemorative events scheduled for May have also been postponed, as has the 'Field of Cloth of Gold' event scheduled for June. You can find out more by joining our email distribution list to receive the (free) Otford History and Heritage Newsletter at info@otfordhistoricalsociety.co.uk. The Heritage Centre is also closed until further notice. There is a small selection of historic photographs and other information on the Otford and District Historical Society website which you can access at: <http://otford.co.uk/historicalsociety/>

Alan Williams

MAY WALK

A two and a half mile walk which climbs up above Fackenden Down and offers lovely views over Otford, Shoreham and the Darent Valley. At this time of year the green colours of spring are at their most intense and the wild flowers and grasses are growing apace.

The walk includes a couple of short steep sections and the path is narrow and uneven at higher level – sturdy footwear is advisable.

The walk begins in Otford car park.

From the car park enter the recreation ground and head for the far right corner passing a proliferation of cow parsley and cleavers (stickyweed) at the margins of the field. With the centre of Otford's Solar System to your left, exit onto Park Lane. Park Farm Stables will be in front of you. Turn left along the lane, noting the beautiful hawthorn flowers in the hedgerow to your left.



When you come to a junction where the track turns left, continue straight on to follow the bridleway as indicated on the three armed signpost. The bridleway climbs gently upwards, with pleasing views of the low hills bordering the valley to both sides. Next you will come to the Darent Valley Golf Course. Continue ahead on the enclosed path between the fairways – following the blue arrow marked 'Explore Kent'.

On reaching a single track tarmac road, ignore the footpath ahead of you and turn right, walking uphill and crossing the railway line before reaching the A225. Turn left, then immediately right to go up Fackenden Lane.

Walk uphill on the road, passing 'The Cottage' on your right. Just before the road bends to the left, you will see a green Kent Wildlife Trust (Fackenden Down) information board about twenty yards to your right. Walk through the metal chain pedestrian gate towards the notice board and pause awhile to read about Fackenden Down – an important area of chalk grassland which is home to many interesting birds, plants, butterflies and moths.

Then, from the sign, retrace your steps for ten yards towards the road to a stile on your right (with a sign saying 'Access Land') leading to a grassy uphill path. Walk steeply uphill though a plethora of wildflowers to the top right hand corner of the field. Turn round when you get there to catch your breath and enjoy the view!

Now climb the wooden stile in the corner of the meadow and follow the narrow, uneven path which runs alongside the barbed wire fencing. On a wet May morning you may spot Roman snails – the largest type of snail in the UK and a protected species.



As you progress along the path, which soon levels out, you will have beautiful views towards both Shoreham (behind you) and Otford. Don't omit to look up too to admire the luminous underside of the leaves of the whitebeam. Pretty clusters of bugle and buttercups adorn the grassy areas beside the path.

Finally the path descends through a wooded area. Keep close to the barbed wire fence



until you emerge, above Otford, onto a grassy area on Greenhill where, in late May, ox-eye daisies and orchids begin to bloom.

Turn right

down the steep slope, passing clusters of sainfoin, towards the Shoreham Road, initially following the footpath situated between two wire fences.



Next climb over the stile directly ahead of you to enter a meadow which abounds with wildflowers and attractive

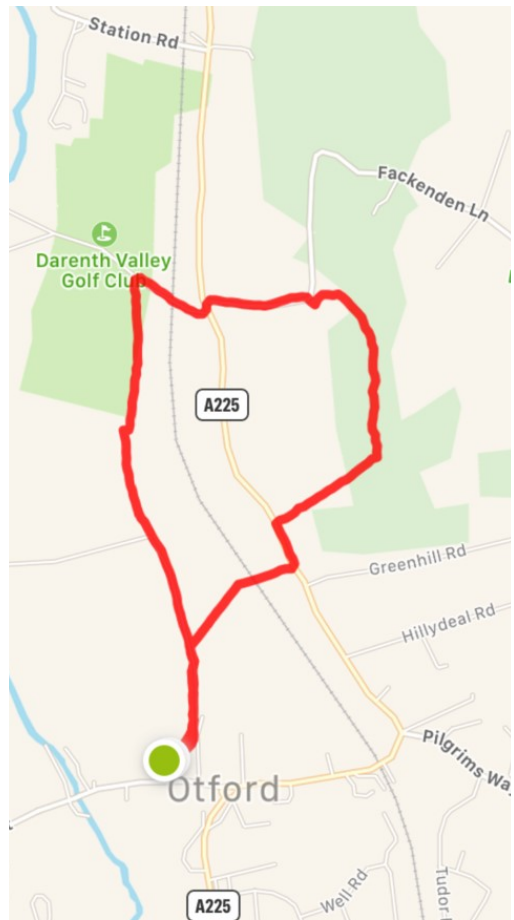


grasses in the summer. At the end of May, amid the tall grasses, you will see large clumps of ox-eye daisies and hawkweed often with butterflies flitting happily across the area.

Walk towards the road, crossing another wooden stile along the way. Turn left on the road then, after about 100 yards, look out for the footpath sign to your right (opposite

a house called Nutwood). Follow this path over the railway line and continue straight on until you reach a field which often has horses grazing in it. Keeping close to the fence on your right hand side, cross the field and go through two gates to reach Park Lane. Turn left and, after a short distance, enter the Recreation Ground to retrace your steps back to the village car park.

Christeen Malan



WORSHIP, EXERCISE AND LEISURE FROM HOME

The prospect of spending weeks at home may seem daunting. If you have young children, that will present its own challenges, especially if you are trying to home school and work remotely at the same time. If you live alone, on the other hand, perhaps the days seem rather long at the moment.

With an internet connection and a computer, tablet or smart phone, there is a great deal on offer to keep you (and your children) occupied and it really doesn't take much skill to access them. We can all worship on-line now, we can join exercise classes and we can even visit art galleries, museums and the countryside. Even if you are not on the internet you can use your radio and your television to join in some of these activities.

Most churches, such as our own, (www.stbartholomews.co.uk) are now offering virtual services each Sunday, which can be accessed through their website. You will also find advice there on how to keep in touch with other members of your congregation and many churches are offering suggested activities for children. If you are not on the internet, try contacting your church office to find out how you can worship at this time – they may be able to offer paper copies of sermons or weekly prayers, for example. You can also follow Sunday worship on Radio 4 at 8.10 am or BBC1 at 10.45 am.

Church websites and telephone contact details

St Bartholomew's www.stbartholomews.co.uk ; tel:01959 523185

Otford Methodist Church
www.otfordmethodistchurch.org.uk ; tel: 01959 523090

Otford Evangelical Free Church
www.otfordchurch.com ; tel: 07510 909035

Holy Trinity Church www.sevrccparish.org.uk/Mas-holy_trinity.htm ; tel: 01732 454177

If you are keen to keep fit you are probably already taking the one walk or run, we are each allowed every day. You could add to these one or more of the many online exercise classes available free online. Joe Wickes, also known as the Body Coach, is offering a very popular exercise class on his You Tube channel every morning at 9.00 am. Originally planned for children, from toddlers to secondary school age, his sessions are also good for adults. You'll find them by searching for 'PE with Joe Wickes' on YouTube. You don't need any equipment – just your trainers – although I would say that you need to be relatively fit to keep up.

If you want a gentler class you might prefer a 10 Today (<https://10today.co.uk>), which is a ten minute audio or video routine created by Sport England (with partners) aimed at keeping older people healthy and active, and including exercises for those who are chair bound. There are ten routines; originally broadcast on BBC Radio 5Live Sports Extra, they are also available as podcasts on the BBC sounds app.

Or why not try a yoga class? Yoga with Adrienne (www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene) offers classes for adults of all ages and fitness levels and Cosmic Kids Yoga (www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga) caters for children.

There are plenty of cultural activities too. Many galleries and museums allow you to search their collections online. For example the National Gallery (www.nationalgallery.org.uk) offers the opportunity to explore their most popular masterpieces through their website and also

virtual tours of some of their collections; and similarly the British Museum (www.britishmuseum.org) offers a whole range of ways to explore its artefacts, including virtual tours. The Royal Academy (<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk>) offers a selection of online artist interviews and curator led tours of their exhibitions.

You only need to take a short walk from Otford village to be in beautiful countryside. If you long to go a little further afield, some National Trust properties are offering virtual glimpses of their best treasures. For example, you can listen to the birdsong in the beautiful rose garden at Sissinghurst Castle in high summer (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sissinghurst-castle-garden/features/sissinghurst-castle-virtual-tours); or you can take a short virtual tour of the flowers and plants growing at Chartwell this spring (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell). While you are on the National Trust website,

look out for their suggestions for things to do, including garden adventures with the children, 'how to' guides for crafts and recipes for treats.

I have only given you a tiny sample of what is available. You will have other ideas, and probably better ones too. Please do share them with others. If you know of relatives or neighbours who do not have access to the internet, and who perhaps can't get the newspaper every day at the moment, perhaps you could access the radio times online for them (www.radiotimes.com) to help them to find television and radio programmes they will enjoy.

Thanks to Christeen Malan, Vicki Howie and Jocelyn Hart for the ideas they contributed to this article.

Eileen Arney



The twins had been doing Messy Church at home.

AT HOME WITH THE BROWN FAMILY

Just a few weeks ago I remember clearly a conversation with my neighbour. We were walking to school AGAIN, weary and with reluctant children dragging their heels behind us. We were commenting on how exhausted we were and how we still had half the term to go! Every evening we were taxi drivers for our children, racing around until late, meals were rushed and bedtimes were getting later and later! Little did we know what was to come . . .

On Friday 20th March 2020, schools shut and that was that - we were all home for the foreseeable future. No more commuting into London, no more school runs, after- school activities, parties or days out. We seemed to adjust pretty well and the first weekend was a welcome time of relaxation and rest. Our calendar had been due to be absolutely rammed full, every minute accounted for with Spring concerts, dancing competitions, parties and family lunches and suddenly we had nothing! We enjoyed the sunshine, swingball came out and we spent the weekend tidying up and playing in the garden.

Soon enough though Monday hit and everyone had work to do. We quickly made sure that each person had a work station where they could feel comfortable and connected to all the technology required. And then we were off . . .

It has been an interesting couple of weeks and we are still learning to adjust. However, there are many positives already coming out of this, not least that I feel truly blessed to have some extra time with my children before they leave home. I felt as though life was out of control, we were all so busy. I longed for more family time. Time to sit down and have meals together. I wished that my husband was home more and could see the children during the week. Now we

eat every meal together, we are having evenings playing games and watching films. There is time for walks together as a family. The children are playing in the garden and rediscovering their old toys that they no longer had time for. Everything has slowed down.

I have noticed that the children appreciate the food that they are given and are no longer asking for constant snacks. I had got into the bad habit of cooking different meals for different people depending on their tastes. That has stopped. They understand that we can't just pop to the shops to stock up.

I have also felt a sense of community like never before. We have a What's App group in our road. It is friendly and supportive and people are always willing to help others. We are even planning a virtual quiz night and we have great ideas for a big street party once all this is over. Our cul de sac is full of rainbows and teddy bears in the windows for the children to spot on their walks. And you only have to stand in your front garden for a moment before someone walks



past and chats. One of the most moving things that I have ever witnessed is everyone appearing from their doorways on a Thursday evening clapping the NHS.

It has most certainly brought out the good in many people. We are thankful that it is Spring and we are able to be outside, see the flowers appearing and the insects getting busy in the garden. Days are getting longer and the sun is appearing more and more. And we are so lucky to live in such a beautiful part of the country, walks around the village, across the fields, in the woods and up the nearby hills.

I am not denying that we are missing seeing our family, our days out, our chats with friends and even school. We have our highs and lows. It's hard to keep everyone engaged and motivated. But we are keeping busy – and thank goodness for the internet! Where would we be if this had happened 20 years ago? I have had virtual coffees with friends, choir get togethers and music jams on line.

We are certainly keeping busy. There are so many amazing resources on line including exercise sessions, art, music, science and many more. Resources are being offered free by all sorts of companies and individuals. We have

had an amazing time watching the live webcams from Chester Zoo, learning body percussion with Body Beats and listening to stories read by David Walliams. We've watched science experiments, explored WWII bunkers and of course played games over the internet and chatted with friends. Staying connected is so important.

And that is just the start - there's art, craft, cooking, gardening, music and reading not to mention trying to squeeze in the school work!!

We would like to thank all those that are involved in keeping this country running while we stay safe at home. We applaud you and respect you all. Thank you also to those that have been creative and imaginative enough to 'go virtual' so that we can continue to learn and play. We will get through this and before we know it, we will be back to that hectic, crazy life again - but hopefully a little wiser, more appreciative and more mindful!

Louise Brown



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?...

Growing up, St Bartholomew's was a key part of my life; I was baptised by Rev'd David Towne and later confirmed when Rev'd Richard Worssam was the vicar. My granny, Sally Woestmann, was churchwarden (often assisted by Wolfgang, "Gramps") and my parents, Andrew and Ellen, helped with many aspects of church life, including Sunday School, youth work, leading services and preaching.

It had a lovely community feel to it, more like a family, and I still remember Nobby giving a group of us some pocket money on Sundays - several of us were in the music group playing at services. My sister Katherine and I were both members of the Young People's Fellowship (YPF) until we moved to St. Nicks in Sevenoaks in 2009. I have very fond memories of games of rounders on Otford recreation ground, helping on Church Fair days, including riding in the back of the lorry transporting the tables, and making pizzas and reading the Bible together at YPF. I also remember CU@5 really clearly, an afternoon service Rev'd Pat Hopkins introduced - it was fantastic as it meant I was able to play netball in the morning without missing out on Church, and with the added benefit of a huge tea after lively worship!

A group of us from YPF started at Bennett Memorial School together. I then studied Primary Education at Winchester University, specialising in PE and then taught in Kent for two years. Now I work for The Sports Factory (founded by Ruth Anderson in 2014 at St Thomas, Norwich, a Holy Trinity Brompton church plant) where we want to see people's lives changed as a result of engagement with sport, faith and the Church. We coach PE lessons,

school clubs, deliver Active RE lessons, lead Pilates and prayer, then in the evening we run adult social sport. The children we meet in schools are invited to 'Legacy', our holiday club which runs every half term; days packed full of sport, and most importantly, the children all hear a Bible story and are invited to church on Sunday, where the Sports Factory team take over the kids' work. The evening adult netball session starts and ends in prayer with a Christian message at half time. Overall, we love Jesus and love sport and want to see people's lives changed by the Gospel; the team pray regularly for individuals, groups and events. St Bart's taught me the importance of building good relationships, a model Sports Factory uses as it reaches areas in Norfolk, revitalising and planting churches. My first year of a university course in Theology with Sports Ministry is enabling me to understand this work better. Please email me at: Susie.bratby@sportsfactory.org.uk if you would like to know any more about sports ministry.

Susanna Bratby



WELCOME WILDLIFE INTO YOUR GARDEN



Despite the 'lockdown' caused by the coronavirus, I hope you have been able to enjoy the coming of Spring in your gardens, and to view the countryside from your windows. The spell of summer temperatures in April encouraged many plants to flower early. Have you been able to be a nature detective or write in a little book the things you have done and seen?

I think May is my favourite month, when seeds are sown (and gently watered), and while we await their first signs of growth we can enjoy the trees. Daffodils, Primroses, Cowslips, Bluebells and Tulips have brought an abundance of colour to our surroundings. Now we see flowers on the trees, Whitebeam, Wayfarer, Mountain Ash/Rowan, Hawthorn/May. A country saying is "Don't cast a clout (an item of clothing) until May is out" because this month can sometimes have a very cold spell, even a frost. Villagers used to choose a May Queen to open their Spring Fair. Laburnums' yellow tassels, Horse Chestnuts' white candles and Sycamores' tiny flowering tassels dance in the breeze. Beech trees display their beautiful green shiny leaves. Lilac, Azaleas and many garden shrubs add an abundance of blossom. Wild flowers, such as the white star-shaped flowers of Wood Anemones, abound in the woodlands; also Buttercups, Daisies, Wild Strawberries, and White and Red Deadnettle (they look a bit like stinging nettles but they don't have the strong hairy stalks and leaves that sting!).

The wayside flowers of pink Ladies Smock/Milkmaids, Cow Parsley, and Herb Robert, can be seen, as well as Black Medick that has little pompoms of yellow flowers, named because their seeds are black when ripe. Look out for

the large pointed shiny leaves and the creamy white pointed flower with a deep- red velvety stamen of the Arum Lily, also called Cuckoopint or Lords and Ladies.

If possible, borrow or buy a wild flower book to take with you to help with identification, or take a photo to look it up later.

Birds are building their nests, or have already and laid their eggs. Swifts, Swallows and House Martins are coming back from Africa. Cuckoos may be heard, telling us they have arrived and wishing to find a nest to lay their eggs for the rightful nest owners to protect that egg and bring up THEIR chick! Badgers and Foxes will be bringing their cubs out to play and learning how to live in the countryside. Frog and Toad spawn will have become Tadpoles, soon to be like their parents. Ladybirds, Beetles of all sorts, Butterflies, Moths, Bees, and Wasps are all busy gathering nectar and pollen, Ants are running around in the grass and building their ant hills. Despite the current situation, all nature is enjoying God's wonderful world.

May tip

Create a simple bird bath and bird table. Put out cheese, oats, peanuts, currants and bits of bacon. Hang up bits of wool, feathers, straw and string from a tree and note what different materials birds collect to use for their nests.



Elizabeth Ward

DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWS

Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Since the Coronavirus outbreak the District Council has been adapting to deliver its vital services during the lockdown. In this fast-moving situation the Council has had to adjust to find new ways to continue to run its services to support businesses and residents across the District.

District Council staff are essential to the delivery of the COVID-19 government response to ensure the best possible outcomes for everyone across the District. Staff and key workers are working in unique ways to provide services and performing extra duties to offer the new programmes of support. The demand for critical services is unprecedented and to keep up with the workload staff are working extended hours and giving up their weekends.

To ensure that the most vulnerable members of our community have all the help and support they need during this crisis, the District Council is working with a number of volunteer groups to provide a coordinated local community response. If you are required to self-isolate, or become unwell, support from people in your community during the Coronavirus outbreak is available through the Otford Road Friends project.

The Road Friends project, set up by Rod Shelton, has volunteers in every road in Otford. You should by now have received a note through your door saying who your Road Friend is and how to contact them. Volunteers are able to help with your shopping or picking up prescriptions and carry identification cards so you can check the identity of anyone who may call. For roads north of the station, contact Simon Featherstone at: simon@featherstones.net, and if you live south of the station (central and west Otford) and don't

know who your contact is, get in touch with Rod Shelton at: rodshelton@greenbee.net.

The District Council has created a volunteer register scheme which supports and links in with local community initiatives. If you are interested in offering to help please register at: www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/communityvolunteer.

If you are in the 'high risk group' due to serious health conditions you should have heard from the District Council who will provide additional support as required. If you have not heard from the District Council, please contact them on: 01732 227000.

The Council is responsible for administering a range of financial assistance for businesses, the business rate holiday and grant funding for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses and the small business grant. To find out more about Coronavirus advice for business go to:

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20004/business/511/coronavirus_covid-19_advice_for_businesses.

The District Council has a dedicated page on its website for residents covering a wide range of advice, support and help including financial assistance. To find out more about Coronavirus advice for residents visit: www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/coronavirus.

To help protect yourself and others please follow the Government's advice and stay at home, unless you need to get essential supplies, and only travel if absolutely necessary.

Stay safe and keep well.

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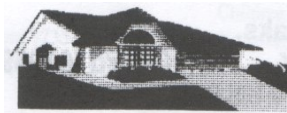
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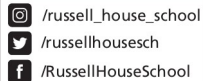
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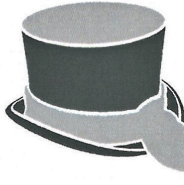
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