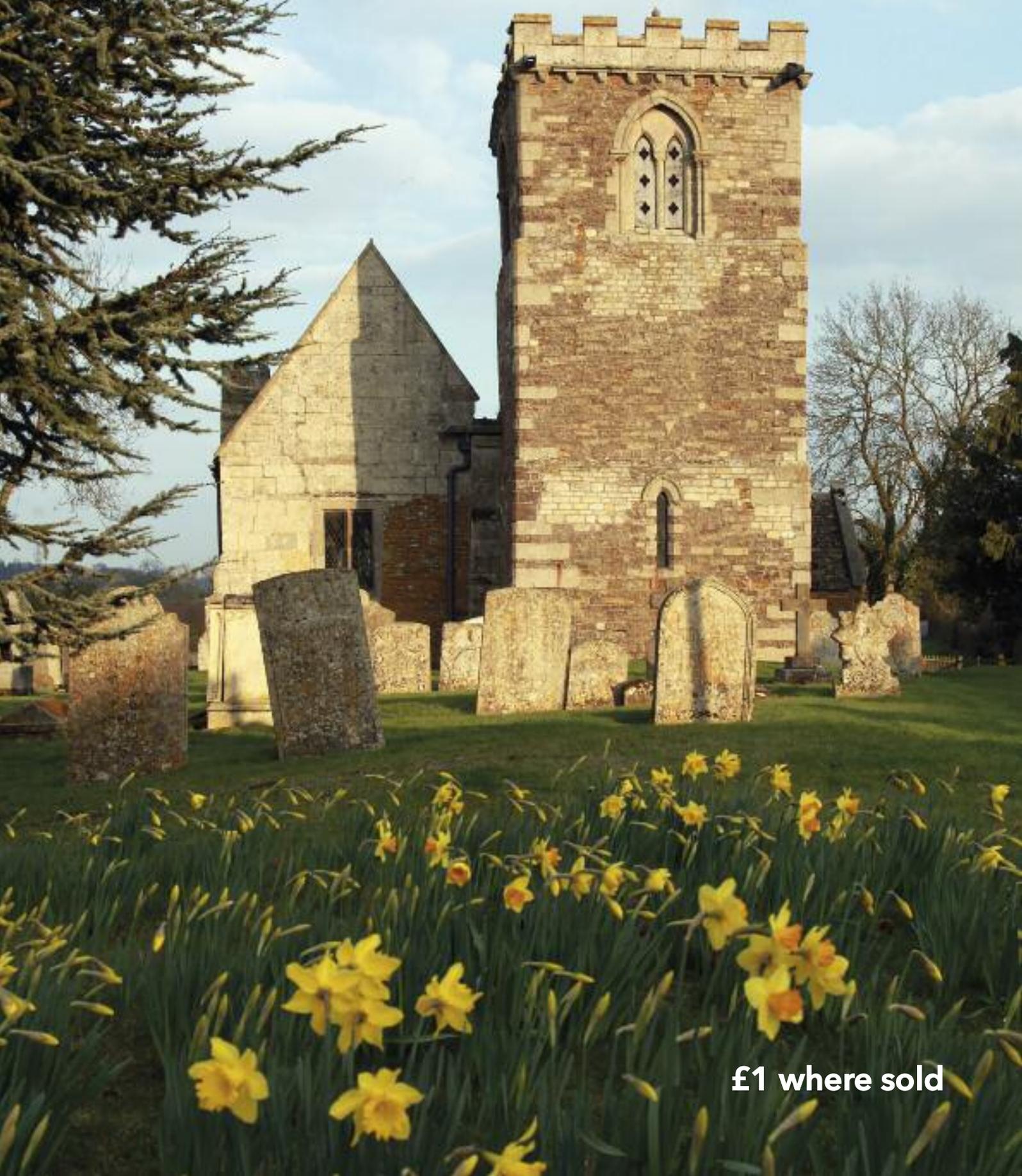




# THE LINK

*Sharing Faith in Jesus Christ*

Spring 2021



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# THE LINK

*Sharing Faith in Jesus Christ*

The Link is the magazine of Oakham Team Ministry, part of the Church of England in Rutland. We are:

St Mary, Ashwell  
All Saints, Braunston  
St Peter, Brooke  
St Edmund, Egleton  
St Andrew, Hambleton  
St Peter and St Paul, Langham  
St Peter and St Paul, Market Overton  
All Saints, Oakham  
Holy Trinity, Teigh  
St Andrew, Whissendine

You can find out more about us on the website: [www.oakhamteam.org.uk](http://www.oakhamteam.org.uk)

The Link is published three times a year, at Spring, Summer and Winter and is distributed to members of all churches in the Oakham Team Ministry and to local hotels, libraries and other outlets.

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by Richard Adams

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Oakham Team Ministry

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Our sincere thanks too, to all those who help Beryl to distribute the magazine in these times of constraint.

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## From the Team Rector

# The moment for imagination

*Revd Stephen Griffiths*

*Dear friends,*

We are now at an important moment as we as individuals, communities and a nation emerge from the pandemic. So much has changed over the last twelve months. For some people the future is about making a fresh start in work or business. For some it is adapting to the loss of a loved one. For some it is finding a new pathway through education. All of these changes (and the countless others that people are facing) require imagination, and imagination thrives in a culture of optimism and mutual support.

It's important not to lose this moment for imagination. We have had by necessity to change our habits and rethink our priorities. We now have the choice whether to embed those changes into everyday life. In particular, given the theme of this edition of *The Link*, we should give some attention to the issues of locality and the environment.

During parts of last year many people rediscovered the joys (and the frustrations) of living full time in their home. And with travel

between tiered regions discouraged and international travel all but impossible the local area became our world. Making the most of our immediate surroundings seems to be a good lesson to learn.

This might show itself in an on going commitment to local food producers and shops, supporting local businesses and charities, volunteering for local projects, exploring the landscape, discovering local history and culture, and joining community groups, churches, and neighbourhood schemes.

### *What changes can you imagine?*

This is not about ignoring the wider world but helping ourselves and our local areas to flourish. What changes for the better can you imagine for your community? Could you be part of making it a reality?

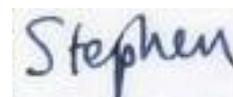
The pandemic has reminded us that we are part of a complex natural world. How we interact with one another and the natural world has huge implications.

Although there is no hard data yet, it seems very likely that there have

been positive results for the environment due to reduced pollution from travel (leisure and commuting). The upsurge in gardening and interest in allotments shows there is a need to care for and reconnect with nature.

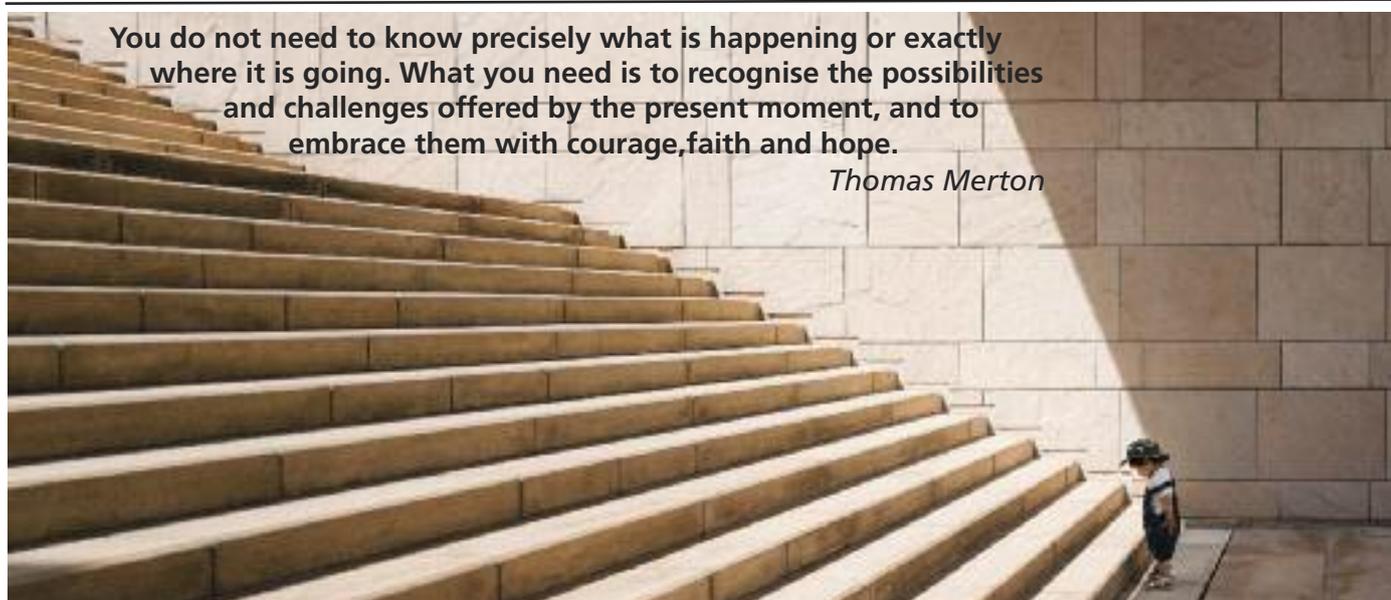
During the lockdown a movement called 'Slow Ways' has been developing a network of walking routes between communities across Great Britain. The idea is to encourage fewer car journeys and a fresh appreciation of the landscape. Coupled with a renewed interest in locality, greater respect for the environment could be part of our re-imagined post-pandemic future. It was said early on in the pandemic that there was no 'going back to normal'. I think that depends on the choices we all now thankfully have the freedom to make.

*Yours in the service of Jesus*



**You do not need to know precisely what is happening or exactly where it is going. What you need is to recognise the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope.**

*Thomas Merton*



# What if...?

**Ann Blackett**

It's not been a good Lent for reading Lent books. Despite having been made redundant when my furlough ended, and having the longed-for time at home to do things, I've been unable to settle to any of them. Instead I've been looking out of the window, doodling, working on this magazine and other odd bits of freelance and helping to plan Holy Week at All Saints in Oakham.

However I have managed to keep up with my regular Lenten poem-a-day book (*The heart's time*, edited by Janet Morley) and also dip into *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' letter to the whole world about caring for the Earth, our common home.

If I begin to think about the state of the environment, from the tiniest things like the chaos in the recycling bins where I live to the overarching nightmare shadow of climate change, I want to crawl behind the nearest sofa and hope it all sorts itself out. But that's not an option any of us really have.

A book I'm not yet reading is *From what is to what if* by Rob

Hopkins, the founder of the Transition Town movement. A fragment from it flashed across my Facebook page last week: 'If we wait for the government it will be too late...if we act as individuals it will be too little...if we act as communities it might just be enough...' As I read the articles in this issue of *The Link*, it really struck a chord with me.

## *Inspiration from working together*

While we need governments to act, and while there's plenty for us to be getting with to care for our planet, and (we hope) keep it in a condition where we can still live safely on it – it's communities working together which inspire and pass on the message that we're all responsible for looking after the environment.

They bring different priorities into local discussions and policies – but like all these things, they have to keep up the pressure for lasting change, especially as Covid has derailed such a lot of this work.



In *The Link* this time you'll find quite a bit about community groups and charities working locally on relatively smallish projects which make up a bigger picture.

Their stories are examples of what can happen with imagination and effort and kindness to the earth and one another, whatever species of wildlife we are.

St Francis – who inspired the Pope to adopt his name – saw humans as brothers and sisters with all of creation, and it's not a bad place to start.

## **Date for your diary**

### **Rutland Ride and Stride**

Churches and chapels throughout the county will be open on Saturday 11th September from 10am to 6pm as this year's sponsored Ride and Stride takes place. Everybody is invited to take part as this is a wonderful opportunity for young and old alike to visit some of the 64 churches and chapels which give Rutland such a rich architectural heritage and at the same time help to raise funds to preserve these buildings.

This is the major fund-raising event organised by the Rutland Historic Churches Preservation Trust (RHCPT) which grant-aids repair and maintenance work to places of worship throughout the county.

Any money raised will be shared between the RHCPT and the church nominated by individuals



taking part. The total raised since the first Ride and Stride took place in 1987 is well over £250,000 and each of the recent years' events have raised over £20,000, which is more per head of population than any other county taking part in this national event. More information will be available from May onwards by visiting the RHCPT website at [www.rhcpt.co.uk](http://www.rhcpt.co.uk)

**Richard Adams**

## Working with nature for wildlife

*We've discovered during the past year just how important our local green spaces are for daily exercise, and for many people one of the unexpected delights of the first lockdown was the sound of birdsong as the traffic fell silent. These spaces don't arrive entirely by chance – many are the result of people working together to ensure they are made hospitable for wildlife and welcoming for humans. Here are two local spaces, and two more within reach of Rutland, where people have worked alongside nature to protect and conserve natural habitats.*



# Trees for the Community

**Richard Adams**

The Brooke Hill Wood story starts in the mid-1990s when the late John Ball, a local farmer and landowner, approached the Woodland Trust and the local council about the possibility of creating a public wood on Gorse Field.

This was an area of about 20 acres lying to the south-west of Oakham off a bridleway running between Brooke Hill and the Braunston Road, with some of the finest views in Rutland but with no immediate access to nearby roads. The Woodland Trust bought the land and in 1997, following local fundraising, the first trees were planted with assistance from local individuals and organisations.

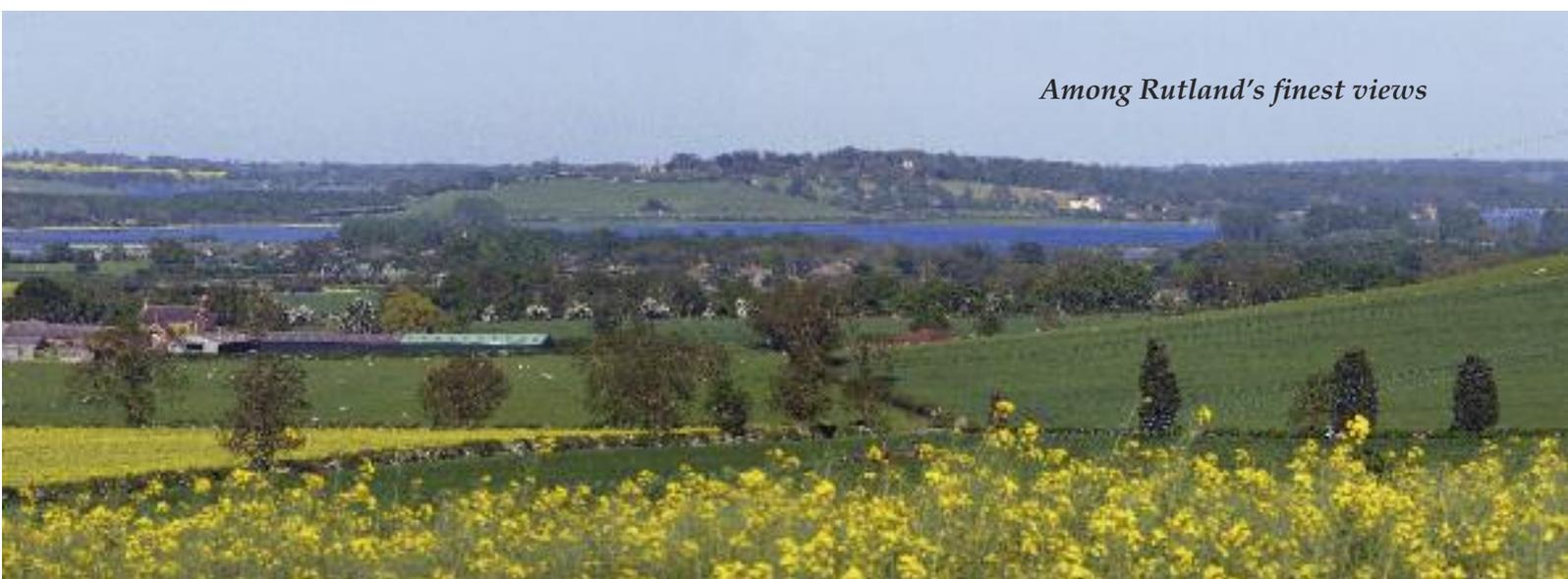
Subsequently John Ball sold two more parcels of land to create the present wood which covers over 70 acres immediately adjoining the southern edge of the town. This immediately gave direct access to Brooke Hill and Braunston Road and made the area

more readily available to the general public, which was even further improved when the Woodland Trust agreed to release some of the site for the construction of a car park which serves both the school and the Wood.

Brooke Hill Wood is an excellent example of a community project designed to safeguard the land for future use by the residents of the town and beyond. Without the generous financial support of local people and a public-spirited landowner, Oakham would not now have this fine amenity which serves them so well. Local individuals, organisations and charities have supported the project in many ways by funding some of the copses throughout the wood, taking part in planting days and in sponsoring the 60 oaks which were planted to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Brooke Hill Academy, which has Forest School status and a commitment to outdoor learning, uses the wood as a teaching aid, has helped with some of

*Among Rutland's finest views*





# Wildlife finds a refuge in Langham churchyard

**Marion Markham**

the planting and was rewarded with a royal visit when Princess Anne visited the site in 2009 to open the final phase of the Woodland Trust project.

The wood has a variety of landscapes including an extensive area of medieval ridge and furrow, together with woodland and open pasture on which sheep and cattle graze. The trees, shrubs and hedges are home to a wide variety of small birds while overhead you are likely to spot a buzzard or kite and later in the day you may be lucky enough to see a barn owl drifting over the open areas.

The lower areas of the wood with lengthy, level footpaths are popular with local dog owners but for those looking for something more strenuous, the paths leading through pasture and woodland to the top of the site reward you with some wonderful views over Oakham and towards Rutland Water. This wood on your doorstep is well worth a visit!



As we go to press, exploratory work is being done on a field adjacent to the Woodland Trust land as a planning application to build houses on the site has been submitted to Rutland County Council. Local people have submitted objections to the plans; more information can be found on the RCC website and on the 'Braunston Rd Development' page on Facebook. **The Editor**

The fifth Mark of Mission of the Church of England is to 'strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth'.

Here at St Peter and St Paul, Langham, we are striving to do just that as a community within the sanctuary of the churchyard. The churchyard is formally closed to new burials and maintenance is carried out by Rutland County Council.

The large space, bounded by hedging and ivy-covered walls and a range of specimen trees and gravestones set in grass lends itself to be a focal point for the creation and nurturing of biodiversity at the heart of Langham Parish.

The churchyard meadow project has brought together the Langham community in many ways. The idea of creating a small meadow was put to the churchwardens a few years ago. Then, after Dr Sarah Furness kindly showed Shirley Myatt around the Whissendine churchyard wildlife area, the volunteers consulted Rutland County Council, Leicester and Rutland Wildlife Trust and the organisation Caring for God's Acre. The idea became a reality.

In early 2019 a small 'no-mow' area was marked out and a group of volunteers planted 100 *Rhinanthus minor* (yellow rattle) plug plants known as the 'meadow-maker' into the no-mow area one April evening. The children's 'dare' club created some very fine bug hotels (pictured), hedgehog des-res and bird nesting boxes in summer 2019. We also planted bulbs of *Camassia* and *Narcissus* to give some bold colour. The rest was left to nature to see what would come up without being suppressed by regular mowing.



During 2020, the meadow area to be looked after

# Working with nature for wildlife



by volunteers, was extended to the boundaries of Well Street and Church Street, incorporating an area of older graves. A meandering 'peace path' is regularly cut through

the meadow to provide an access route to enjoy the area and read the peace messages which have been hung up. There are benches to sit awhile and take in the peace and tranquillity of the place.

Spring has sprung when the delicate pink-mauve flowers of cuckoo flower (*Cardamine pratensis*) are seen in the no-mow long grass area in April. These little flowers grow in damp meadows and are a food plant for caterpillars of the orange-tip butterfly. This beautiful butterfly is on the wing throughout April and May. However, its lifecycle continues all year, with the eggs and caterpillars in Spring and early Summer and the rest of the year as pupae. The pupae are secured in tall vegetation close to the food plant.

The tall vegetation of the no-mow area provides this rare habitat of an undisturbed meadow setting with the right food plants.

By the end of Spring the meadow area is a glorious yellow wash of three species of buttercup – Meadow, Creeping and Bulbous and white of lesser stitchwort).

These are complemented with the blues of wild forgot-me-not and planted *Camassia* (pictured) and pheasant-eye narcissus.

The Pasqueflower is also known as the anemone of Passiontide ('pasque' being derived from Old French 'paschal' – 'of Easter') referring to the supposed emergence of the bells on Good Friday. These are currently growing in the Garden of Remembrance but as a native flower may spread into the meadow.

The hues within the meadow in summer change to purples, yellows, oranges and pinks as the knapweeds, hawkweeds, St John's Worts, teasel, foxgloves and ragged-robin flower. These are all visited by butterflies, bees and moths, many of which make their homes in the meadow too.

In August, half of the meadow was cut using a traditional Austrian light-weight scythe (pictured), followed by mowing to reduce the height further. A patch where a Carder Bumblebee nest was found hidden at ground level in moss was protected. We added some yarrow and tansy plants donated from a fellow Langhamite and also seedlings of cowslip and bird's foot trefoil.

The seeds of ribwort plantain and teasel provide food for birds in winter. The uncut heads of knapweed provide seed for the birds followed by a cosy shell for ladybirds to overwinter. The no-mow area is still there too, hosting many meadow ant hills and the cocoons of next season's adult butterflies and moths, we hope. Occasionally a Tawny Owl roosts in one of the mature conifers.

Our botany County Recorders, Steve Woodward and Helen Ikin, published an article in *Fieldfare* (the journal of Rutland Natural History Society) in



## Working with nature for wildlife

June 2019 on the flora of Rutland churchyards. Langham features in the authors' top three with 97 vascular plants recorded by Steve Woodward.

He visited twice in July 2013 and May 2018, and reported that while there were no unusual plants (i.e. no orchids yet!), there is a good range of common species. A few more species were added to the list when they returned in 2020. We look forward to welcoming you for a visit to Langham's piece of God's Acre soon. If any readers would like to know about creating a wildlife area in your churchyard then please contact Churchwardens Debbie and Hilary.



## Habitats in changing landscapes



### **Ann Blackett**

Titchwell beach is one of the glories of the north Norfolk coast, with sands and skies and the sea stretching into the distance. It lies between the North Sea and the RSPB Titchwell reserve which has a riot of habitats for wildlife and attracts tens of thousands of visitors in a normal year.

However the beach forms part of a coastline which is shifting with the winds and tides, and the reserve as we see it now – woodland, seedbed, freshwater lagoon, salt marsh – is the result not of the forces of nature but of careful planning and work to anticipate the damaging coastal erosion which has affected much of the east coast for centuries.

When the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) acquired the site in the 1970s they created saltwater and freshwater habitats enclosed by sea walls, reedbeds and woodland, attracting a wide range of breeding birds and other wildlife. They maintained the defences but a storm surge in 1996 damaged the sand dunes and sea defences and threatened the reserve itself.

After looking at the options the RSPB decided not to go against nature but allow the sea frontier to move back inland, strengthening an existing bank to a height of 5.8m to protect freshwater areas, building artificial islands to provide nesting sites for avocet, and breaching the sea wall to create a new saltwater habitat. This would protect the reserve and create habitats so the displacement of birds and other wildlife would be kept to a minimum, and should

withstand the predicted coastal change for the next 50 years.

The work began in 2009 and progressed in long stages, at first surveying wildlife populations and creating nesting places for the birds who would be affected, before the earth movers moved in – just as we have seen at Rutland Water over the years. The project was completed in 2012.

Today the reserve is a succession of habitats, with the birds going about their business paying no attention to the birdwatchers trailing up and down with long lenses and binoculars, to say nothing of the people just heading for the beach to revel in the solitude. It looks entirely natural – even the old concrete pillbox on the edge of the lagoon blends in as part of the landscape. This is one way to work with nature and not against it. Even Canute couldn't stop the tide coming in.

### **Partnership at the pits**

About 50 minutes up the A1 from Rutland, just off the A46 to Lincoln, there's another example of the RSPB creating habitats, but this time in the wake of industry, or rather gravel pits.

At RSPB Langford Lowlands a smallish site of reedbeds and wetland is the public side of a reserve which will eventually double in size – at least – as it restores a gravel quarry which is still expanding. This is a long-term project and to achieve it the RSPB is working in partnership with Tarmac.

The aim is to create one of the largest reedbed habitats in Europe, which in turn will replace the reed habitats being lost through coastal erosion and land drainage. It does flood, however, when the river Trent overtops its bank, and the lake and reeds are submerged for a while. The water goes down, and it recovers, but it takes the hard work of many volunteers working with nature, although sometime struggling against it.

On an autumn evening, though, with dragonflies in the air and the swans pottering home into the reeds, and the starlings swooping through the sky, it becomes one of those 'thin' places where heaven touches earth.

# Stamford Community Orchard Group

*Barbara Clemence*

## A journey into apples

In November 2018, I received a phone message from a lady who used to live in our village and had visited my open studio, enquiring if I would be interested in doing a commission to illustrate six heritage apples for the Stamford Community Orchard Group (SCOG). I contacted her and agreed to take examples of my work to the Christmas meeting at the Crown Hotel Stamford for members to view.

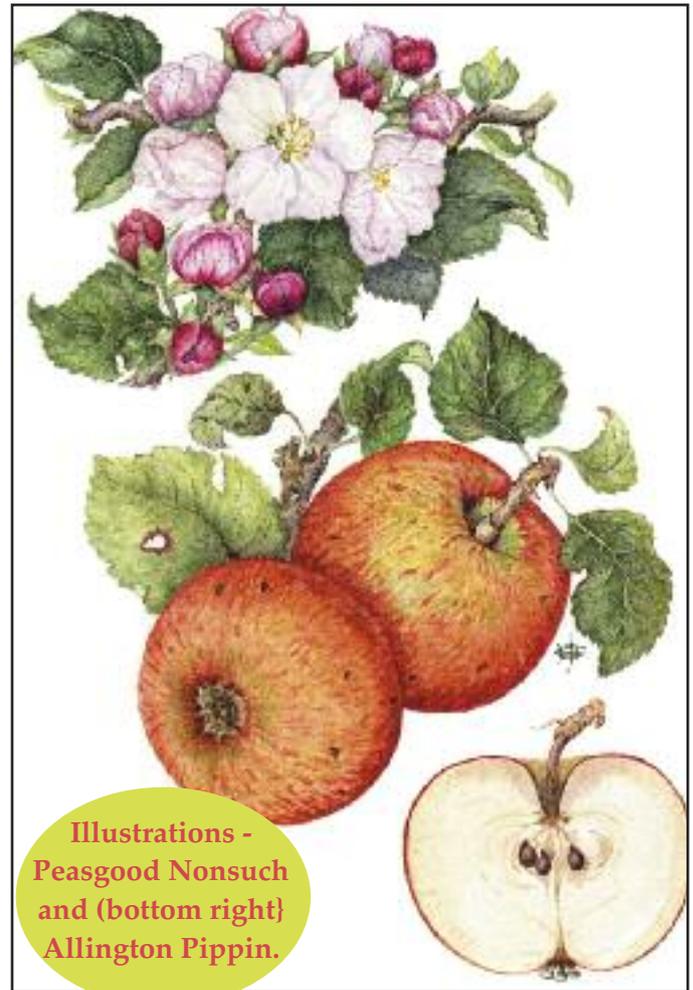
They made very nice comments about my illustrations, and asked if I would like to be involved with the paintings of local heritage apples. They had been awarded a grant from South Kesteven District Council to commission six paintings which would be reproduced into cards and prints for sale, also to aid the teaching of the local heritage apples to local groups and schools. This was the beginning of a lovely journey into the world of local apple enthusiasts from the Stamford Community Orchard Group.

The Apples they chose for me to illustrate were Lord Burghley, Browns Seedling, Barnack Beauty, Schoolmaster, Peasgood Nonsuch and Allington Pippin, all growing locally in their community orchard.

### *We found an old tree full of blossom*

In the spring of 2019 I went along to the Stamford Community Orchard to collect the blossom of the six apples I was to illustrate and take photographs for reference. The Barnack Beauty was not in blossom in the orchard, so we drove over to Barnack, a village on the Burghley Estate about five miles south of Stamford. This is also the village where Adam Frost broadcasts for BBC *Gardeners' World*. There I found a very old apple tree full of blossom, growing in the small back garden of a village cottage – half of the trunk was completely hollow.

When I had completed the illustrations of the blossom, I arranged a meeting with Chris Hulbert and Denis Smith, who are the apple specialists, to approve them before I proceeded with the fruit illustrations. In October I met up with them again at the Stamford Apple Day to collect the apples to complete the paintings. By November they were complete



Illustrations -  
Peasgood Nonsuch  
and (bottom right)  
Allington Pippin.

and I arranged to meet up with the committee at their November meeting at the Crown Hotel Stamford for approval. They were all delighted with the finished designs, and I recommended Steve Meadwell, a graphic designer in Market Deeping, who I have worked with before for scanning and printing.

### *Lockdowns just put everything on hold*

We made an appointment to meet up to discuss the design, and Chris and Denis wrote the text to be printed on the cards. The cards were printed ready for launch when Covid-19 struck, so everything was put on hold. When conditions eased, a small invited gathering of the group at Burghley House was planned to launch the cards and prints. Everything was organised, a marquee was erected, the press was invited when the second lockdown was declared so once more everything was cancelled, so we wait for spring 2021.

Through this lovely project and meeting these enthusiastic people I learned about their aims to preserve local heritage apples and to plant community orchards for local residents to enjoy.

Part of the group's work involves identifying local fruit trees; often the variety can be pinpointed by their experienced team on looks alone, and they consider all aspects of the fruit – shape colour, taste and smell, a cross section, the stalk, blossom and leaves. The ultimate step is to send a fruit sample for DNA analysis, to see if the apple matches a named variety on the national database. However, it might come back as an unknown or, more excitingly, it could fit a description of a lost variety from an old grower's catalogue, which means it can be claimed accordingly.

## *Grant helped to buy and plant 100 trees*

A grant of £7000 helped SCOG to buy and plant 100 named apple and pear trees and run training courses for villages and primary schools in South Lincolnshire and Rutland. They also help to set up and manage small community/school orchards on public land.

They also celebrate Apple Day in October, when members of the public can take apples from their gardens to be identified from the stall of more than 100 named apples. The event happens at Stamford Arts Centre and includes other displays from local community groups and craft stalls, plus an apple press with cider for tasting and talks in the cellar bar room by apple experts from across Europe. The 2019 show was a huge success with more than 800 visitors. If you would like to see more about this remarkable group please visit their website [www.scog.org.uk](http://www.scog.org.uk)

It has been a pleasure to be involved in this project and meet such lovely knowledgeable people.



**The best time to plant an apple tree is twenty years ago – the next best time is today.**

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## At home on the tower



# Peregrine Falcons find sanctuary at Oakham All Saints

## **Jane Dell**

***Jane is a member of the Rutland Osprey Project and of the Peregrine Working Group at All Saints.***

Walking through Oakham to post a letter, I was lost in reverie. It was cold and gloomy, and I was longing for spring and the return of the Ospreys to brighten my days. Suddenly my bubble of peace was interrupted by a couple of loud screeches and looking up I saw two peregrines soar off the church in the general direction of the reservoir before returning and alighting once more on the tower. Surprised and excited I quickly posted my letter and ran back for my camera, taking several photos of them before heading home. It was a pair and one of them was ringed!

Peregrines are the ultimate aerial predator, a large falcon which is legally protected in the UK – bigger than a Sparrowhawk or Kestrel. They are powerful and agile in the air, recording speeds in a diagonal stoop of over 200mph. In flight they look crow-sized

*12 The Link Spring 2021*

for comparison, with large, slightly flexed pointed wings and a medium length tail.

Peregrines have adapted remarkably well to urban life. Ed Drewitt – naturalist and author of *Urban Peregrines* – estimates that there are now over 200 pairs of urban peregrines in the UK. Churches and other tall/industrial buildings have masonry and ledges reminiscent of the crags, cliffs and quarry faces that peregrines as a species are used to, while the light pollution affords them a greater opportunity to be able to hunt nocturnally.

The urban environment is also slightly warmer than the rural landscape and has a plentiful supply of other urban dwelling birds such as the feral pigeon, enabling the peregrines to have a convenient year-round food source.

Oakham All Saints provides for these birds which have been present since October 2020, all the benefits of urban living, with the added bonus of migrating and resident wildfowl and waders at nearby Rutland Water. The astonishing view from the top of the tower reinforces this along with the numerous wings of species such as Woodcock, Teal, Lapwing and even a

**Oakham Team Ministry**

Shelduck that have been found near the church.

'Our' female (the falcon) carries two rings, a metal BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) ring and an orange darvic ring bearing the characters PJA. These rings enable us to recognise her as an individual as well as establish her age and origin. She was ringed in Derbyshire in May 2019 by Eleanor Wilkins. The Tiercel (male) is unringed.

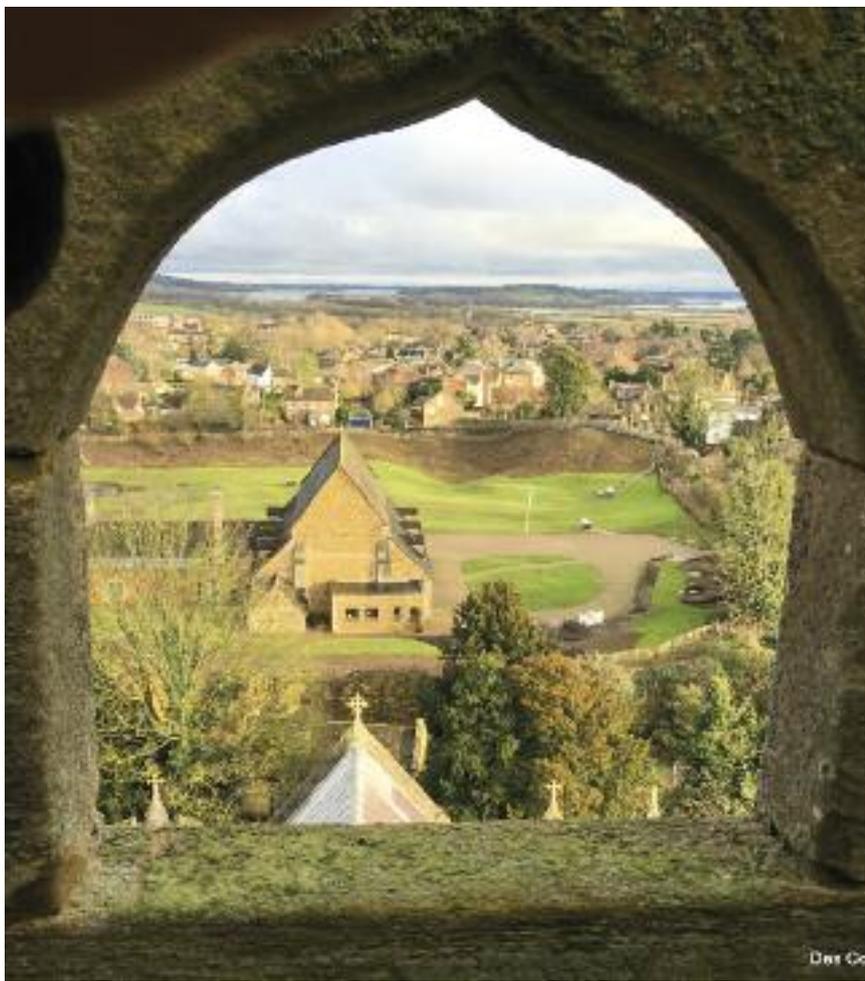
The male and female are visually similar in appearance but as with most birds of prey, the female is larger than the male. To tell the pair apart it is easier if you can see them perched together as they sometimes do – most often on the gargoyles or grotesques above the large belfry windows. He appears sleeker and darker with more defined and neater markings.

His neck is quite a bright white and his legs and beak stand out bright yellow against his blue/grey wings and head. She has a heavier chest which is slightly creamy in appearance and above the barred feathers of her chest she has some 'spotted' feathers which the male does not have.

After contacting the Revd Stephen Griffiths and local nature conservationist Tim Mackrill, formerly of Rutland Osprey Project, a group aimed at protecting the peregrines was set up and a nest tray installed by Tim Mackrill and Paul Stammers to encourage them to breed.

If the pair do choose to stay and breed, which is looking very promising, there are plans to set up a larger Friends of Oakham Peregrines Group aiming to engage a wide audience, set up peregrine watches, an information hub or social media platform to share news on how they are progressing and also fundraise to install a web camera, possibly live streaming, to promote the peregrines and provide a better understanding of how they live. The camera equipment is projected to cost £1500-£2000 and the aim is to install it ready for the 2022 season.

If you have any questions, are interested in joining the Friends of Oakham Peregrines or would like to contribute to the peregrine camera fund please direct emails to [office@oakhamteam.org.uk](mailto:office@oakhamteam.org.uk) and do make sure that any donation is clearly marked for the Peregrine project.



**Pictures: main photo – male peregrine on the tower; top – view from the tower; right Tim and Paul install the nest tray; inset – 'our' female after ringing in 2019.**

**Photos by Jane Dell, Des Cook and Eleanor Watkins.**

## Charity moves with the times

Amanda Whittington and David Pattinson



# Historic Rutland charity provides homes for today

The Hospital of St John and St Anne is one of the larger almshouse providers in the country which in itself is not that singular, until you take into account it is based in Rutland, England's smallest county.

The singularity of the charity does not stop there. Not only is it the county's oldest charity with a history that spans 620 years, but it is even more remarkable because it came uncomfortably close to extinction on several occasions in the past.

The first Hospital was on the site of the present-day St Anne's Close in Oakham. A local man, William Dalby, a successful wool merchant, founded it in 1399 to support 12 'poor God-fearing men'.

### Prayers for the benefactor

They would have been given accommodation and food and in return said prayers for the soul of their benefactor and of his family in the chapel, the only historic building of the Hospital to have

survived and which is still in use today. During the Reformation, this religious connection led to the confiscation of the charity's lands in 1590.

### Saved by the Archdeacon

The Hospital was saved from dissolution by Archdeacon Robert Johnson who bought back some of the land. He secured it a Royal Charter from Elizabeth I in 1597, with the aim of helping 20 poor people of both sexes.

Archdeacon Johnson had founded Oakham and Uppingham Schools a few years earlier and as a result, a number of Oakham school heads acted as Wardens over the years.

He also created a governing body which included the Bishop and Dean of Peterborough, the Rectors of North Luffenham and of Uppingham and the Vicar of Oakham.

After a long period of decline, and the building of the railway line across the site of the almshouses in

the 1840s, the twentieth century saw a new vision. Some older Rutland residents might remember how the sale of land by St John and St Anne in 1963 changed Oakham considerably. This was because the sale freed up land west of the railway line for the building of a considerable number of private homes and council houses.

Many of the houses around Welland Way, Derwent Drive and Braunston Road now stand on lands once held by St John and St Anne's Hospital.

### Back to original purpose

The land sale meant that there were possibilities to bring the charity back towards its original purposes.

It had also benefited from its amalgamation with Royce Eventide Homes and the Archdeacon Johnson Almshouse Charity in 1962, and the funds raised, together with grants, paid for the building of the first three properties – in South Street, Oakham in 1976, and then

# Charity moves with the times



The charity's homes in St Anne's Close, Oakham - including the chapel (right)

Johnson Road, Uppingham in 1980 and in 1983, St Anne's Close in Oakham. Further flats in Oakham and Uppingham followed.

## Charity now has seven sites

Today the charity has seven sites in all, covering both Oakham and Uppingham and normally provides accommodation for around 120 people, mostly in flats.

Like all organisations, it has had to adapt to new ways of working over the past year but the support for residents has not diminished. The support worker even managed to organise Covid-compliant Christmas get togethers at three sites which involved carols, mulled wine and hot chocolate.

Residents showed their appreciation of her efforts by supporting her fundraising raffles to contribute £253 to the Rutland Foodbank. Up until the lockdown last year, the chapel, which is even older than the charity and situated on the St Anne's Close site, was in regular use with weekly services enjoyed by residents and others alike.

## Visits from the

### Royal family

Members of the Royal Family are also familiar with the charity, with Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip

Oakham Team Ministry

visiting St Anne's Close in 1984. Their signed photograph is still a prized possession in the common room. In 2014, residents at St Anne's Close again met royalty during the visit of the Prince of Wales, Patron of the Almshouse Association, together with the Duchess of Cornwall.

With 102 units to maintain, together with adherence to social housing legislation, the management of the charity today is complex.

But with its dedicated staff team of six and a governing body involv-

ing individuals from a range of backgrounds and skills from financial to legal, medical to social care, it is in safe hands. The religious connection still thrives today, with five ex-officio members on the governing body.

## Would you like to be a governor?

The Governors have fixed terms of office, so it is always a challenge to identify new people who want to contribute to the wellbeing of older, vulnerable individuals.

## Before lockdown the chapel was in regular use



## Charity moves with the times

It is a very satisfying role and anyone who might be interested, or knows someone who might be interested in becoming a governor is encouraged to contact the CEO Paul Martin for more information on 01572 756950 or paul.martin@stjohnstanne.co.uk

If you know of an older person who might need accommodation and would meet the eligibility criteria (which is means tested), please also contact Paul Martin.

### Links

Website

<http://www.stjohnstanne.co.uk>

For more about the history of the charity, see <http://www.rutlandhistory.org/pdf/Stjohn&stanne.pdf> where you will find a copy of *The History of the Hospital of Saint John the Evangelist and of Saint Anne in Okeham*, by David Parkin (Rutland Local History and Record Society, Occasional Publication no.6, 2000).



The Prince of Wales with chairman of governors David Pattinson on a visit to St Anne's Close in 2014

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Make a summer healthy by growing your own fruit, vegetables and herbs. Get outside, get exercise and enjoy watching them grow.

There is no need for a garden – just the odd container or two and some space to put them outdoors in the sun. If you have a border and lawn pop in a few veg and fruit among the flowers.

Vegetables aren't too fussy about what container they grow in, as long as it's large enough for the plant, has compost or soil and holes for drainage because the main thing is to water them well. With containers, the bigger the better, small containers need more care as they dry out quickly. If you only have small plant pots, try cress, lettuce or rocket and radishes – they grow fast so are soon ready to eat.

If you have an old Belfast sink or water tank you could try some root vegetables like carrots or beetroot. We had some old plastic planting troughs, last year in which we grew lettuce, lamb's lettuce and rocket. When they were finished we planted strawberry plants and await the crop this summer.

With medium plant pots, herbs can be tried such as rosemary, basil, oregano, sage or parsley. You could also try mint which comes in many different varieties, some chocolate tasting! Large pots allow you to step up the size or quantity of your plants. Try mixed salad leaves, which can be cut with scissors and allowed to regrow and cut again.

### Potatoes in the bag!

Use hessian sacks or grocery bags (don't forget to make holes for drainage). In March/April, fill the bag about a quarter full with compost, plant up to three early variety seed potatoes (ideally already sprouting) well-spaced, then cover well with compost. I grow the variety Charlotte as it's a good waxy salad variety that doesn't fall apart when cooked.

Place the bag in the sun or partial shade and water whenever the compost starts drying out. When the leaves appear, add more compost and repeat as more leaves appear until the sack is full. Keep watering regularly. Flowers will appear and when they drop off it's harvest time. Either dig or tip out the plant and pick the potatoes or take the lucky dip approach and take what you want, when you want.

**Oakham Team Ministry**

## Let's grow our own

*Roy Edwards*

# Making the most of small spaces

If you have a garden why not try some fruit and veg in the border – or be really radical and dig up a corner of the lawn! Vegetables to consider for the border – tomatoes for a sunny south facing area – don't forget to stake them as they grow. Cherry tomatoes are easy to grow and crop well, and Gardener's Delight is a good one.

### Beans on a teepee

A runner bean teepee would look good with its crimson or white flowers but remember to pick them at least every other day. Why not try a courgette plant, to produce wonderfully flavoured veg throughout the summer – again, these need picking before they get too big.

Autumn raspberries are perennial and just need cutting down to the ground in February. I prefer these to summer varieties as they are easier to grow and apparently the birds don't eat them. I can't promise this as mine are in a fruit cage. Rhubarb will take up some room but produces copious stalks throughout the summer and once established lasts for many years. Think rhubarb crumble and custard!

In Rutland we are fortunate to have garden centres and other outlets for your peat free compost, seeds and plants. Keep it simple, use what you already have to hand and enjoy.

I hope that this has reminded or inspired all ages to start a rewarding venture. What else can you do that gives you fresh air, exercise and quality food for free (almost)?



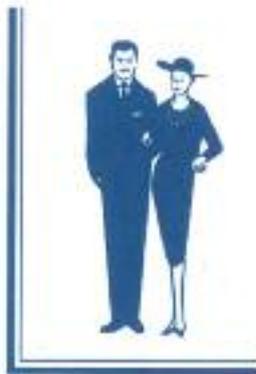
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## Natal recalled

# Love thy neighbour

Chris and Heather Rattenberry spent some time in KwaZulu Natal, at the invitation of the Bishop of Natal, when they left their parish in Nottinghamshire. They ministered at a church in the city of Durban and sent some stories home as they happened. This is an adapted version of one of those pieces.



**W**e continue to experience poverty in South African society. We took flour, beans and oil to a health clinic in the city. Each bundle cost £6 but makes a huge difference to each family that receives them. One lovely Christian lady, a grandmother, is living with ten dependants in one room.

We prayed with her. HIV/AIDS is often at the root of the problems, leaving extra children to be cared for within the extended family. The grandmothers are bearing the heaviest loads.

### **A daily rate for hiring babies**

How do we love these our neighbours? The churchwardens have written to the church family here encouraging people not to give to beggars because this leads them into dependency. Instead, church members have been circulated with details of groups and agencies that help people in need. I have myself heard stories of 'fake' beggars. Apparently, there is a daily rate for hiring another woman's baby. Beggars carrying babies do much better.

### **An opportunity to improve their lives**

We spent a fascinating day at the Warwick Markets, Durban (pictured), a sprawling series of informal stalls, through which 450,000 people pass every day. It's very Zulu – in the bovine head markets I was offered 'bits' scraped off a head bubbling away in a

pot! City authorities sometimes crack down on this place, but it offers indigenous people an opportunity to work and trade and improve their hard lives. It was hard, too, being the only white faces amongst many thousands of black ones. The merchandise, language and culture were alien to us. But it was humbling to gain an insight into the reality of so many peoples' lives and encouraging to see a way forward for at least some of them.

Neither of us, I think, will ever forget it.

**Chris is Team Vicar for Braunston, Brooke, Egleton and Hambleton.**

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## New direction for life on the land

**Brian Chester**

Although most of us are now distanced from the reality of life on the farm, we still live in rural communities where the actions and activities of those who produce our food, are just around the corner. We need to take note, then, of changes that will result in the most fundamental switch in the policy of support for agriculture in more than 70 years.

A national policy of farm support was introduced after the Second World War as a way of encouraging an affordable supply of home-produced food while giving the farmer a 'guaranteed price' for many products.

### **Twists and turns**

That policy has seen twists and turns over the years but the emphasis has consistently remained on producing food. Farmers are now engaging with a new policy with the mantra of 'public money for public goods' in which the emphasis is placed on the contribution farmers can make to enhancing the environment.

# Farming faces time of change

Once-a-year payments presently made to farmers based on their acreage are being replaced by an Environmental Land Management regime to be phased in over the next seven years.

There are farmers who will be able to embrace the new 'ideals' but others may find it hard to apply them to their land or livestock enterprise and remain in business – especially producers with relatively small acreages who keep sheep or cattle for their main source of income.

Reaction to the policy change has seen a guarded welcome from most sectors of the industry, summed up by the remarks of Mark Bridgeman, president of the Country Land and Business Associ-

ation (CLA), when he said: "The new Environmental Land Management scheme has the potential to be a genuinely world-leading policy that will allow land managers and government to work together to reverse biodiversity decline and mitigate climate change, as well as deliver quality food, grown and reared to the highest standards. But the transition from the old system to the new is fraught with risk. Many farmers will find it hard to see past the drastic cuts to the Basic Payment Scheme."

### **Implications unravelled**

There are many complexities and uncertainties surrounding the way forward as the implications of the new policy are unravelled – none

**Question mark over traditional grazing**



of which is helped by issues on exports and imports following the UK's exit from the EU and pressure on farmers to continue to reduce the industry's impact on the environment and respond to calls for us to eat less meat.

A survey by the CLA and Strutt & Parker revealed that while farmers were keen to protect and enhance the environment they were concerned over a lack of clarity on how the ELMs would be implemented\*. More than half reported they were already taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and 64 per cent said a sense of personal responsibility would motivate them to make climate change a higher priority.

### Farmers' concern

In summary, the report concluded that 64 per cent of farmers expect a switch from direct payments to ELMs will reduce profitability; 76 per cent are concerned that payments will be insufficient; 57 per cent are concerned that administration of the new schemes will be poor and 44 per cent are worried that ELMs will not deliver the desired environmental benefits.

Richard Young, policy director of

the Sustainable Food Trust, makes the point that the potential impact of the policy change only becomes clear when it is understood that 55 per cent of farmland in England is grass.

He says that proposed steps to mitigate the impact – including a lump sum to farmers who want to leave the industry, encouragement to farmers who want to stay with cattle or sheep to intensify and become more productive and encouragement to farmers on poorer land to give up their livestock and plant trees – may appear attractive but getting rid of traditional grazing livestock farms and planting trees could result in increased imports of beef and lamb to make good the lost production. And in most cases that meat will have a significantly higher carbon footprint than beef or lamb produced in the UK.

The result is a picture of many new challenges for an industry that already experiences increasing difficulties with mental health and wellbeing to a point that has seen support groups issue higher alert levels and awareness warnings than in the past.

Maybe this is a time when the

## Is it time to look again at these rural services?

rural church, once so closely entwined with farm life, should consider re-shaping and re-introducing those services that are linked with the pattern of rural life. The Harvest Festival has survived as a celebration and thanks to God and the farmers for 'all things safely gathered in'.

### Ability to engage

This celebration continues (in normal times) to draw congregations from the farming and wider communities and shows the church's desire – and ability – to engage with those who may not normally attend church services.



Butterflies on the farm.  
New emphasis on  
the environment.

Three other once well-established acts of worship could be added to Harvest.

**Plough Sunday** – celebrated in early January at a time when the plough returned to the land after the Christmas break

**Rogation Sunday** - the Sunday before Ascension Day when crops are blessed and parish boundaries remembered

**Lammas** - 1 August - to give thanks for the first loaf made from the first grain of the harvest.

It could be said that these services carry too much 'historical baggage' to make them relevant for today. But equally there is a case for the rural church to make a commitment to re-engaging with 'life on the farm' and reshape these services to show its support – and encourage wider support – for an industry that is facing a time of change not seen for generations.

*\*As reported in the magazine Anglia Farmer.*



**Rural churches:  
once  
part  
of life  
on the  
land**

## Campaign urges 'Buy British'

The National Farmers Union (NFU) has taken a leading role in urging consumers to 'Buy British'. Sparked by a scandal in 2013 when supermarkets were found to be selling imported meat products containing horsemeat, the NFU launched a social media campaign encouraging us to buy the 'high standard food produced on British farms'.

A *Back British Farming* initiative followed with the wider aim of seeking support of the whole food and farming sector.

A petition backing this campaign attracted more than one million signatures last year. In January this year a month-long calendar listed ways of 'eating a balanced diet of British meat and seasonal fruit and vegetables while enjoying the farmed recreational environment responsibly.'

While acknowledging that the UK can't be self-sufficient in food, the NFU stresses the need to improve the current level which stands at 64% against 78% in 1984.



## Tenants 'serious' about exit payment

Seven out of ten farmers contacted by the Tenant Farmers Association said they are giving 'serious consideration' to the proposed Lump Sum Exit Scheme (see *main article*). TFA farm policy adviser, Lynette Steel, said that if DEFRA executed the scheme effectively, coupled with a proposed new entrants' scheme, the movement of land could result in more new entrants into the industry and greater opportunities for those looking to progress onto bigger and better units.

"But not surprisingly, over three quarters of respondents said the value of the retirement package would be the biggest factor they would need to consider before taking part in the scheme. Other key factors were readiness to retire and whether succession rights would be affected by participating," she said.



*"Investment in farming and in rural Britain not only brings about obvious benefits to food production but can have massive benefits to the whole country. If the past 12 months has taught us one thing, it's that we are all in this together – and a country which levels up everyone, everywhere, is a stronger country. Rural Britain can deliver jobs, green growth, exports and wellbeing for a nation in recovery. We know the world is an unusual place at the moment, but we have to get ready for the future. We face a time of risk, opportunity, but above all else, a time of change. We can choose to look inwards, pretend that nothing will change, or we can look up, open our eyes to the world, and decide to own our farming destiny."*

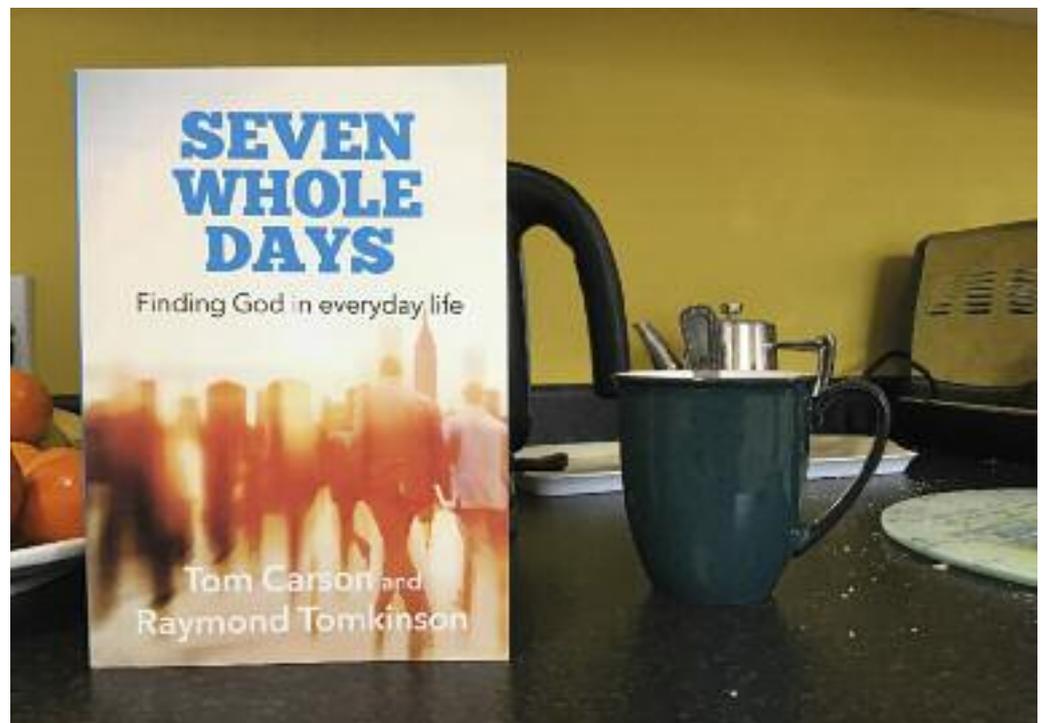
**NFU president Minette Batters announcing an NFU report *Levelling up Rural Britain***

## Everyday faith

Raymond Tomkinson

'God calls us into a 24-hour relationship each day, in which he is involved in every aspect of our lives'

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Raymond Tomkinson and the Revd Stephen Griffiths has kindly asked me to tell you a little bit about a book I wrote with my good friend, the Revd Tom Carson.



### **The inspiration for the book**

In the hymn *King of Glory, King of Peace*, George Herbert, the 16th century poet-priest, prayerfully exclaims: 'Sev'n whole days, not one in sev'n, I will praise thee!'

It was that line which inspired our book. It is also what challenged us. So often it feels to many of us in an ordinary week as though we don't even manage to praise God for seven whole minutes! Yet God is calling us to

engage with him 'seven whole days' of every week. More than that he is calling us into a 24-hour relationship each day, in which he is involved in every aspect of our lives, even those parts we might not think of as being remotely spiritual.

Many of us can find, however, that while we may meet with God at church it's all too easy to neglect that relationship after Sunday worship only to pick it up again a week later at the next Sunday service.

### **Everyday prayer**

#### **nourishing everyday faith**

How then should our faith and our relationship with God in prayer impact the rest of our week? In our book we explore how we might take a sense of God's presence into our normal lives, into our everyday routines, into those activities which may not feel especially sacred, like catching a train or going to sleep at night. The question we ask throughout is 'where can we find God in everyday life?'

When we begin to believe that we can find God everywhere and in everything, we find ourselves doing what Christian spiritual tradition calls 'the practice of the presence of God'. The approach we take in this book is influenced by the writings of Brother Lawrence.

He was an uneducated lay cook in a French monastery who lived over 300 years ago and discovered how to enjoy a profound awareness of God, moment by moment, even in the midst of busyness and distraction.

Though he spent most of his time working in the kitchens, he tried to practise the presence of God in all things. 'The time of work', he said, 'does not with me differ from the time of prayer. In the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great a tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the Blessed Supper.'

Brother Lawrence's approach is particularly attractive because we don't need to do anything special. We don't need to be anyone brilliant. We don't need to go anywhere different to find God. God is already with us, we just need to notice him!

## Mutual expression of our relationship with God

Prayer is never a one-sided thing. Even as God gazes on us, we gaze on God. As we speak to God, he listens to us. As God speaks to us we listen with the ears of our heart. We speak of letting God catch our eye or of glancing in God's direction. This deep interconnectedness is how love works.

God is love, and mutual interconnectedness is what nourishes any loving relationship. Do we love those who are special in our lives just one day a week? Of course not! We love them seven whole days of the week.

In this book we offer suggestions for nourishing and sustaining our relationship with God and so to deepen our everyday faith.

## The structure of the book

Following a brief introduction, each section continues with a short story featuring people encountering God in everyday life. This is followed by a reflection based on the story and includes ideas as to how Christian traditions might aid us as we seek to connect with God. The reflection is followed by suggestions for prayer and questions for individuals or groups to consider.

Each section of the book is dedicated to one of the seven days of the week, with just a hint of the mood attributed to some days of the week in traditional liturgical practice. In order to encourage the reader to connect with God at different times of the day each section focuses on a particular time; drawing on the ancient practice and experience of the 'hours' of prayer: Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline.

Tom and I are not suggesting that everyone is able to respond to the scriptural injunction to 'pray without ceasing' by engaging with a full liturgical office seven times a day! Attending on the presence of God and offering up a brief but heartfelt prayer at different times of the day or night may be more manageable.

Incorporated into each section are short sketches of prayer traditions which Christians around the world have found helpful in their daily discipleship. We have drawn on the spirituality of St Benedict, St Ignatius of Loyola and others, as well as on spiritual practices of vocal, mental and contemplative prayer. In each of the daily sections we offer a text from Holy Scripture which might provide thought for the day.

This is a little book designed to help individual Christians to develop their relationship with God. It is also a book which can be used by groups meeting regularly to work through the material: sharing experiences of the joys and challenges of meeting God over 'sev'n whole days' of the week and not just 'one in sev'n'. At the end of

each section there are suggestions for group activities.

## A bit about us

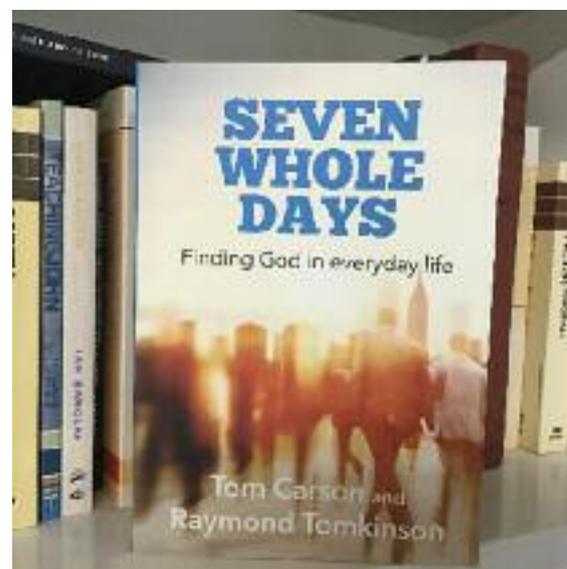
Before being ordained as a priest in the Church of England, Tom Carson was a secondary school teacher and Head of Religious Education at a school in Wallington. He is now Chaplain to Exeter School. He is also a singer and songwriter whose brilliant compositions can be found on YouTube.

I spent some time in religious life before becoming a State Registered Nurse specialising in the care of elderly people and in hospice care. I was a hospital manager and staff development officer before training for ordained ministry.

I have been a parish priest and an area dean and have held vocations adviser and clergy development posts. My last full-time post was that of director of a diocesan retreat centre. In 2005 I began working at Ripon College Cuddesdon, an Anglican theological college and seminary near Oxford. It was there that I met Tom. Following four years serving as a visiting spiritual director I was invited to serve for five years as College Chaplain with some teaching responsibilities in the field of Christian spirituality.

My wife, Rose, and I have been living in Oakham for nearly fifteen years where I continue to write in the field of Christian spirituality.

**Seven Whole Days is published by Kevin Mayhew Ltd.**



## Get to know your churchwarden

### *Debbie Sowter, St Peter and St Paul, Langham*



*Zoom time - Debbie (left) and Beryl*

## 'Raising the missionary outreach of church is the biggest challenge'

### *Beryl Kirtland*

What a sign of the times! You need to get to know someone better and it has to be done through a Zoom meeting! So it was when Debbie Sowter, Churchwarden of St Peter and St Paul Church, Langham, and I decided to spend the evening together.

Many people in Langham and the surrounding area will know Debbie and the other Churchwarden of the parish church, Hilary Knight, for their longstanding and dedicated commitment to the well-being of the historic building and the village community. Debbie has

held the position for 25 years! I felt honoured that Debbie was willing to share some of her life's journey with me and you, the readers.

Born in Shirley, a suburb of Croydon in Surrey, Debbie and her sister, Georgina went to St John's C of E Primary School where she also attended the huge, vibrant Sunday School which was held in the School Hall.

A change of job for her accountant father saw a move to Ashford in Kent where, together with her Christian family, involvement with the church and Sunday worship was routinely part of their lives

although her father was sometimes delegated the job of staying at home to put on the Sunday joint! Debbie became a valued Sunday School teacher during her teenage years.

Unsurprisingly for a caring person Debbie chose nursing for her career and went off to London's St. George's famous teaching hospital which had recently been transferred from its original site at Hyde Park Corner (now the five star Lanesborough Hotel) to Tooting, South London. Several years of general nursing followed. In 1981, Colin, an IT software specialist, and Debbie were married.

For many, circumstances shape the pattern of lives and this is particularly so in Debbie's case. One of her saddest memories was the very sudden death of her father aged 61 from an aortic artery aneurism. At the time her oldest son Richard was one, and baby number two, daughter Caroline, was on the way. Debbie's Mum,

Melville, who many of us know, was left a widow. After three years Melville met Alan, who was to become her second husband, and had the difficult decision to make of whether to relocate to Canada with him. She did and spent 25 happy years there and Debbie and family had many wonderful visits. Finding herself a widow once more is how Melville came to Rutland seven years ago to be with Debbie and her family and become part of our Church family here.

A job transfer from Mars to Petfoods in Melton for Colin brought the family, now consisting of twins Edward and Diana aged one, Caroline three and Richard five, from London to Rutland, a place of which Debbie had not previously heard. Edward, diagnosed with Downs Syndrome, was about to have open heart surgery. The Church was a very welcome support for them, and a lasting memory is of Val Page telling her that the church members were praying for Edward and the family at this time.

It was not long before Debbie joined the PCC and was eventually persuaded to take on the role of Churchwarden, alongside Val, by Peter Corah, son-in-law of Anthony and Beryl Houghton, when he and wife Claire moved from the village.

### ***'We get lots of help'***

When Val decided to step down, it was this similar friendly persuasion that saw Hilary join her. Debbie says 'it's not a hard task being a churchwarden here in Langham as we get lots of help from the whole Church family. We may be small in number but we're big in love and support'.

Having Edward exposed Debbie to things she might not ordinarily have encountered. The Parks School and support organisations brought help, friendships and a wide acquaintance with many local people. In return Debbie was a good help when needed. Edward, now 31, with incredible qualities of cheerfulness and kindness, is spiritually blessed, loves singing in



***Debbie (left) at her Service of Admission in 2019 at Peterborough Cathedral***

church and enjoys his duties as an acolyte 'in normal time'. Anyone who has been to one of the many social functions at Langham church will know Edward as the person who takes tickets and circulates with the superb interval canapés.

Talking about 'old Langham' with its three pubs, Post Office, shop and bakery, we both agreed that although things have changed, as everywhere, it is still a large, vibrant village with lots of groups and a good community spirit.

The Village Hall is well used; the popular school has a good relationship with the church using it for festive occasions; a village newsletter is delivered to every household and there are many clubs and societies.

There are about 50 people on the church electoral roll with a choir and good weekly attendance.

Although young families come and go and having in the past had a thriving Junior Church and a few trial years of 'Church at Four', regrettably for Debbie there is at present no Sunday School or children's style worship.

On a personal level, Holy Communion is her preferred service and she tries to go to church each week. More widely and most importantly she sees raising the missionary outreach side of church as the biggest challenge.

The new curate, Shakeel, will be welcomed with open arms to help

with those aims when he arrives this summer. On a practical level the large village with a large church means a large amount of money to be raised to pay the parish share and maintain the historic building.

### ***Keen to start again***

With unstinting enthusiasm Debbie, Hilary, supportive members of the PCC and helpers organise a wide range of musical events, social occasions and a Christmas Tree Festival to meet these demands and they are looking forward to getting back to doing so again!

A thought shared was the interesting informal conversation that could be held with the estimable retired Bishop of York, John Sentamu, on some of the Church's challenges.

Long, sunny summer holidays in Cornwall were annual delights as part of Debbie's upbringing. Something that their own family, hopefully, has replicated. That is until recent years! With oldest son, Richard, relocated to Australia a bi-annual trip 'down under' for Debbie, Colin and Edward has taken place since 2012.

Exercise during this pandemic has not been a chore for Debbie for she enjoys cycling and long walks with Merlot the dog. Add to this Pilates, Yoga, helping with two young grandchildren, the family and all matters Langham parish church, results in one busy person, a person to whom we give thanks for all she does.

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