

The Welwyn Magazine



February 2022

www.welwyn.org.uk

60p

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February 2022

PUBLISHERS

St Mary's Churchwardens

COVER IMAGE

At Lockley Farm

Captured by the Farmers

July 2021 (Pre Avian flu!)

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Include your contact details.

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Editor Note

We normally publish reports on activities and meetings occurring in Welwyn village and the immediate areas. If any reader would like to submit an article on local matters then please send the details by email to: magazine@welwyn.org.uk or contact St Mary's church office on **01438 840964**.

EDITOR'S NOTES

Articles by the 1st of the month preceding publication, see details above.

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The Rector's Letter

Dear Friends

Most years it comes as a bit of new year shock that not only do I have to write an article for the magazine just as Christmas has passed (though of course Jess reminds me rather too smugly, that she has already done hers...), but that as it is for February so it needs to have details for the start of Lent. However, for once Lent doesn't start until March as Easter is more or less as late as it can be this year. (Shrove Tuesday is 1st March – Pancake Race at 3.30pm, Ash Wednesday is March 2nd – Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes at 9.30am and 8pm.) So, this allows me to say something about a feast which occurs at the start of February, and often gets overlooked. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple is actually the end of the Christmas season, and certainly the church keeps its decorations and tree up until then. This is because it's the final chapter in the gospel Christmas stories – apart from one glimpse of him aged 13, we will hear nothing more of Jesus' life until he begins his ministry at the age of 30.

Luke records the incident in chapter 2 of his gospel, and seems to combine two Jewish rituals which surrounded childbirth. The first, which occurs forty days after a birth was the purification and thanksgiving for the safety of the mother, in this case Mary. The Church of England retains this in the Book of Common Prayer as the Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth. This was essentially a domestic rite. The forty days explains why we observe the

Presentation on the 2nd February. However, the Jewish Law also had provision for the presentation of the first-born son in the Temple anytime in the first month of his life. So, both of these



rites are found in Luke's account. In the Temple Mary and Joseph meet Simeon and Anna – two devout older people. Both recognise Jesus as the Messiah, and Simeon says the words which we know by their Latin first line of *nunc dimittis* – (Now you have dismissed me). In these famous words which are said every day at Evening Prayer in church, Simeon prophesies that Jesus will be the 'Light who will lighten the Gentiles.' That theme of light is carried over, not only daily at Evening Prayer, but also in the popular name for the feast of the Presentation – Candlemas. This is because remembering Simeon's words, people would bring candles to church to be blessed at this time of year. Perhaps we forget in an age of 24 hour electric light, how dark even quite populous towns and cities were, and how important candlelight would have been for safety and security in the winter months. The Welwyn Team will celebrate Candlemas with a candlelit carol service at St Mary's on Sunday 30th January at 6.30pm. All are welcome.

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Jessie - The Rectory Dog

Master has recently taken pity on me, and although I seem to have completely colonised – and in one case destroyed – the three sofas in the house, he has noticed that my night time bed was not quite up to scratch. So, he's bought me a new one, which is marginally more comfortable and only just slightly less expensive than his. I know you'll all be fascinated so I'll stick to the highlights.

Firstly: the innards look initially as though they might garrotte you, and also look far too small – but it turns out they are something called memory foam. This magically expands as you take it out of the packaging – in fact slightly alarmingly. And the cones apparently are there to gently support my delicate frame. Also, the foam remembers everything – where I left my toys, where I buried my bone, when I was last taken out for a walk, the weight of my last meal.

Secondly, the much-needed washable outer cover is soft and furry on one side (is it cat hair? Here's hoping ...) for winter, and then rather plainer and cooler on the other, apparently for summer. Also, it is chew resistant, though that's been a description applied to many items, whereupon I have systematically debunked the manufacturers' claims.

If you're tempted to share with me details of your own bedding, then please don't. Jess



Fellowship

We were able to hold the November meeting taking great care to observe all the safety rules. We had a good attendance and we usually feel this meeting is the start of Christmas. The meeting took the usual form of celebration with carols and many members reminiscing about their childhood memories of Christmas. The refreshments consisted of mince pies and Stollen cake all provided by the Committee.

Unfortunately, the January lunch has had to be postponed. It has been decided that at the present time of uncertainty with all the precautions it is wiser to delay this annual meeting. It has been a hard decision and we all hope as the year progresses our lives will become less restricted, and life will be almost as it used to be.

Marjorie Lyon

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Beyond the farm gate



As a farmer's daughter I am often asked, what is it that you actually do? Driving tractors all day or milking cows? Despite spending our days growing for the nation's dinner tables, it is often rare for consumers to know what actually happens beyond the farm gate or who these mysterious farmers are...

And so, in these articles I hope to welcome you beyond the farm gate to the heart of the machine producing the British food and drink we enjoy every day. I am a young farmer from Welwyn, and this is the story of my life as a Hertfordshire farmer.

New year, new beginnings

This year's winter planting season started like any other. We ploughed the farm in September straight after harvest in order to remove old roots, then drilled (planted) Soft Wheat, Winter Oats and Winter Barley.

The last few years have been incredibly challenging for farmers. Among other

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Beyond the farm gate *continued from p7*

obstacles, the weather has been so extreme that many of our crops have started to struggle where previously they had not. As a result, in May we are planting a vineyard, alongside our normal agricultural practice, to make the best of the current volatility in British agriculture. More on this exciting project can be found on our website.

Diversification projects such as these are normal on British farms. Believe it or not, while British farmers provide over 60% of the food we eat, most cannot support their businesses on the sale of produce alone- they have to adapt to survive. I hope that by opening the farm gate (as it were!), these articles may spread support for British farmers and encourage us to buy British where we can.

For now, there are animals to muck out, fences to repair and piles of paperwork to work through! I have only scratched the surface today; I hope you will tune in next time as we venture beyond the farm gate.

Farmer Hannah

For our Vineyard and Farm information: www.lockleyfarm.co.uk

For more articles on British agriculture, visit my website Agri Unwrapped:

<https://agriunwrapped.wixsite.com/agri>

Note: The hens (see cover photo) are currently all being kept indoors to prevent the spread of Avian Flu.

Wanted: Choir conductor/Musical Director

Welwyn Garden City Male Voice Choir is looking to recruit a conductor/musical director. We are a well-established and active choir with over 30 members. We sing locally in Hertfordshire and have raised funds for many charitable causes in the area. We have also performed further afield on tour in the UK and in Europe. The choir has a wide ranging repertoire including well known pop numbers, songs from the shows, classical arrangements and traditional male voice classics including some in Welsh. The choir currently rehearses once a week on a Thursday in Welwyn Garden City. The choir is now wanting to recruit a conductor who can maintain our heritage and at the same time can lead the choir in new musical areas. The choir has an active organising team which allows the conductor to focus on musical leadership. It also has excellent support from other talented musicians who accompany the choir and contribute with some conducting support. The choir has traditionally provided some financial support for the conductor through an annual honorarium and would be happy to discuss financial arrangements. Call to discuss on 07768 237538



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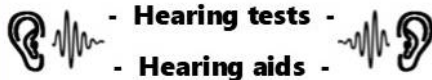
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Birds and Bible: Sparrows

This is the first of what I intend will be series of occasional articles that link our common birds to references to similar birds in the Bible.

Sparrows get mentioned in Jesus' affirmation of God's love for us.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31)



The text gives reference to sparrows being sold. They were acceptable as a sacrifice at the temple for very poor people who could not afford a larger animal for sacrifice.

The bird that is mentioned is probably the house sparrow (*passer domesticus*), which is a bird of the sparrow family Passeridae. It is one of about 25 species and is native to most of Europe, the Mediterranean Basin, and a large part of Asia. There have also been intentional or accidental introductions to many regions, including parts of Australasia, Africa, and the Americas, making it the most widely distributed wild bird.



The house sparrow is strongly associated with human habitation and can live in urban or rural settings. Their colonial nesting habits and flocking together make them a social species. This probably accounts for its well-known presence and mention in the

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Birds and Bible: Sparrows Continued from p.11

biblical scene as well as its familiarity to us. Also, as noted, small birds such as sparrows were acceptable as a sacrifice.



The other sparrow species in the UK is the tree sparrow (*passer montanus*) and is mainly a rural species.

It is a matter of conservation concern that both house sparrow and tree sparrow have declined greatly in the UK and across Europe. The decline in house sparrows

(-69% since the 1970s) has been going on for several decades, something I have witnessed myself finding them missing from areas I have watched for many years.

Research shows there are different factors influencing rural and suburban populations. Agricultural change, loss of nest sites and reduced food availability appear to have influenced rural populations. However, the factors behind the urban and suburban declines are more difficult to isolate. This may be related to air pollution reducing insect levels. There appears to be a better situation in Scotland and in recent years the decline in numbers over much of the UK has been less severe and, in some places, there have been increases. A problem is that they remain quite local within their breeding patches and so do not often move into new areas.



The tree sparrow population decline has been even worse (-96%), although there are local regional recoveries in recent years, mainly due to careful conservation measures supplying nest boxes and supplementary feeding.

Colin Hull



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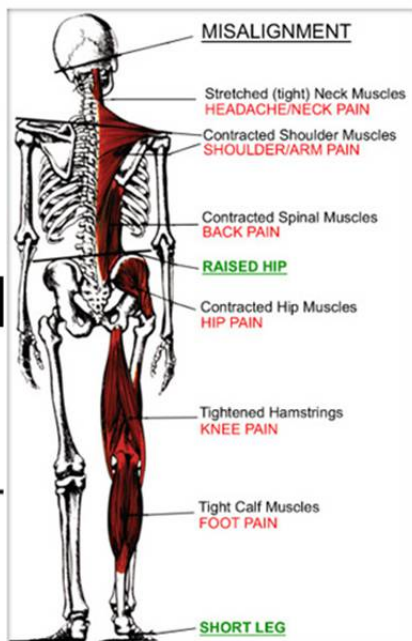
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- heart failure
- abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmia)
- heart valve disease
- inherited or congenital heart disease

It's important that you know the signs of heart attack and other heart conditions, and when to seek medical attention.

DO

- know the symptoms of a heart attack
- get medical help immediately if you have symptoms of a heart attack
- know the symptoms of heart failure or arrhythmia (abnormal heart rhythm)
- seek medical attention if you are pregnant and have chest pain or breathlessness that occurs with minimal exertion or when you are at rest
- seek medical attention if you are pregnant and have chest pain or breathlessness that comes on suddenly or is not normal for you
- talk to your healthcare professional if you have a heart condition and are planning pregnancy

Reduce your risk of heart disease by making lifestyle changes

DON'T

- do not ignore symptoms of a heart attack

Continued on page 17

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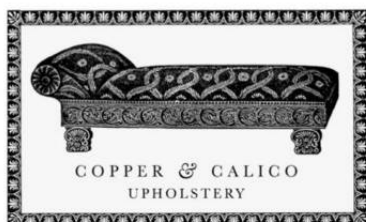
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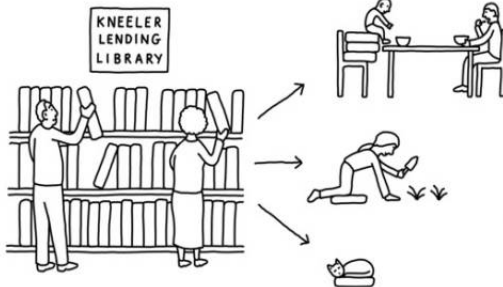
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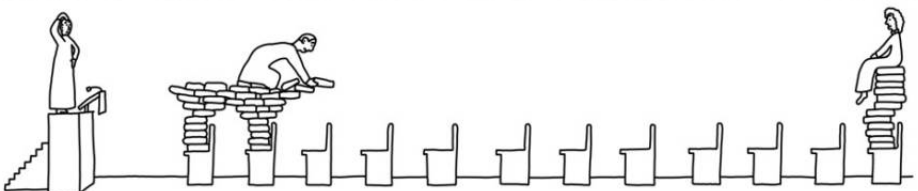
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Bringing some cheer at Christmas

At Bible Discovery we enjoy getting together for a summer and a Christmas party. But, as with everything else we would like to do, Covid has caused us to make some changes. We were able to have a summer party in our garden, fresh air, good spacing -and no rain luckily, but what to do for Christmas? In the end we decided we'd like to do something for the children who won't get a Christmas present this year. After a quick search on line, we discovered that the Salvation Army accept and distribute toys at Christmas.

We met in our two groups with coffee and mince pies (thanks to Katie's bakery), and were overwhelmed by how many lovely toys we had acquired. When the people working in the Charity shop in Welwyn learnt about our scheme, they were very generous and added to the toys many of us had unearthed from cupboards, stored there long ago. We set about cleaning them all with sanitising wipes, and the soft toys underwent a session in the washing machine. We put each toy in a see-through bag unwrapped, as requested by the Salvation Army, with a label and a length of ribbon. The many rolls of wrapping paper donated were put in a big bag so that parents could wrap the toys for their own children. While we worked, we shared memories of Christmases past, favourite Christmas poems and stories, and some music.

A few days later, Mike and I put the toys into three large boxes, a huge teddy bear lying on the top, and set off to the Salvation Army centre in Welwyn Garden City where we met Diane, and gave her the toys.

For the pleasure it gave us all that may not be the only time we enjoy such an evening!

Gay Carpenter



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Welwyn St Mary's Church Clock

It's 1803 and, in Hyde Park, George III is reviewing his army of 27,000 volunteers who have gathered to defend Britain from what was thought to be the imminent invasion of Napoleon's forces. Four miles to the east, in the quieter atmosphere of his Clerkenwell workshop, John Thwaites is supervising the final assembly of his company's latest turret clock. It's a fine clock, built to the same high standards as the clocks his company has installed in Lincoln Cathedral and Horse Guards Parade, but we have no record of where this new clock is heading. Once it leaves the workshop it disappears for over a century. In 1911 we catch sight of it again. This time in the hands of local clock maker C E Arnold, who carries out some restoration work before installing the clock in its present home in the newly completed tower of St Mary's church, Welwyn. Here, it ticks away quietly as another century passes. For most of that time all it has for company are the eight bell ropes that emerge through the floor from the ringing chamber below and disappear through the ceiling into the bell chamber above. But twice a week someone climbs the spiral staircase to wind the clock.

A mechanical clock needs two things: something to make the hands turn and something to stop the hands from turning too quickly. In watches and smaller clocks, the power is usually supplied by a spring. Springs are compact and can be moved around easily, but they have the disadvantage that they provide less power when they are nearly unwound than they do when they are fully wound. Larger stationary clocks are often powered by weights, which provide the same amount of power to the clock all the time. Clocks in towers (or 'turret clocks' as they are known) often have weights that descend through more than one floor. The weights that drive our clock start near the ceiling of the clock chamber after winding, and slowly descend through to the floor of the ringing chamber below over the period of about a week.

The speed at which the hands go round is regulated by the escapement. Our clock has an anchor escapement which rocks to-and-fro, slowly allowing the teeth of the escapement wheel to tick forward at regular intervals. At the same time, the escapement wheel gives the anchor a little nudge to keep the pendulum swinging. The exact timing of the swing depends on the length of the pendulum (not its weight). A pendulum of around 250 mm (10 inches) will swing to-and-fro once a second. This is known as the pendulum's period. Our clock has a period of 4 seconds, so you might think that it needs a pendulum four times this length, but the length of a pendulum is not proportional to its period but to the square of its period. This means that the pendulum is over 4 metres long and extends through the floor of the clock chamber into a cupboard in the ringing chamber below.

The clock has probably been wound over 12,000 times since it's been with us. The 'going train' (the wheels that drive the hands) and the 'striking train' (the wheels that chime the bell each hour) have their own weights and need to be wound separately. This is done with a large metal key that slides onto the winding shaft of each train in turn, and takes about 5 minutes. Each turn of the key raises the weight a little, then a

Welwyn St Mary's Church Clock

ratchet holds the weight in place as you prepare for the next turn.

One Tuesday morning in the spring of 2021 I'd finished winding the going train and transferred the key to the winding shaft of the striking train. Perhaps I missed a clue that all was not well as I began winding. Had the familiar click-click-click of the ratchet been absent? What I do know for sure is that, as I let go of the key after the first wind, the cable drum didn't lock reassuringly onto the ratchet. The key span rapidly backwards for a few turns then flew off across the room. At the same time the weight plummeted with gathering speed through its shaft. Sparks showered from the pulleys as the cable raced through them. The impact of the weight on the floor of the ringing chamber below could be felt as much as heard, and sent a cloud of dust and debris into the church office below that.

Within a second or two all was quiet again. Miraculously the going train had survived unscathed and the steady ticking of the clock continued. However, it was clear that it would not be safe to touch the clock until a professional clock maker had assessed the damage.



Wayne removing one of the damaged components

Clock makers are much harder to find than they used to be but we were lucky to get a recommendation from our friends at Ayot St Peter. A few weeks later, Wayne Francis of Clockwise Restoration made the journey south from Boston in Lincolnshire. I expected him to bring a collection of specialist tools with him, but with little more than an adjustable spanner he set about dismantling the clock, pulling out and inspecting each component of the striking train. Thankfully, none of the larger components needed to be replaced, but Wayne took several pieces away to repair in his workshop. He was also able to disengage what was left of the striking train so that we could wind and restart the clock. Later in

the year he returned to complete the repair, and install two electrically driven automatic winders. These replace the weights, and so the twice weekly trip up the tower to wind the clock has passed into history.

It may be that few people had even noticed that the clock had not been sounding out the



The going train (on the right) still running after the striking train has been removed

Welwyn St Mary's Church Clock



A broken ratchet tooth

hours through the summer of 2021, but it was good to have the clock fully working again by the time we reached Remembrance Sunday. Wayne will carry out an annual inspection and service of the clock, so, with luck, we can look forward to another century of uneventful ticking and

striking.

Peter Gill



Wayne Francis of Clockwise Restoration after completing the repairs and installing the auto-winders

Clock jokes (groan!)

1. How did the street clock address the tower clock? "High there!"
2. What did the second hand say to the hour and minute hand? "See you around in a minute, guys."
3. 5. What happens when a clock is hungry? It always goes back four seconds.
4. What is a belt made of clocks called? Waist of time.
5. What is a clever clock called? A clockwise.
6. My friend finally thought of a clock joke. It is about time!
7. What would a robber say to the clock? Hey you, hands up!
8. What would you get if you cross a clock and a chicken? A cluck.
9. Why did the student throw the clock out of the window? Because they wanted to see time fly.
10. Why should you never eat a clock? Because it is a time-consuming process.

In conversation with Rod Dowdell



On a dark winter afternoon some weeks before Christmas it was very comfortable to sit and chat with Rod Dowdell and his wife Pip in their warm cottage by the Mimram while a Christmas pudding simmered away in their kitchen.

This seemed a long way from the main subject of our conversation: Downing Street.

But we weren't discussing any of the tumultuous events of the past two years, rather Rod's time based there as a civil servant working for the government around 25 years ago, during the prime ministerships of John Major and Tony Blair when the culture was quite different. "Any thought of a wine and cheese party was never on the cards," says Rod. "If more outsiders – ie non-Cabinet Office staff – were at a meeting, we got a biscuit with our coffee. Otherwise, it was just coffee."

Originally a plant chemist Rod explains "My work for the government started in 1970 when I joined the Agricultural Research Council Laboratories in Wantage". This work led him to publish many papers on soil and plants in scientific journals which brought him prominence in his field. "However, in the 1980s Margaret Thatcher decided that as government-funded research benefitted industry, industry should pay," says Rod. "Unfortunately, industries were unwilling to stump up, so the cut backs to government funding inevitably led to the closure of the laboratories in 1985, which is when I was offered a new position in Edinburgh, joining the Scientific Advisor's unit in the Department for Agriculture and Fisheries in Scotland, where I oversaw what was left of the Scottish agricultural research budget."

Five years later Rod took up a new position on the Government's Chief Scientific Advisors team in Downing Street. Moving back south for this new post, this is when Rod and Pip settled together in Welwyn.

Now part of the Cabinet Office, Rod was responsible for producing an annual review of government funded research and development programmes. "I travelled widely throughout the UK, visiting every government department, research institution and university in receipt of government funding, to collect their reports in order to write up and collate all data for an annual review of how government funds had been spent." This review, which became *The Forward Look*, was useful both to MPs and science writers.

All documents had to be photocopied for drafts to go to all departments, which involved

In conversation with Rod Dowdell

many hours at the photocopier for Rod and the biggest copier was situated just outside the Cabinet Secretary's office.

“At 6pm one evening I still had a large quantity to copy and collate. A smart bowler hatted man emerged from the office and saw the stack of copying waiting. He asked me how long it would take and at my response of several hours, he immediately removed his hat and coat, put down umbrella and brief case and set to, helping to collate and staple the copies so that the job was finished by 8pm. My helper just happened to be the Head of the Civil Service – a valuable illustration of how a good manager should be, willing to do any task expected of his team.”

Each annual review was destined for The Crown, commanded by the Queen through Parliament.

“I was tasked with staying to see the final copy off the printers' press and taking it to Buckingham Palace for the royal signature. One year, having spent the night at the print works in Kings Langley, I drove home for breakfast before taking 25 unseen copies to London, one for the Queen to sign then taking it with the rest to the House of Lords. Pip glanced at the cover of the report and said 'You know there's a spelling mistake, development doesn't have an e in the middle!'

“I was horrified,” says Rod. But he still had to get the report signed. “So I went into London, to the back door at Buckingham Palace, sat and waited anxiously while a flunky took one copy for the royal signature. Fortunately, the mistake went unnoticed by Her Majesty and indeed everyone else.”

Another time at Downing Street, Rod stepped into the lift and found himself with Margaret Thatcher and Michael Heseltine, “They included me in their conversation, fortunately it was only about the exploits of the Cabinet Office cat.”

Once Rod even had to sit on a step, in front of the throne in the House of Lords, “I had been involved in preparing the White Paper on Science and Technology, so accompanied the minister, William Waldegrave when he was presenting it to the House of Lords. I was ushered to sit in front of the throne to listen to the presentation before going to the Hansard Office to proof read their report and sign it off for print.”

More often Rod was to be found in the House of Commons listening to a scientific debate, but not seated on the benches.

“As experts who might be needed to be called upon during a debate, we were seated behind a screen behind the Speaker's chair,” explains Rod. “If an expert opinion was required during the debate, the minister's parliamentary private secretary would pass a hand written note to us over the top of the screen.” Rod isn't sure whether this

In conversation with Rod Dowdell



simple method is still used in today's world of mobiles, but it certainly worked well then. Sometimes instead he was available waiting by a phone during a debate, "It was a bit like being the phone-a-friend on a TV quiz show," says Rod.

Unfortunately, Rod's career in Downing Street ended all too soon. He explains why, "I was on a trip to Washington to represent the UK at a United Nations meeting on science and technology on the day of Princess Diana's funeral, September 6 1997. It was during that trip that I discovered I had an eyesight problem and was blind in one eye. Within a year I was medically retired from the Civil Service." Rod was just 54.

There are probably many other fascinating things Rod could have told about his Downing Street years, had he not signed the Official Secrets Act. But of this I am sure, if I were ever on a TV quiz, Rod would certainly be my phone a friend.

Vernonne Allan

Dear cyclists, joggers, walkers, runners, dog-walkers, please wear something white, pale or reflective on your upper body, including your sleeves, when you are out after dark. Even when there are street lights pedestrians and cyclists "disappear" into the gloom if they are dressed in dark clothing. This is especially the case if you are sideways on to the traffic, e.g. crossing the road or exiting a side road. Stay safe—be seen!

Welwyn Community Library opening hours have changed to Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 2 – 5 pm and Saturday 10 – 1 pm. Library membership is free if you live or work in Hertfordshire. Come and see us in the Civic Centre.

Woolmer Green Parish Council

Woolmer Green Parish Council Community Award presented to The Red Lion

Councillors Phil Corke and Rob Horton presented the Woolmer Green Parish Council Community Award for 2021 to Jackie Castle at The Red Lion on Christmas Eve.



Jackie and her team have worked hard to support the village community during a challenging couple of years. As reported a couple of months ago Jackie led the fund raising for a defibrillator to be located on the outside wall of the pub and arranged for training, kindly provided by Sarah McGuinness. Well done to Jackie and The Red Lion team and thank you from Woolmer Green!

Carols on Christmas Eve

Carol singing returned on Christmas Eve 2021 after a year's break in 2020. The event was relocated to the Village Hall grounds to allow more space for people to stand and sing safely. There was festive lighting, mulled wine to keep everyone warm and the Woolmer Green Band accompanied the singing.



The Parish Council's charity for 2021 was Cardiac Risk in the Young (c-r-y.org.uk) which was nominated by Sarah McGuinness and a collection was made for the charity. Woolmer Green Band also collected when they played at the Farmers' Market, Winter Wonderland, County Funerals' Christmas Wreath making event and the Burnham Green Christmas lights switch-on. A grand total of £270 was raised - thank you to everyone who donated!

Woolmer Green Farmers Market

The next market will be on 27th February - please support your local traders!

Sarah Hall

Woolmer Green Parish Council

sarah.hall@woolmergreenpc.org.uk

The Friends of Danesbury

Love is in the air...or so they say and with Valentine's Day round the corner we hope that even under the current circumstances, you are still able to get a warm hug from those dear to you, something we could probably all do with during these cold and dark months. However, if I may take a moment to go back in time we would like to recognise and thank Georgia Shaw, one of our shop managers, for all her hard work in organising the amazing Christmas raffle we had last Christmas. The raffle raised an astonishing £1200, this was truly amazing!! Also, a big thank you to all who so kindly donated towards the raffle – we would have liked to mention all donors but that would leave no space to further add any updates from the Friends. But please do know that your donations were much appreciated, and the money raised will go towards supporting



both the patients and the staff at the Danesbury and QVM hospitals.

Unfortunately, COVID is still very much among us all, and therefore Danesbury and QVM hospitals are both still very busy and adhering to strict NHS guidance and regulations. As Spring approaches, they hope to be able to have volunteers coming back to help within the hospitals, as they are such an integral part of patient rehab and a support to all the staff.

Our charity shop in Welwyn has had a very busy Christmas, especially after the terrible Christmas of 2020. It is no surprise that January has started rather slowly, but we are confident that the foot fall in the shop will pick up over the coming months. As always, we are very appreciative of your donations, and if you are planning on having a spring clean then please do think of us – we are

now also accepting electrical items.

We are always looking for volunteers at the shop. If you have any spare time and would like to be part of the Friends helping to make a difference within the community, then please come to the shop and one of our managers would be more than happy to discuss this with you.

Attached is a photo taken by one of the nurses of the courtyard at QVM Hospital a few winters ago. It looks rather magical. However, I look forward to the burst of colour that comes with the warm sunshine of Spring. Here's hoping that we will all be able to enjoy the outdoors again as Spring approaches.

All our best wishes

The Friends of Danesbury & QVM



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Car thefts and potholes, again



Over the last 11 months vehicle crime in Welwyn is up 50% on the same period in 2020. Those of you who receive the OWL crime alerts (and which of you still doesn't?) will have noticed the frequency with which thefts of cars, especially those with keyless entry, were reported by our PCSO. It is thought that these will have mostly been stolen to order and probably shipped abroad. During a recent conversation with our PCSO we were told that none of these vehicles had been recovered.

If you have one of these high-end vehicles, we hope that by now you'll have bought a Faraday pouch in which to keep your keys safe from hackers, and a steering wheel lock. Pouches are available locally from the not-for-profit website owlprotect.uk. For most vehicles, you'll also find from your handbook or dealer that the keyless entry can be switched off.

Do you remember that in the September 2020 magazine we invited readers to report potholes to encourage the authorities to get them repaired? That was prompted by RAC research showing a 37% increase in reported potholes during the year to April 2020. Since then, during the third

quarter of 2020, the RAC dealt with the largest number of pothole-related call outs in any third quarter since 2006. Have you reported any potholes recently? We explained last September how to do this. But if you log into OWL using your email address and password, your "local" tab will take you to Fix My Street where you can identify the location and upload a photo. You could also download their app to your smartphone.

Naturally, we've been reporting potholes ourselves and were pleased to see this week a considerable number of repairs to the inside lane of the A1 southbound between Welwyn and the Tesco roundabout. Incidentally we now don't hesitate to use that roundabout after alterations were made to the traffic lights. Before then one of your authors experienced two instances of being shunted by other vehicles. On one occasion this happened on the way back from the garage, having just collected the repaired car following the first accident!

Valerie Richards and John Mitchell
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St Mary's, Welwyn and St Michael's, Woolmer Green PCC Meeting 15th November 2021

The minutes of September's meeting were reviewed. There were no objections or queries. The Chairman (The Rector) signed them as a true and accurate record. No matters arose therefrom.

The finance report was circulated by email prior to the meeting. The treasurer advised the PCC that a deficit is likely to be incurred in the current financial year due to the various exceptional capital expenditures including the new boiler, refurbishing the heat pumps and fire safety systems.

Those of you who have been giving to St Mary's by direct debit administered by Virgin Money Giving will be aware that that scheme has now been closed by Virgin. Maggie Varco has proposed that The Parish Giving Scheme, a charity dedicated to serving donors and churches in a shared ministry of giving, offers the best replacement, especially as the diocese bears the cost of administering it as well as claiming Gift Aid on behalf of St Mary's.

Maggie also introduced the new method for cashless collections in church. The new payment terminal has a contactless card reader with options of £5, £10 or £20 or "choose other amount". For those whose card is not contactless or for sums exceeding the contactless maximum the terminal includes a normal card reader into which your card is inserted and your PIN is entered. The message displayed on the touch screen can be varied to allow for different campaigns, for example St Mary's nominated charity. If you have been to St Mary's recently you may well have seen this new terminal as it was placed within a few days of the meeting and is now operational. A QR code is also provided as an alternative means of giving which will be printed in the pew sheets and included in the live-streamed services on the YouTube channel.

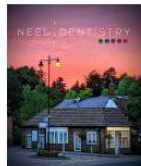
Turning to fabric reports: At St Michael's Susan Keach and Stuart Jenkin will carry out their own fire safety assessment. This is permitted for small churches. An offer of a donation towards the cost of a new gate to fill a hole in the hedge surrounding the churchyard has been received. A specification will be drawn up and a faculty (Diocesan speak for planning permission) applied for.

St Mary's has received a quotation of c. £12,000 to install a new fire monitoring and alarm system. The PCC unanimously agreed to accept it. Another quotation was received but declined. A faculty will be applied for to proceed with this installation.

The PCC thanked Stuart for all his work involved in dealing with the above as well as the

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PCC Meeting *Continued from p.32*

heating system which is still not completely finalized. The contractors are being very evasive about finishing the work in spite of numerous chasers from Stuart.

Another item mentioned was getting the path light to Church House door to work again – apparently this was accomplished by divine intervention since no steps were taken by any person known to the PCC to get it working, but lo and behold it was working – at least it was on the night of the meeting.

Turning to the Rector's items he noted that children's activities remain at a low level. The usual Parade Service did not take place on Remembrance Sunday for the obvious reason. Since half term schools have had no collective worship. St Mary's Christingle Service was expected to take place as usual. Congregation numbers remain lower than pre-pandemic reflecting the general pattern across the country. Since the last meeting the Renewal of Ministry and Mission booklet was distributed and posted on social media.

Welwyn St Mary's School has offered a gift to the church to remember the 2020 pandemic. They have proposed a colourful cross with a plaque to hang in Church House celebrating school and church working together during the pandemic. The PCC unanimously agreed that a faculty be applied for.

Environmental policy – the Rector proposed that both St Mary's and St Michael's should set themselves the goal of attaining the ECO Church bronze award. This would be added as a goal to the 2016 Environmental Policy to complete the 2021 update. An offer to apply for one of the vacant posts of governor of St Mary's School had been received and was approved subject to success in the usual application process.

The Deanery Synod report was presented by Shoena Eggington with contributions from Colin Hull.

It is hoped that the new altar frontals for St Mary's will soon be finished.

Judith Watson was thanked for her work in setting up and up-dating the notice board at St Michael's as well as bringing their website and Facebook page up-to-date.

David Hughes
Nov/Dec 2021

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News from Ayot St Peter

The Candlemas clear-up

Candlemas Day is a lesser-known Christian festival that has special significance in Ayot St Peter. It is celebrated forty days after Christmas Day on 2nd February and commemorates Mary's visit to the temple in Jerusalem to be purified and to present baby Jesus to God. The name "Candlemas" appeared around the middle of the 5th century, when it became the custom for all the candles needed in the church during the coming year to be blessed on that day.



In medieval England, Candlemas was observed as the official end of Christmas and any decorations not taken down by Twelfth Night were left until Candlemas Day. Last year, English Heritage followed this idea at several of its historic palaces and encouraged the public to do the same, to provide a bit of cheer during the pandemic.

There was a pre-Christian festival on 2nd February, that marked the midpoint of winter – halfway between the shortest day and the Spring equinox. Over the centuries, people came to believe that Candlemas Day predicted the weather for the rest of the winter. Weather proverbs express the idea that a fine bright sunny Candlemas Day means that there is more winter to come, whereas a cloudy wet stormy Candlemas Day means that the worst of winter is over.

In the United States, 2nd February is celebrated as Groundhog Day, which focuses on the idea of the groundhog coming out of its home in the morning to predict the weather. If a groundhog can see its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If it cannot see its shadow, spring is on the way. For the naturalists among you, the groundhog (also known as a woodchuck) is a rodent belonging to the family of large ground squirrels known as marmots.

Here in Ayot St Peter, Candlemas Day is the time when any remaining Christmas decorations are removed from graves by our volunteers. Usually some of the Spring bulbs are poking through the ground by early February and it is often a lovely time of year in the churchyard. The Christmassy colours, that were so festive a few weeks ago, start to look wrong in the light of the new year, so a tidy up at Candlemas always seems appropriate. Whilst we have plenty of wildlife in our churchyard, sadly there are no groundhogs.

Valerie Richards



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Welwyn Parish Council



This is my first article since Christmas. I hope you were able to enjoy the festive season with family and friends. Welwyn Parish Council is looking forward to 2022. We are hoping, Covid restrictions permitting, to be able to promote our Neighbourhood Plan with exhibitions, drop-in sessions and general public meetings. We were delighted with your response to our survey and to be able to hold a meeting when we can talk about our ideas and

listen to yours is a good opportunity to communicate on this issue.

For the last two years we have missed being able to hold our Annual Parish Assembly and are hoping we will be able to invite you to meet us on 20 April. As councillors we have a duty to be well informed, especially about diverse local issues. We cannot assume that we represent the interests of all residents without consulting them. I hope, if we are able to hold our Annual Parish Assembly, that many of you will join us. These meetings provide a valuable opportunity for local people to identify features of the Parish that need improving or are worth protecting. They stimulate discussion, inform decision making and usually lead to action. The Council should not make decisions in isolation and we are fortunate to work with interested groups in the Parish including the Welwyn Planning and Amenities Group (WPAG) and the Singlers Marsh Action Group. We would like to thank these volunteers for their campaign for Singlers Marsh to be given Village Green status. I know this is important to many residents. Members of WPAG are also working with Welwyn Parish Council on the Local Plan, the outcome of which will affect the whole Parish.

We are delighted with the success of our Terracycle facility. Thank you to all who have used it. Cheese packaging, crisp packets, blister packs, marigold gloves can all be recycled at the Parish Council office, Lockleys Drive between 9am and 1pm. Finally, Welwyn Parish Council still has a councillor vacancy for the Mardley Heath Ward. For many people it is the satisfaction of acting on behalf of their local community that encourages them to become councillors. Obviously, we have rules that guide the council, not as glamorous as action, but vital to its success. If you think you would enjoy being part of the Parish Council please contact Caroline Williams, our Clerk, at clerk@welwynpc.org.uk or 01438716667. If you would like more information about the work of a councillor, I (07775928132, cllr.m.otton@welwynpc.org.uk) or any of your councillors, would be happy to talk to you. Contact details for councillors can be found on our website.

I wish you all a happy and healthy new year.

Marj Otty, Chairman

Welwyn Parish Council



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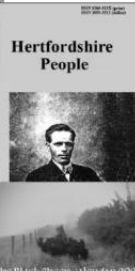
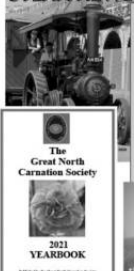
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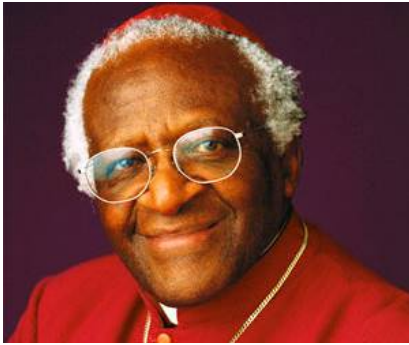
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Archbishop Desmond Tutu



Desmond Tutu Archbishop of Cape Town.

Numerous tributes, particularly in South Africa, have been paid to Archbishop Desmond Tutu who died in 2021 aged 90. The Meditation on p. 48 highlights some of his famous sayings.

He was born into a relatively poor family living at Klerksdorp in the Transvaal, but moved to Johannesburg when he was twelve. He wanted to become a physician, but that was beyond his family's means, so trained to become a teacher.

In 1954 he graduated from the University of South Africa and was ordained as a priest in 1960. He then travelled to London and obtained a Master's degree in theology at King's College London. He later returned to South Africa where he taught theology from 1967 – 72.

Whilst studying at King's College London, Desmond Tutu lived in the curate's flat at the Church of St Alban the Martyr in Golders Green and assisted at services. Subsequently David Munchin was a curate there and stayed in the same flat that Desmond Tutu had used. Whilst David was a curate there he went away on a course. During the time that David was away Desmond Tutu and his wife visited the parish and stayed in David's flat. David tidied the flat but it is said that Mrs Tutu gave it more thorough clean when they left.

Desmond Tutu was appointed Bishop of Lesotho (a small landlocked country within South Africa) in 1976, then Bishop of Johannesburg and finally Archbishop of Cape Town, a post he held for ten years, from 1986 – 96.

He was a firm critic of and leader of non-violent protest against the South African white minority-led rule and racial segregation. His tireless work resulted in his winning the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1984 for his 'unifying leadership in the campaign to resolve the problem of apartheid in South Africa.' He also received several Honorary Doctorates from universities in the USA, Great Britain and Germany.

He married in 1955 and had four children. He finally retired in 2011.



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A Quiz for February

Here are a few brain-teasers for you, some easy questions some a bit more challenging. Answers in the March magazine.

1. How many months of the year have 28 days?
2. In how many types of deer (not antelope) do the females have antlers as well as the males?
3. St Valentine is known as the patron saint of lovers and marriages. What else is he the patron saint of? (There are several – choose at least two!)
4. How did the brave ladies of Fishguard save the day on 22nd February 1797?
5. What was the exact date Britain officially “went decimal”, making pennies, tanners and half crowns things of the past?
6. How much would the following pre-decimal coinage be worth in decimal currency? A thrupenny bit, a tanner, a bob, a half crown.
7. What first appeared on the streets of Mayfair on 5th February 1958?
8. Which church festival is traditionally celebrated on 2nd February?
9. Samuel Plimsoll was born on 10th February 1824. What did he invent?
10. On 20th February 1712 the last trial for witchcraft in England took place. What is the (fairly) local connection?
11. Why is February called February?
12. What lunar event always occurs in 11 months of the year, but only sometimes in February?
13. What is the birthstone associated with February?
14. Chinese New Year happens in February. What is 2022 the year of?
15. When is Groundhog Day and what does it signify?

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Parish Registers



St Mary's Welwyn

Wedding

29th November 2021

Carol Whitehead & Ahmad Irfan

Baptism

19th December 2021

Sarala Carmel Warren

Funeral

4th November

Margaret Rose Palmer

Ayot St Peter

Baptism

21st November 2021

Ares Christopher Enzo Cooper

Funeral

4th December

Anthony Bremner

St Michael's Woolmer Green

Funerals

26th October

David Middleton

10th November

Paul Weatherhead

21st December

Peter Laurence Davis

February Fact

The old Roman calendar had only ten months, starting in March and ending with December (Latin for "the tenth month"). When the two winter months January and February were added, February became the last month of the year and was given 28 days to fit into the calendar. To keep up with the seasons, the Romans introduced a leap month they called *Intercalaris*. The extra month was added every couple of years after February, which was shortened to 23 or 24 days to make room for the thirteenth month.

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ST MARY'S - Welwyn

Sunday	8.00 am	Holy Communion
Sunday	9.30 am	Parish Communion / Junior Church
Sunday	6.30 pm	Evensong (2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays)
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
Wednesday	9.30 am	Holy Communion
Saturday	9.00 am	Parish Prayers

Children

Mondays	3.30pm	Craftea (1st and 3rd Mondays during term time)
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ST MICHAEL'S - Woolmer Green

Sunday	11.15 am
1st and 4th Sundays:	Parish Eucharist:
2nd Sunday:	Family Service
3rd Sunday:	All Age Eucharist
5th Sunday:	Morning Prayer

AYOT ST PETER

1st Sunday	11.15 am	Matins: <i>(Book of Common Prayer, King James' Bible)</i>
2nd and 5th Sundays	11.15 am	Holy Communion: <i>(Book of Common Prayer, King James' Bible)</i>
3rd Sunday	11.15 am	Family Service: <i>(Common Worship, NRSV Bible)</i>
4th Sunday	11.15 am	Parish Communion: <i>(Common Worship, NRSV Bible)</i>

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Sunday	9.45 am	Bible Classes (All ages 7+)
Sunday	11.00 am and 6.30 pm	(Facilities for young children)
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Meditation

Desmond Tutu 1931-2021

- ◆ “Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s all those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”
- ◆ “Dear Child of God, I am sorry to say that suffering is not optional.”
- ◆ “Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”
- ◆ “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.”
- ◆ “I’m not interested in picking up crumbs of compassion thrown from the table of someone who considers himself my master. I want the full menu of rights.”
- ◆ “I wish I could shut up, but I can’t, and I won’t.”
- ◆ “If you want peace, you don’t talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.”
- ◆ “Your ordinary acts of love and hope point to the extraordinary promise that every human life is of inestimable value.”
- ◆ “In the end what matters is not how good we are but how good God is. Not how much we love Him but how much He loves us. And God loves us whoever we are, whatever we’ve done or failed to do, whatever we believe or can’t.”
- ◆ “We may be surprised at the people we find in heaven. God has a soft spot for sinners. His standards are quite low.”
- ◆ “Forgiving is not forgetting; it’s actually remembering – remembering and not using your right to hit back. It’s a second chance for a new beginning. And the remembering part is particularly important. Especially if you don’t want to repeat what happened.”
- ◆ “But God can only smile because only God can know what is coming next.”

Amen