

S^t John's Gazette

50p Issue No.4

April 2016



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From the Vicarage Easter, England and St George.

Happy Easter to you all. We had a splendid Lent and Holy Week at St John's, culminating in a wonderful Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter. 125 people attended our Easter Day celebrations, and we enjoyed sunshine, great hymns, wonderful flowers and chicks and (chocolate) eggs. It is the great festival of the Christian Calendar, and here at St John's we kept the festival faithfully and joyfully.

On 23rd April, we will see the celebration, on a smaller scale, of St George's Day. Our seniors' lunch this year is dedicated to the theme of St George. As patron saint of England, St George is a bit of an enigma. Very little is known about the real St George. He is thought to have been born into a noble Christian family in the late third century in Cappadocia, an area which is now in Turkey. He followed his father's profession of soldier and became part of the retinue of the Emperor Diocletian. The emperor ordered the systematic persecution of Christians and George refused to take part. In 303, he was himself tortured and executed in Palestine, becoming an early Christian martyr.

The legend of George slaying a dragon and rescuing an innocent maiden from death is mediæval. St George's Day is celebrated in England on 23 April, reputed to be the day of George's martyrdom in 303.

The celebration of St George's Day is linked to a specific English patriotism. In this changing world, there is both irony and hope in the fact that the patron saint of the English is from Turkey. There has always been, in the heart of the English people, an openness and welcome for others, starting with our patron saint, and I pray that St George will continue to be a standard bearer for hope, welcome and inclusion in the future of this green and pleasant land. Alleluia, Christ is risen!



Fr Barrie

From the Church Wardens.

We have now come through the winter period and are running into spring. During the winter period we have continued to keep an eye on the church roof and also all the guttering to see that no problems have been caused by the extremes of weather that we have had this winter, with the high winds and a tremendous amount of rain we have had which in the past has given us problems.

During the winter period we have continued to do work both inside and outside the church cleaning and other jobs around the church itself have continued, we also hired a skip so that we could clear the main pathway directly through the churchyard where a lot of rubbish had accumulated from the autumn and where bonfires had been lit in the past. That is now being cleared and I will be very shortly sowing grass seed on a large area where all the rubbish has been moved, To once again make it look green and pleasant for those coming into the churchyard.

I have no doubt that as the days grow longer and it gets warmer that we will have to start looking at cutting all the grass both on the lawn in front of the main hall and also pathways around the church, which of course we normally do on a Saturday. If there is anyone who has a spare few minutes on the Saturday morning of course we are more than happy to see you as there are normally plenty of jobs to do around the grounds cutting grass and also tidying up in all the other areas.

We thank you for all the help that you give us during the course of the year.

Rosie Parker and Michael Taylor : Church Wardens.



A KenCoinQuestion

What is the denomination of this coin? There were 5 to the pound. What is its 'used name' (nick-name)? You may never have held one (last used in the 19th century). What was it made of?

Lago di Garda

The sun awakes to light the sky and gently warms the land
Soft breezes stir the water's edge like many unseen hands
In this quiet corner nature worked a miracle of creation
While time bears witness to her art and acts of perpetration.

Hills of cypress, banks of vine, bush of rose and oleander
The air is fragrant with perfume from this natural pomander
Distant mountains capped by snow in all their majesty
Protect this peaceful haven, time has granted amnesty.

Castles rise to flaunt past glory, echoes of time they knew
When Scaligeri ruled like kings, their power they did imbue
Villas nestle in the trees, sunlight playing on the stone
Their rooftops red as carmine, church bells ring their sombre tone.

Monte Baldo beckons us to make the slow ascent
Silently upwards to its peak where proudly it presents
A panoramic vision to entrance and captivate
Where changing cloud formation catches eye and fascinates.

Citrus fruits bedeck the trees that line the tiny streets
Flowers cascade from balconies, floral beds compete
Boats rock idly in the bay, lulled by the tranquil air
Picturesque pavement cafes invite travellers to the square.

The setting sun with tenderness paints the evening sky
Around the lake like sparkling gems lights shimmer and multiply
The spell is cast, the web ensnares the artist in his ardour
To capture the enchantment that surrounds Lago di Garda.

Audrey Robbins : *Dedicated, with thanks, to Pat & Peter Hull and Marilyn & Graham Jenks*

God's Creatures

One of my best-loved colleagues, when I was teaching, became famous (notorious?) within the school for one particular saying : "It's one of God's creatures".

She would trot out this comment whenever child or adult threatened so much as a fly – but it was very tongue-in-cheek because the next moment she would be swatting it with a rolled-up newspaper or tea-towel.

Now, some twenty years later, "God's Creatures" desperately need our help. "What is Man's role in the whole of Creation? Does Man have absolute dominion over other creatures? Is Man created to be a guardian of Nature and hand it on safely to the next generation?" However, one thing that is for certain is that Man has so far proved to be both the most constructive and destructive creature on the planet.

"God's Creatures" not only need our help – it is in our interests to give it!

You often hear talk of the future risk of the Earth being hit by a large meteor and yet our demise is far more likely to be caused by our own destruction of the natural world.

Thankfully, over the last fifty years or so, awareness of this danger has grown and people known as "conservationists" have been at work both as individuals and groups. The need is for ALL of us to become conservationists!

One key realisation has been that the whole of Nature can be regarded as a chain – break a link and the whole chain ceases to function properly. Some links can seem small and insignificant. My own area of interest is insect conservation.



Aesthetically insects can be beautiful, or interesting (or frightening!) to look at – but they are also key pollinators, not just bees but insects in general. Despite the efforts of conservationists, butterfly numbers alone have fallen by at least one third in this country in the past forty years – and bees are still a source of great concern.

No pollinators – very few plants – no green plants – no oxygen, and so on.

So, as Spring approaches, keep an eye out for insects such as bees and butterflies – see if you can spot a Brimstone butterfly (bright yellow or cream) or an Orange-tip (white with...yes, that's Holly Blue (pale blue with Even earlier, you may see a velvet with four beautiful bright orange, black and Tortoiseshell. These will hibernation. Yes,



right) or a little silvery underside). Peacock (dark eyespots) or a blue Small have come out of butterflies do live

longer than a day!

If you see these, try to jot down when, where and how many and keep a record. You now have a valuable conservation record and details can be forwarded (online if you wish) to an organisation such as “Butterfly Conservation”. But that's another story!

If allowed, as the year progresses, I will try to tell you more about conservation efforts and what you can do to help.

You can contact “Butterfly Conservation” as follows :

www.butterfly-conservation.org

facebook.com/save butterflies

twitter.com/save butterflies

or just Google “Butterfly Conservation”

Mike Nash

Rhyme and Reason 1

Down the lane there used to be
A very fine grand oak tree
We would sit under it and you would say
Will it not forever be this way
I love you and you love me
eternally it will be
All the things I say from the heart
I would die if we ever did part
In the spring the buds did show
Then summer time leaves would grow
Then in autumn they would start to fall
Do you not hear me when I call
Now the grand old tree is gone like you
My heart is in tatters broken in two
I wish you and the tree would come back again
Take away my pain
And let me once again be
Contented happy and free

Tracey Butler

Flowers

Thanks are due for all the donations given for flowers throughout the year. We enjoy arranging flowers in Church but would be unable to do this without the generosity of our congregation.



Joan, Sylvia & Sue : The Flower Ladies

I think thanks are also due to the Flower Ladies themselves; for their incessant effort to keep the inside of our church so beautiful, and especially for the stupendous arrangements they have been putting on for the special occasions.

Thank you Ladies. **Ken**

A SUPREME ACT OF FORGIVENESS

All of us at some time have had some act which has upset us greatly but our Christian teaching tells us we should forgive. Often that can prove difficult and I have so much admiration for those people who openly express forgiveness in the case of the brutal murder of a loved one. I often ask myself, could I be so forgiving in such circumstances? It is easy to say yes when, in the relative safety of your own home. It was this question that drew me to watch the documentary about Eva Kor Mozes a survivor of Auschwitz.

Eva lived with her twin sister Miriam and two older sisters and their parents in Port, Romania. They were the only Jewish residents and farmed the land they owned. Eva and her sister were just 6 years old, having been born in 1934, when a Hungarian Nazi armed guard occupied their village in 1940. In 1944 the family were transported to the regional ghetto and within weeks to Auschwitz death camp. The twins were then 10 years old and soon came to the attention of Dr. Josef Mengele, named "The Angel of Death". He selected Eva and Miriam to join a group of twins to be used as human guinea pigs in his experiments, the objective being to create a supreme Aryan race. Most children died as a result. I will abstain from chronicling his experiments as they are far too horrific for words, suffice to say he did not often use anaesthetic, the thought of which leaves me speechless. Eva would be given as many as 7 injections into her arm in one day, the contents unknown except they were deadly. Her arms and legs began to swell and she felt very ill. She heard Mengele say she would be dead in two weeks, but Eva was determined to live as it was known if a twin died the surviving twin would immediately be killed as being of no value to the experiments. Eva had to crawl everywhere as she was unable to use her arms and legs and the pain was too great. By this time the girls had heard their parents and two sisters had all been gassed.

In January 1945 Russian troops liberated the camp and Eva and Miriam were sent to an Orphanage in Poland. They found a Displaced Persons Camp and located a friend of their mother who helped them back to Romania. Although Romania came under Communist rule the girls were given permission to emigrate to Israel where eventually Eva married an American and went to live in the United States.

In 2015 Eva went to Germany to testify in the trial of one, Oskar Groening, a former Nazi who worked at Auschwitz. Secret filming showed Eva embracing Oskar in an act of forgiveness as she tried also to get him to persuade other fellow Nazis to repent. Many victims of Auschwitz did not agree with her decision to forgive, one Jewish man saying he could not forgive the murder of 50 members of his family. Eva is recorded as saying"The best revenge is the moment the victim forgives the perpetrator as he no longer has any influence on the victim's life." She also asked Groening not only to repent but to teach young people to reform.

Once again I ask myself, in Eva's shoes would I have been so willing to forgive knowing all my family had been murdered. It is very difficult – I would like to think I would do just that but then one questions whether you are being disloyal to the memory of your loved ones, especially if one member happens to be a baby or young child. I admire Eva tremendously after all that she went through and the work she is doing in setting up Charities and a Museum to educate the public. May God walk beside her in all that she is doing.

Audrey Robbins

Ken's Quiz : Answers to Quiz 3

Q1 (the easy route) Start by saying :

"let my youngest brother's age be x " (oh no! algebra!)

Then my other brother's age will be 2 times $(x + 1)$

And my age will be 2 times $(x + 1) + 10$

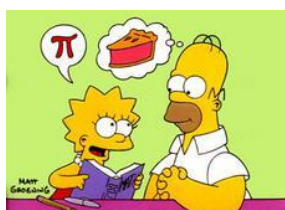
But we know that $x = 10$

So my age is 2 times $(10 + 1) + 10$

2 times 11 + 10

22 + 10

...and therefore I am **32**



Note that you don't have to use " x "; you could leave a "hole", something like this :

My middle brother is twice as old as my youngest brother will be next year and I am another 10 years older than this.

So, I must be 2 times 11 + 10 ... 32

If you prefer this method, don't be surprised when I tell you that you have (still) performed an algebraic task! You just didn't want to use a symbol (like I used x). Clearly you suffer from a symbolphobia **but** you can do algebra. Well done!

(the (slightly) more complicated route) Start by saying :

Let my age be x .

In which case, my middle brother will be of age $x - 10$.

My youngest brother is actually 10 and will be 11 next year.

So my middle brother's age is twice 11 or 22.

Therefore my age is 22 + 10 or 32.



Oh...I did say that there were two possible answers. OK. One of the answers is 32 (the correct answer); the other answer isn't.

Ken (continued on next page)

Ken's Quiz (continued)

Q2 For those who can “see” stereoscopic pictures, you will have seen a large heart. (only one person communicated this (correct) answer to me; and that was by ‘phone.) If you want any more stereoscopic pictures, just let me know.

Quiz 4

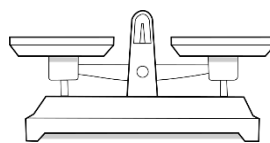
Q1. In Lsd (no, not the psychotic drug!)

- (i) How many pennies (1d) were there in a shilling?
- (ii) How many shillings (1/-) were there in a pound?
- (iii) How many pennies were there in a pound?
- (iv) How many shillings were there in a sovereign?
- (v) How many shillings were there in a florin?
- (vi) How many shillings were there in a guinea?
- (vii) What name was used for 2/6d?
- (viii) What name was used for 5/-?
- (ix) Add together : £2/14s/6d and £1/8s/10d
- (x) What change from £5 when you spent 19/9½d ?



Q2. In “imperial” units

- (a) How many inches in a foot?
- (b) How many feet in a yard?
- (c) How many furlongs in a mile?
- (d) How many ounces in a pound?
- (e) How many pounds in a stone?
- (f) What does cwt stand for?
- (g) What does lb stand for?
- (h) How many pints in a gallon?
- (i) How many square feet (ft²) in a square yard (yd²)?
- (j) How many pounds in a ton?



Ken

...from our Mission Apprentice

Bringing people closer to the Word Of God, bringing them closer to Jesus Christ Our Lord, helping them find a way in that is comfortable for them. That's what I am aiming to do.

Some of the ways that I am trying to achieve this is by helping people feel more welcomed into church, inviting people back for events and special services. If you know someone that you think would like to attend a service or special event then why not invite them, write it down, to help them remember when it is and explain to them what it's about - you never know what may come out of it!

There is so much good work that's being done in church to help people feel welcomed but there is always more that we can do and always more people that we can invite, welcome and include. So many more people that want to hear the Gospels of the Lord and know Jesus. We can all do something and invite someone!

Helen Greenwood – Mission Apprentice

RHYME AND REASON 2

When we are uncertain of what direction to take in life, and we try to work things out for ourselves - it is then, we must pray, Let go and let God and allow him to work out his plans.

The scripture for this month is from Proverbs 3- 5.6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
And lean not on your own understanding ;
In all your ways acknowledge Him
And He shall direct your paths.

Hayley Painter

FAKE GOODS WARNING

Talking about the rise in crime with a friend who used to be a Detective Inspector with the CID, he warned of the mounting number of fake goods flooding the Market. He advised to always use reputable Stores and shops and not be taken in by someone trying to sell, for instance, a well-known perfume for half the price. It is a pity that the genuine trader can be classed the same.

Everything from washing powder to watches, DVD'S to designer clothing. A quantity of washing powder when analysed was found to contain toxic matter. The haul must have been lucrative when you consider a large box is anything from £10 - £12 or more in supermarkets. The giveaway was the actual packaging, the cardboard was poor quality and not so thick as the genuine container. The same with hair shampoos and conditioners, these were found, in some instances, to contain rats' urine and together with the other ingredients caused burning to the scalp and some hair loss. I have often heard traders offering "designer" perfume for half the price you pay in the more upmarket Stores, but once opened the "perfume" evaporates and you are left with what looks like coloured water having perhaps handed over £20 or more.

Consumers do not get anything for nothing these days. Recently there was a flood of pound coins around and unfortunately I was given one in my change. At a quick glance I saw nothing out of the ordinary but the shopkeeper immediately knew it was forged. He told me as soon as he held the coin the weight was lighter than a genuine pound coin and also the serration around the edge was not uniform. Once this was pointed out to me I could see the difference between the forged coin and the genuine one. There are some very clever people about these days who, if they used their talents honestly could do a great deal of good. Just be careful and do not be taken in by someone offering branded goods for half the price unless, of course, you have proof it is genuine.

Audrey Robbins

Rhyme and Reason 3

I knelt down to pray, to see if your there;
You knelt down beside me, as you've always been there.
Holding my hands together we pray

Your warmth, Your energy I want you to stay.
Listen to me, Lord, Listen as I pray...
These mumbles of words that I want to say...

Calm Me Lord
Calm me through my storm

Keep Me Lord
Keep me safe from harm

Take Me Lord
Take away my sorrow

Show Me Lord
Show me there's tomorrow

Teach Me Lord
Teach me your loving ways

Guide Me Lord
Guide me into the light

Give Me Lord
Give me peace on earth

Enfold Me Lord
Enfold Move me in your love

Me Lord
Move me within your spirit

Walk With Me Lord
Walk me through my storm

You've calmed the storm
No darkness in sight
You've moved me Lord
Right into the light

Once again see you never seem to fail me
Once again see your always there beside me.

Written by **Shirleen Lawes**

Dear Parishioner,

As I sit at my desk wondering what to write, I look out across a winter-worn patchwork of houses and back gardens. I can hear birdsong as it carries across the higgledy-piggledy landscape, heralding the onset of Spring.

It strikes me that we can learn a lot from the birds because God put a song into each of their hearts and they never fail to sing it.

Some, like the blackbird and the robin are the first to sing. Early in the morning their voices initiate the dawn chorus and one by one the others join in. We might compare them to Mary Magdalene -Apostle to the Apostles- as we imagine her feet taking flight as she rushed to tell her news. There is true beauty in her words "I have seen the Lord" for they sing the song of love's triumph: Of Christ conquering death.



Legend has it that the swan saves its song until the end, a myth tenderly captured by Orlando Gibbons in his madrigal:

The silver swan, who, living, had no note,
when death approached, unlocked her silent throat;
leaning her breast upon the reedy shore,
thus sang her first and last, and sang no more:
"Farewell, all joys! O Death, come close mine eyes!
More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise."

We might compare the swan's song to the words of the criminal crucified alongside Jesus who saw the error of his ways and said "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." His final song of repentance gained him a place in paradise, the fools being his other companion and all those who shouted "Crucify him!"

This Easter, remember that God put a song in your heart too. When will you sing yours?

Yours faithfully,
Mandy Harris

Beggars and the homeless

Last week, as I entered the churchyard, I was approached by a man who asked me if I could spare 90p. How he looked and the manner in which he asked me is irrelevant; I was, once again, put in a quandary. Of course I want to help people, and if it is financial help then I will also give this (within my resources of course) but I remember



hearing someone(s) saying that I would only be feeding their 'drug habit' or 'alcoholism' so I shouldn't. The following extracts from the April edition of "Erdington Magazine" does not answer my problem, but gives me food for thought.

Overwhelming evidence shows that people who beg on the streets of England do so in order to buy hard drugs, particularly crack cocaine and heroin, and super-strength alcoholic beers and ciders. These highly addictive drugs cause an extreme deterioration in people's health and even death.

Thames Reach's outreach team estimate that 80% of people begging do so to support a drug habit. In Birmingham, in the autumn of 2013, a police crackdown (no pun intended...I'm quoting") on begging, every single one of the 40 people arrested failed a drug test. Many beggars ask for a "few pence" to make up 'bus fare etc. It all adds up...Aggressive beggars are earning £2 800 a WEEK and it's all spent on drink and drugs, says "Big Issue" boss.

Accommodation or a room in a hostel is available from the council via the Home Options scheme. Most people sleeping rough do **not** beg and most people begging do **not** sleep rough.

Our overriding concern should be to save lives. Support local homelessness charities and **don't** give money to beggars!

Ken

Check out : Birminghamhomelessoutreach.co.uk

Birminghamcitymission.co.uk

www.crisis.org.uk



The Altar of Repose in the Lady Chapel Maundy Thursday

Events throughout the year include the mini-markets which are usually held on the first Saturday in the months February – June and August – October. We also have a Summer Fayre in July and a Christmas Market in November. These events raise money to help in the running of St John’s and offer bargains galore for those who attend.



Weekly Services:



Wednesday	9.30am	Morning Prayer	10.00am	Holy Eucharist
Friday	9.30am	Morning Prayer	1.00pm	Holy Eucharist
	7.15pm	Compline followed by “Quiet Church”		
Sunday	10.30am	Sung Eucharist		

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All submissions are the property of the church.