

THE LINK

A COMMUNITY MAGAZINE FOR THE
SEVEN PARISHES IN THE SOUTH
WARWICKSHIRE 7 BENEFICE

June 2020

£1



■ BARCHESTON with WILLINGTON ■ BARTON-ON-THE-HEATH
■ BURMINGTON ■ CHERINGTON with STOURTON ■ LONG COMPTON
■ WHICHFORD and ASCOTT ■ THE WOLFORDS

CONTENTS

Contents

(Hover over text to navigate...)

Page 3 – Events Diary

Page 4 – The LINK Team

Page 5 - Editorial

Page 9 – Parish People

Page 10 – Church News

Page 12 – Gardening Notes

Page 14 – Nature Notes

Page 16 – Barton Village Pages

Page 20 – Burmington Village Pages

Page 27 – Cherington and Stourton Village pages

Page 28 – Long Compton Village Pages

Page 38 – Whichford and Ascott Village Pages

Page 40 – The Wolfords Village Pages

Page 42 – Chairman’s Corner

Page 45 – Poetry Notes

Page 46 – LINK Lit.

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<https://editor794.wixsite.com/sw7link>



EVENTS DIARY

Contact: The Editor
Email: editor@swlink.org.uk

Events Update

Once again, the programme of events across SW7 Benefice has been hit by the restrictions that have become necessary. Until normal service is resumed, please meet some friends that Simon Lewis-Beeching found on one of his recent walks.



LINK cover: *Great Wolford Wood Bluebells*

Photograph by Gabi Duck of Great Wolford.

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The LINK welcomes contributions for the front cover or elsewhere. Portrait orientation photographs or artwork preferred.

Please send items to editor@swlink.org.uk

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THE LINK

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Please note the copy deadline for July 2020:

Monday 15 June

(Please be aware we are planning to have a printed LINK for July)

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EDITORIAL

LINK Talk

This is the second of the 'online only' LINK issues. At the time of writing, some coronavirus restrictions are being lifted and as near as we are able to judge, next month's issue will be in the usual printed format. Of course, as we all know, things can change at a frightening speed but as we are at the moment, we will return to printing for the July LINK.

We have had to give our printers, KMS of Hook Norton as much notice of possible and we are grateful to them for being able to get us back onto the printed page.

I am aware that there have been a number of you who kindly printed out the June issue of The LINK for friends and neighbours who do not 'do the internet'. If you have done this, please accept our special thanks.

Another group of people to whom our thanks need to go are our village distributors. Please, if you are able to lend them a hand, give them a call to offer your services as a 'temporary distributor' for the July LINK. Their telephone numbers are on page 8. Sharing this load could possibly be a help to some of them.

Whilst most LINK readers prefer a printed version, there may be some of you who would prefer to stay with the online version. This is quite possible; please just email me and I can add you to digital subscribers list. You will have access to the 'Current Issues' page on the website, which in due course will once again be password protected.

In the meantime, please stay safe and enjoy this issue of The LINK.

Keith Murphy, editor@swlink.org.uk



More of Simon's friends - Photograph by Simon Lewis-Beeching

landings, relieved Major John Howard of the original assault force and was en route for Caen, the Rhine and the end of the war. Imagine her celebrations on 8 May 1945 with a with a 3-month-old baby boy in her arms, Antony.

We have returned to Normandy many times, firstly with Antony's parents and our 2 very small children (see right). Johnny had never been back before. As he walked into the Café Gondree on Pegasus Bridge, 34 years after his first visitation, a very old lady stopped polishing the tables and shouted in sheer disbelief 'Mais c'est Majeur Johnny oui?'. She had not forgotten the good- looking English soldier who had liberated her from 5 years of German occupation. We will never forget the copious quantities of Calvados Madame Gondree produced to celebrate the event.



The last time we went was with Johnny's son, grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren (see above). We all raised glasses to a fantastic enterprise that had brought about the defeat of Nazi Germany in the West and led to VE Day the following year. As a family we were hugely proud.

Harriet Granville

Advice for Village Halls

I have been sent what looks like some sensible guidance for users and managers of village halls. It's from WRCC (Warwickshire Rural Community Council) and it's dated 28 May 2020. As we know, things can change so quickly, but I would hope that WRCC keep this advice as up to date as they can.

<https://www.wrccrural.org.uk/re-opening-village-halls-grant-support-for-halls/>

Keith Murphy, editor@swlink.org.uk

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If you wish to update information on this page, please email the Editor: editor@swlink.org.uk



*Happy
Birthday!*



June Birthdays

1st	Isobel Jones	Whichford	9
2nd	Milly Blake	Cherington	14
6th	Elena Swift	Burmington	16
13th	Isabella Parsons	Long Compton	12
14th	Alexander Banner	Willington	13
16th	Tom Simmonds	Stourton	16
20th	Millie Kinch	Long Compton	14

SW7 BENEFICE CHURCH NEWS

SW7 Benefice Church Services now on YouTube!

Last month, *The Guardian* newspaper reported a survey which showed that 25% of adults in the UK had watched or listened to a religious service since the lockdown began (compared with 6% of adults who normally attend a religious service each week). In addition, an article in *The Tablet* summarised a report on Google search trends, indicating that searches for 'prayer' had doubled with every 80,000 new COVID-19 cases in 75 different countries studied.

All this means that more people are reaching out and searching for God during the coronavirus crisis. We want to encourage readers of The LINK to do so too. That is why we have created our own YouTube channel: 'SW7 Benefice Churches'. This contains videos with Bible readings, hymns and songs, sermons and talks, prayers, and some teaching and craft activities for children. In addition to this, our churches continue to meet for prayer, and for Bible study and discussion groups using the Zoom platform online.

If you are interested in joining our weekly prayers on Zoom, then please contact me by email: rectorsw7@gmail.com and I will send you a link.

Stuart Allen (Rector)

Deanery News

Since we have been in lockdown, our church buildings have had to remain closed. But around the deanery, the church has been alive and well and often busier than usual. It has been encouraging to hear how in our villages, because the church is already so embedded in the community, it has been able to be at the centre of caring for the vulnerable. Different Benefices have embraced online church in different ways, depending on their context. In our deanery we have livestreams, recordings to YouTube and websites, deliveries of worship ideas by post and lots of Zooming.

Some of us have found the new situation has helped us build new relationships and talk about faith in new ways. But we are all aware that many of us are also feeling isolated and far from our friends and even from God. It's not always easy to keep up a rhythm of prayer in times of stress and trauma. Bishop John is holding an online retreat for anyone who wishes to join on Saturday 3 June, so keep an eye out for more information.

As we begin, tentatively, to look at a way out of lockdown, the churches remain closed for public worship. Weddings have been postponed, and funerals happen at the graveside or crematorium. It's going to be a while before we can get back fully into our buildings, and so that gives us time to consider what might have changed and what we might do when the time comes. As we begin to think, I was promoted by a colleague to ask, 'what are you learning about God in this time? What is God saying to you?'

As we begin to reflect on those questions individually and as churches, my prayers continue to be with each of you at this difficult time.

Sarah Edmonds, Area Dean

Shipston Food Bank

The Food Bank in Shipston is open to anyone who finds they might be in need of a bit of help to tide them over. We know there may be people who need something at the moment, but who have never accessed help before. That's fine, you're not alone. And you don't need a referral or a voucher. Just come along on a Tuesday or Saturday morning between 10.00 am and 12.00 noon. We operate out of St. Edmund's Church (opposite the chip shop). You can come as often as you need.

You can also get help by asking your local vicar, who can get in touch with us.

Donations for the Food Bank can be left in the porch of St. Edmund's between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm Monday - Saturday. We are especially in need of tinned potatoes, fruit juice and spreads (jam, marmite etc).

SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE SEVEN BENEFICE



Church Services



During the coronavirus, our sermons will be available on *YouTube*

Please go to www.youtube.com and type the following in the search bar:

SW7 Benefice Churches
(Or click below...)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDh8bzt9ZSVbPWSulGsLg9w>



South Warwickshire Seven Benefice



Reverend Stuart Allen

Tel: 01608 684207 - rectorsw7@gmail.com (off duty Thursday)

Reverend Ben Dyson

Tel: 01608 685752 - pioneersw7@gmail.com (off duty Friday)

Benefice Administrator: Mrs Lucy Simpson

Tel: 01608 684787 - officesw7@gmail.com

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 2 – 4 pm

www.southwarwickshirechurches.co.uk

GARDENING NOTES

Editors:

Margaret Welsh, Long Compton Garden Club

Miranda Arnold, Whichford Amateur Gardener

May is always a busy month in the garden but with rewards of rapid plant growth. This year, the plants had a spell of very warm weather only for the shoots to be hit with a hard frost. My walnut tree was very badly affected, and the potato shoots were frosted in spite of being fleeced. I am glad that I had not yet planted out more tender vegetables such as courgettes, marrows and sweetcorn. These I have been hardening off but protecting from the strong winds which we have also experienced recently. I shall plant them out soon.

June is officially the start of summer, so I hope that the risk of frost has passed. I shall have fleece at the ready, just in case. There has been a lack of rain this spring and watering has been, and will continue to be, necessary. Try to water thoroughly once or twice a week, rather than little and often, as this encourages plants to put down deep roots instead of sending them to the surface. Containers of course, generally need daily watering and feeding every 2 weeks or so. New trees and shrubs planted in the lawn should have a clear area around them to allow water to penetrate.

The growth spurt of plants tends to continue until the longest day and after that, it tails off. Try to keep on top of weeding, as weeds also romp away and compete with vegetables, particularly for water and nutrients. You should stop cutting asparagus around the middle of June to let the plants regenerate for next year's crop. Watch out for asparagus beetles as the last fronds develop. You should also be vigilant when it comes to other pests and diseases in the garden. Lily beetles seem to be particularly abundant this year and need to be approached cautiously as vibrations send them to the ground. When you do get them, squash their rather hard bodies. I give aphids and caterpillars the same treatment, but I have several different bird's nests in the garden, and I hope the parent birds will help to remove insect pests. A robin and a blackbird are quick to swoop down for worms and millipedes when I expose them in my compost.

I have been glad to have a ready supply of garden compost during lockdown as, until recently, garden centres were closed. I have also been making 'comfrey tea' by soaking comfrey leaves in water. If you let them soak for 1 or 2 weeks a brown liquid is produced which can be used as a feed for tomatoes and other plants. Dilute it - approximately 1 part liquid to 20 parts water. But beware, being rich in protein the leaves do smell potently as they break down. Continue to earth up potatoes to increase your yield. First earlies will be ready to harvest as the flowers appear. Plant out brassicas this month and short-term crops such as lettuces and radishes can be grown between them to maximise space.

June is the beginning of the strawberry season. Like vegetables, they also need plenty of water and any runners should be removed so that all the growth goes to the parent plant and the fruit. If you want new plants, pick some of the strongest offshoots and leaving them attached to the parent, peg the shoot into a small pot of compost.

I am aware that I have mainly considered fruit and vegetables (the cultivation of which I understand has had an upsurge by gardeners this year). Other jobs in the garden

include regularly tying in sweet peas, deadheading and pruning such early flowering shrubs as philadelphus and deutzia. Gardens have been particularly appreciated during lockdown and I am sure that they will continue to give much pleasure this summer, even if a lot of work is involved in their upkeep.

Margaret Welsh



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NATURE NOTES

Editor: Tony Partridge
Tel: 684698

A month or two ago, I made a rather derogatory remark about the jay, or rather, its call. May I take this opportunity of offering sincere apologies to this bird because it happens to make an important contribution to the structure of our countryside. For a favourite food of the jay is the acorn, with which it stuffs its crop, then deposits many acorns often at the base of a hedge. Later, it will return there to satisfy its appetite but of course many are left. Of these, the strongest will thrive, mature and grow into a tree. Take a look at the local hedges as you drive along and you will notice the dominant tree in most hedges is the oak. Of course, I am by no means suggesting that all these trees are the result of a jay's deposits. But some must surely be. The jay's feathering makes it quite a colourful bird and it is a shame that its numbers are diminishing. My daughter, who lives near Banbury, does have one which calls from nearby hedges and will occasionally visit her bird table to take a decorous peck at what is being offered there.

All gardeners know that wild plants will invade their gardens. These are, of course, collectively known as weeds and a constant battle rages in our efforts to repel these invaders. But some wild plants can be of benefit to the garden. Step - or rather blow - forward the seeds of the greater celandine. This flower - totally unrelated to the earlier flowering lesser celandine - will, if it likes your garden, remain with you and grow into a bushy yellow-flowered plant. I have a number of them dotted around my garden, but I am intrigued as to where they choose to install themselves. Rather than in a well-dug, well-tilled flowerbed, these seeds install themselves between the crags in paving stones or between crags in the pathway and the stone of my cottage wall! How they gain nutrition to thrive I have no idea, but thrive they do. The name celandine derives from the Greek 'chelidon' which means a swallow. The ancient Greeks believed that the female swallow used part of this plant to restore the sight of those of their young who had gone blind. Its name swallowwort still persists in parts of North America.

Bending to examine more closely a flower in my garden that had recently come into bloom, I was surprised to see not one but two insects flying over it. One was a butterfly - an Orange Tip. This one was a female which is the only one which bears the orange on the tips of its wings. The male has to be content with rather dull white-coloured wings with a dark edge and central spots. But it was the other insect which intrigued me. It had a tiny bee-like body, wings situated centrally and a long proboscis. I had never seen one before and had to look it up to identify it. It was a bee fly and of course, its slight resemblance to a bee gave it its name. But it has a rather more sinister association with bees. The female bee fly flicks her eggs towards bee larvae which then enter the body of the larvae and feed from its flesh. The bee fly is one of those creatures showing that it depends on the flesh of another to survive. Nothing, I am afraid, unusual in this. Nature is cruel and its dependency on such cruelty is what keeps it going.

Recently, as my wife stood looking out of the dining room window, she saw a tiny mouse in the middle of a tub full of winter-flowering pansies. As she watched, the mouse approached a pansy and neatly bit off the flower. Instead of eating it on the spot, as she thought it might do, the mouse carried the flower in its mouth and disappeared who

knows where. I have to admit, I have never heard of mice having a penchant for devouring flowers. But the nerve of the creature! Invading my flowerpot containing flowers I have nurtured these many months and pinching one is taking things too far. What did it want with this flower anyway? To eat it? Or, since we are into the middle of the spring breeding season, did it intend to decorate its nursery with it? I shall in future keep a close eye on my flower tub. This habit may spread, and it will tell its pals where a bit of easy food is there for the taking.

Tony Partridge



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My Mother's recipe is a mix of wisdom, strength and comfort

Cooking has become my antidote during self-isolation. I have always loved to cook, preparing meals for my family and organizing weekend dinners for friends. But now, cooking has taken on a whole new meaning; it's no longer to just satisfy a need, a form of entertainment, or creative expression. It has become a self-soothing ritual practiced every day.

And I am not alone. As I follow social distancing from my 85-year old mother, fighting an 'invisible enemy' together, we speak through a 5.00 pm FaceTime call. Sometimes with drinks in hand, her, a Prosecco, and I, a glass of wine; she reclines in her living room chair, I stand in front of the kitchen counter with my phone propped against the fruit bowl, and I begin to cook dinner.

While chopping vegetables and stirring sauces, my mother's stories begin to unfold. The difficulty and isolation of today, igniting memories she buried long ago. Through her narrative, she reassures me with a strange blend of sounds, smells and imagination that all will be fine.

My mother has always been a remarkable role model. Her big smile, soft brown eyes and cheerful demeanour bring many people into her orbit. When we hosted a birthday lunch for her in January, her closest friends totalled 18 women ranging from 65 to 93 in age.

Now, watching her handle lockdown, she is setting an example for her four children, and 11 grandchildren: a lesson in coping, in surrendering control, in accepting what life hands you in a time of uncertainty.

My mother was six years old when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour in 1941. From that day on, her life changed. Her memories are surprisingly vivid given her young age. She remembers air raid drills at her Paterson, N.J., school, with boys and girls shuffling to dark rooms in the belly of the school, as she imagined the world above them being destroyed. Teachers and staff disappearing from one day to the next as they enlisted in the war effort, prompting a reorganization of classes that often doubled the number of students allocated to each teacher.

In one reorganization, my grandmother became my mother's classroom teacher bringing an awkward juxtaposition of home and school life.

The ration books her family received each month with little perforated green stamps allotting shoes, gas, meat, oil and canned goods are impressed onto her mind. Kitchen fat was collected by everyone, worth its weight in cash at the local butcher. An animated video 'Out of the Frying Pan and into the Firing Line', produced by Disney and starring Minnie Mouse and Goofy, instructed American families to save cooking fat 'to help make explosives' and uphold their patriotic duty in the war effort. My grandfather was a

warden in their neighbourhood during mandatory 'blackout' exercises and patrolled the neighbourhood to enforce compliance.

I can hear the contagious fear of the child in her voice as she remembers waiting anxiously for his return home.

During our calls, she not only recounts the past, or the challenges of war, but lessons of life in general. She tells me 'you have to make the most of what life gives you' and 'sometimes you have to sacrifice' or 'you have a choice to be happy or miserable'. And nothing is said with severity, judgment, or envy. She speaks in truths that flow into my body to soothe the core of tension that has accumulated throughout the day. I have begun to realize as I slice fresh apples for a pork dish, grate mozzarella to top the homemade pizza dough made earlier, or whirl the final ingredients into a fudge cake, that my mother's words become blended and baked into the dish.

My children, my husband and I ingest her strength, a silent invisible force, through each meal.

In the mornings, when I wake up into a reality that feels like a dream, my day is no longer spent in a spontaneous freedom that was taken for granted with very little thought to the generations who gave it to me.

In an ironic twist of fate, a reversal of roles, I protect my mother, and those like her. Never considering or asking for some type of 'exchange' to pretend a long life is expendable. Through these evenings spent cooking with my mother, in our new virtual connection, I find unexpected comfort, strength and foresight into a future world where I will be the one sharing the lessons of this current story.

Barbara Rees

[Barbara Rees is a food blogger and recipe developer @tablenspoon.entertaining, and a resident of Barton-on-the-Heath.]

Julia Child's Berry Clafoutis

As we reap the benefits of spring fruits, this is a classic dessert that highlights the flavours of seasonal berries. The classic recipe requires fresh cherries but since removing the pips is a bit fiddly, I have changed to blackberries or blueberries. Serve with a large dollop of whipped cream, custard or ice cream.

serves: 6-8 pp

Ingredients

Butter for pan

310 ml whole milk

150 grams sugar, (divided into 2 x 75 grams)

3 eggs, room temperature

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

1/8 teaspoon salt

120 grams flour

2 generous cups blackberries or blueberries, rinsed and well drained

optional: powdered sugar for dusting, whipped cream or ice cream

Equipment: blender, medium-size flameproof baking dish at least 4cm deep.

1. Preheat the oven to 175°C and place the wire rack in the middle.
2. Prepare a flameproof baking dish at least 4 cm deep, greasing with butter.
3. Place the milk, 75 grams sugar, eggs, vanilla, salt and flour in a blender. Blend at top speed until smooth and frothy, about 1 minute.
4. Pour a 6 mm layer of batter in the baking dish.
5. Over a low heat, place the baking dish on hob for 1-2 minutes until a film of batter has set in the bottom of the dish. Remove from heat.
6. Spread berries over the batter and sprinkle remaining 75 grams of granulated sugar.
7. Pour over the rest of the batter and smooth with the back of a spoon.
8. Place in the centre of the oven and bake for about 50 minutes, until the top is puffed and browned and a tester plunged into its centre comes out clean.
9. Sprinkle it with powdered sugar just before serving. Clafoutis need not be served hot but should still be warm. It will sink slightly as it cools.

Barbara Rees



VE Day comes to Barton - photograph by John Castle

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Covid Behaviour...Observed in Shipston

Woman walking with baby in buggy; woman is wearing mask and gloves (sensible). Then proceeds to wipe child's face while still wearing gloves (not so sensible). Oh dear – it's all very difficult!

CAMEO Lunch Club – We Never Closed!

A boast made at CAMEO's 14th birthday party in February was that the club had only had to cancel one meeting over the years, and that for summer flooding. With the VE Day celebrations in mind, it brought back memories of another establishment's war-time claim, 'We never closed!'

It is far from certain when we will be able to hold our next meeting together, but the club is certainly not moribund. In April, lunches were distributed to members across SW7. The hot casserole, cooked with excellent beef from Todenham Farm, attracted much praise. When the club's purchaser of the Aberdeen Angus beef foolishly asked the Todenham Farm shop butcher where the beef came from, he was advised, 'look over the hedge'.

VE Day Celebrations.

On the evening of the 75th anniversary of VE Day, 8 May, some Burmington villagers gathered across a village road decorated with Union flags, maintaining a more than the legal coronavirus separation requirement, to reminisce with memories of the actual VE Day, and to debate whether or not their gathering was actually legal. After colourful reminiscences, both sad and joyful, and many toasts, the gathering dispersed without coming to any logical decision.



Plea to Dog Walkers

Please, if your dog does a poo in the village, please don't just leave it there. Bag it up and take it home... please. It is against the law and there are penalties for owners who don't pick up.



It could be residents, but hopefully not; maybe visitors or people walking through the village? Whoever the culprits are, it's unpleasant, unsightly and unhygienic for others - adults and children alike walking down the village. Think of others please!

Burmington Salutes its NHS Heroes

Burmington expressed its thanks to its own NHS heroes - Kate Hall, Jo Tyrell, Rachel Tame, Kat Payne and Bryony Lennon with a gift of flowers and a card of thanks and appreciation to each from church members.

Every Thursday evening Burmington villagers join with the rest of the Nation to stand outside their homes in a clapping salute to gallant NHS workers. The dispersed village ceremony may be a trifle noisier than in some communities as horns, whistles and musical saucepans are brought into play.



Milk Matters and Local Businesses

... and Burmington's Very Own Milkmaid.

Burmington resident, Dawn Fisher, has taken on an unexpected new role as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Some months ago, she had begun helping out with the administration at Mabel's Farm Dairy, a small family run dairy farm in Ilmington. But when the virus hit, demand for milk to be delivered to peoples' homes rocketed overnight in Shipston and the surrounding villages, and with only a small team, it meant 'all hands on deck'.

Dawn says 'as people have become more aware of the environmental effects of plastic pollution, there is an increase in demand for pints of milk in traditional glass bottles with foil tops, and also our new litre glass bottles. I'm a firm believer in supporting local small businesses and farms. It helps create environmental sustainability and strong communities'.

Mable's Farm Dairy also supplies locally sourced eggs, bread and cream. If you are interested in a doorstep delivery, please contact Mabel's Farm Dairy on 01608 663171 or email: dawnfisher210@gmail.com



Burmington Profiles – Edith Bradley

An occasional series of LINK conversations with Burmington residents. The first conversation is with Edith Bradley, Burmington's most senior resident.

Edith has lived close by for all of her 91 years. She was born in 1928 at High Furze Farm, Tidmington where her parents farmed. Edith now lives at The Byre at Burmington Manor and is cared for by her daughter Sarah who lives with her.

Childhood, School and Teenage Recollections

For all of their childhood, Edith and her three sisters lived at High Furze farm. She was the eldest. Her younger sisters were Violet, Jasmine and Muriel. Violet and Muriel (the latter lived until recently in The Lane, Burmington) have sadly passed away. Jasmine lives in Shipston.

Edith recalls that every day when she was a schoolgirl, she would harness the horse to the cart and deliver farm eggs and milk to shops in Shipston and surrounding houses.

Her first school was the village school in Todenham. The way to school was a walk across the fields - except when the brook flooded when her mother took her by car. At the age of eleven, Edith attended senior school in Shipston where one of her classmates was Bill Travers, later to find fame as an actor, notably starring in 'Born Free' with Virginia McKenna.

Edith recalls that her grandfather made whisky and kept it secretly in the dairy. One day he invited her to share a glass with him – unbeknown to her parents and sisters. On one occasion, when family friends from Scotland were visiting (somehow they had heard

about the homemade whisky!) they asked if they might have a 'wee dram' which mystified Edith's family who had never heard the expression before. Grandad's secret was out.

One day Muriel was missing for hours and Edith was dispatched by her father on her bike to find her. Eventually she did. Muriel was playing in a field; entranced by a family of fox cubs she had discovered and with whom she had spent many hours.

There was little time for play recalls Edith, as there were always things to do on the farm and Edith, at an early age, became skilled at driving a horse and cart and tractors and trailers. When her mother suffered a heart attack, Edith would get up in the morning and cook her father breakfast on the range. She saw her sisters off to school and then got on her bike and went to school, coming back at lunchtime to make her mother's lunch and then back to school again.

War Years

During the war, German and Italian prisoners of war were allowed out of their prison camp in Ettington to work on local farms. Some were dropped off in Tidmington to work on her fathers' farm and Edith would meet them with a horse and float and bring them down the lane to the farm.

Some of them she thought were rather unpleasant and she would choose to walk, leading the horse, rather than sit with the men on the cart. Some of them didn't work very hard she recalls. Others, however, were industrious and some quite charming. One or two of them would frequently present her with a bunch of daffodils which they had acquired from an allotment on the way.

Edith remembers that one day, an RAF bomber which had apparently taken off from RAF Moreton in Marsh, crashed in a field on their farm. The pilot had been taken ill. There were no survivors after the plane went up in flames. Another recollection was of a German bomber flying home and unloading bombs over their farm and over Brailes hills. A bomb was later discovered in their pond. Edith wasn't particularly worried about this, she says and doesn't recall what eventually happened to it.

On VE Day in 1945 bonfires were lit and the family went to celebrate in Brailes where her other grandfather and his family lived.

Marriage

In 1948, at the age of 20, she was married to Herbert Bradley at Tidmington Church. She had met Herbert at a local livestock show. They began their married life at Herbert's parent's house in Darlingscote and moved to Burmington in 1952 - to Rose Cottage in The Lane, owned by Mr Hunt.

During the war years and just afterwards, Herbert worked for *War-Ag*, the Agricultural Executive Committee whose job was to manage the country's limited agricultural resources. He was based at Captain Rodocanachi's farm – The Green Farm, Tidmington. After *War-Ag*, Herbert worked for Peak Engineering in Shipston and then for many years for Beecham Buildings, also in Shipston.

Family Life and Work

Edith gave birth to John in 1948 at the Ellen Badger Hospital in Shipston, where all her children were born.

John has lived all his life in Shipston and Burmington – moving back to Long Barn in Burmington with his wife Sue in 1989. In 1956 Herbert and Edith had a daughter Elizabeth. She now lives in Tredington. Sarah was born in 1964 and has also lived all her life in Burmington.

Working in the 1960s and 1970s at Green Lane Nurseries in Shipston, (no longer in business, having closed over twenty years ago), was a job Edith relished. She loved working with plants. Here she grew, nurtured and sold plants and flowers and enjoyed teaching others at the nursery about growing flowers and vegetables. She had also worked for many years for Mr. and Mrs. Cobb at Burmington Leys, cleaning the big Victorian house.

After the war, Edith was frequently seen at local fetes and county shows judging flower and food competitions. For nearly twenty years Edith played an important role in the Shipston Cricket Club, where John was a keen member. Edith did the cricket teas. She gave this up when the club started to serve alcohol, which she thought wasn't appropriate.

The Mill House

Around 1960, Herbert and Edith moved to the Mill House in Burmington. Henry Beecham, the then owner, had wanted someone to manage the floodgates and asked them if they would like to do this and live in the Mill House. The Mill (now The House of Bread Christian retreat and conference centre) was by then no longer a working mill and was used by carpenters who worked for Beecham Buildings.

Managing the floodgates meant going outside to lift the gates with chains, often in wet and windy weather, sometimes in the middle of the night. This task was mainly tackled by Herbert and son John. The Mill House had a lovely garden which Edith and her husband tended lovingly. This was the start of Edith's interest in and love of plants and flowers.

In 2007, The Mill, the surrounding buildings and land were extensively flooded. The Mill House itself was flooded to some depth and the family was forced to take refuge in the attic. Edith and her husband lost a lot of their possessions, including Edith's WRVS uniform of which she was very proud. It was now impossible to live in the house and the family had to look for somewhere else to live.

The Byre

Michael Macdonald asked Herbert and Edith if they would like to move into recently converted farm buildings - formerly a cow pen and bull pen - in the grounds of The Manor. They gladly accepted Michael's offer and moved into The Byre. It amuses Edith to think that her bedroom used to be the bull pen!

After Herbert passed away in 2010, daughter Sarah moved in to stay with her mother.

Animals and Pets

As a farmer's daughter, Edith had been brought up with animals. The dogs on the farm were working dogs. She was given Trixie, a terrier, by a local huntsman as her very own pet. Edith recalls that she sometimes dressed Trixie in dolls clothes and put her in a pram. Trixie, evidently a very good-natured dog, was a great favourite at local fetes and apparently much enjoyed the attention. However, Trixie made Edith's grandfather angry by having a litter of puppies on his bed! Edith was in turn cross with her grandfather for making a fuss.

One sad memory: someone reported that a large dog had been killed at Mitford. Fearing it was their collie Rover, Edith and her sisters hurried there to find to their intense distress that it was their beloved Rover who had died there.

Memories of Burmington

Life in Burmington, recalls Edith, was lots of fun in her younger days for her and her sisters; there were plenty of social activities for everyone. A gentleman called Jim Drury ran a club for men and boys which met in the village hall.

There's a picture (reproduced below) in the village hall of Edith doing some washing. She believes she was the first person in the village to have one of the new electric boilers. Villagers would come to the house requesting hot water for their own washday. Did she also do the washing for them? No, they were welcome to hot water, but they had to take it away and do their own washing.



Monday morning wash! Edith Bradley at Rose Cottage

Changes Edith has seen over the years

Mostly the changes have been gradual she says. However, she recalls changes when the Beecham family left Tidmington Hall. For example, an event to look forward to was the

Christmas party which the Beechams threw for their tenants at the Hall every year. There was live music and Father Christmas gave presents to the children.

The road bisecting Burmington was straightened in 1970. Before that, vehicles travelled too fast round the bend [*Village Ed: some things don't change*], and would often run out of road and end up in the brook! The village Post Office was originally in The Lane, but moved to the other side of the Oxford Road. It's now a private house – 'The Old Post Office'.

What would Edith like to see happen in Burmington now?

Edith says she is quite content with the way things are; she just doesn't want the village to get too busy! Sadly, Edith has had to give up gardening, a great joy for her throughout her life. Now she enjoys watching the wildlife through her window - especially the birds in her garden. Her favourite sight is a woodpecker taking food from her bird feeder.



Edith with Great Grandchildren

Edith's recollections were gathered in conversation with Graham French.

VILLAGE NEWS

CHERINGTON WITH STOURTON

Editor: Alan Holmes

Email: cherington@swlink.org.uk

Tel: 686682

Village Lottery

Winners in the draw for the May lottery were:

1st	Theo Borland	£80
2nd	Tony Wells	£45
3rd	Bill Law	£30

Congratulations to our winners and thank you for your continued support. For more information on joining please contact Steve Allkins.

Steve Allkins

Brailes Picturehouse

As lockdown has been extended, it would seem cinemas are on the agenda for possible opening mid-July, or so I read, but of course this changes every day. So sadly, we may not be able to show a film until September or October.

What a delight it was to see the *Kinky Boots* film on TV in early May (it is now on iPlayer), which brings to mind the competition we had for 'best boots' staged behind the curtain. The winner was a pair of 'pink boots' worn by Chris Bryan.... such fun.

Take care and keep safe.

Deirdre Carney

Cherington, Stourton & Sutton under Brailes Seniors Club

Dear members, we hope you are all keeping well and reasonably fit during this unprecedented lockdown time. At least we have had some lovely weather so we have been able to spend days in the garden, which helps to pass the time.

The Committee have decided to cancel all club activities for the rest of the year. If we are able to resume our bi-monthly meetings in 2021, we hope to kick off with the New Year Feast at the Cherington Arms in January.

Meanwhile look after yourselves and stay safe. If you do need help of any kind, please do not hesitate to contact Tricia (686682) who will arrange the necessary assistance.

Best wishes from the Committee.

The Seniors Committee



VE Day Commemoration in Long Compton

Long Compton Village Hall

The Village Hall Committee would like to assure you that when all this is over and we return to some sort of normality, your village hall will be available for your celebratory needs. We look forward to welcoming you all back to our regular classes and events.

Thank you.



Mo Read on 684130, 07814802814 or lcvillagehall@yahoo.co.uk

Working from Home

One of the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic has been that many of us are having to work from home. What this has taught is that for many businesses, this is a perfectly effective way of managing our working time. In fact, in many situations work can be arranged more flexibly around needs of the family, exercise, and without the need of a long commute.

High speed broadband is available in many rural areas, including Long Compton, and this has opened up opportunities for video meetings and conference calls, where your location turns out to be irrelevant. What many are finding, however, is that there are problems in having an office set up in the dining room, with the baby crying in the background and the dog being sick on the carpet just when you are hosting an important Zoom meeting. Whilst this stress can be managed for a short period of time, the long-term consequences do not look favourable to maintain both a happy working and family life. Mental health, being able to separate work from rest, and physical health with a bad back caused by the dining room chair; all need to be managed.

There are a number of rural offices now available, with buildings having been converted on farms for offices and workshop uses. At the Woodlands Business Centre in Malthouse Lane, Long Compton, there are a range of attractive stone-built offices, fully serviced, providing an appealing and high-quality office environment, high speed broadband and plenty of parking.



We may have what you are looking for. Email: jim@ghwalton.co.uk.
Tel: 07860 727467

James Walton

Compton District History Society

Archive Openings

With regret, we are going to have to cancel our usual programme of open days at the Lychgate. It will be obvious to anyone who has visited the archive previously that it is too small a space and with inadequate access to allow any form of social distancing.

It seems unlikely that the rules on social distancing will be lifted any time soon, leaving us no choice. We have not given up hope that things may be getting back to normal by September and allow us to resume our monthly meetings. Watch this space!

Diana Cook 684771

Long Compton Parish Council

The Parish Council has been embracing the joys of holding meetings by Zoom, in order to comply with Social Distancing Regulations. Tempting though it might be to suspend meetings, consideration of Planning Applications and other urgent business, including end of year accounting procedures, still have to be undertaken by the Council. We have even welcomed a new Councillor, Linn King, who most of Councillors have not yet met in person!



Social media has also played a large part in keeping in contact with residents and hopefully the 'Silver Lining Posts' have helped to share the positives resulting from a negative situation. The efforts of those who are collecting litter as part of their exercise routine or helping out others, whether through the semi-formal volunteer group or on a neighbourly basis, have been much appreciated.

As Clerk, I have also been attending Zoom meetings with other Warwickshire Clerks. This has turned out to be very beneficial, as we all share the various issues affecting our Parishes and the solutions found to problems, on a more regular basis than our normal quarterly meet ups.

May is usually the month that legally, an Annual Parish Assembly has to be held and it is a great shame that we are unable to physically have it this year. Our intention, as promoted in Spring Newsletter, was to use it to promote various village projects. An additional Newsletter will be compiled to share the news.

Elizabeth Gilkes – Parish Clerk/RFO - longcompton@googlemail.com

The Friends of Long Compton Church

Our information and contact points:

e: friendslcchurch@gmail.com

f: [@friendsoflongcomptonchurch](https://www.facebook.com/friendsoflongcomptonchurch)

www.friendsoflongcomptonchurch.com



Sue Klatt, Chairman: [@friendsoflongcomptonchurch](https://www.facebook.com/friendsoflongcomptonchurch)

COMP

2020 Photographic Competition

Image: Andreas Klatt ARPS



The Friends of
Long Compton Church

PHOTO

This year's theme is any interpretation of **GREEN**

Digital images accepted

Deadline:
7th June 2020

All entries will be displayed in the Photographic Exhibition to be launched in the church on Friday 7th August

Rules and entry forms can be found on our website
www.friendsoflongcomptonchurch.com

The Friends of Long Compton Church is a registered charity number 1141040

Long Compton Ebenezer Congregational Chapel



The Congregational Chapel ethos is about working together, so when unable to use Long Compton Chapel for worship, members quickly repurposed the porch as a collection zone to help meet the unprecedented needs that the coronavirus crisis has generated.

An amazing quantity of fabric to support the work of those sewing for the NHS (and other key workers) has been donated and has acted as a resource not just for Long Compton, but other villages too.

Photo of Elizabeth Gilkes and Sally Franklin outside the chapel with donated items

Food Donations for Shipston Food Bank

Incredibly generous donations have been collected both here, and at The Stores, and then delivered to Shipston. Over a six-week period, they have helped support 40 families in the local area. There are food parcels kept in Long Compton if anyone here is in need.

Plant Donations

As we realised that the popular Shipston Home Nursing plant stall was not happening, a DIY table has been set up outside the chapel and again has received generous donations to help the work of this valuable local service

Virtual Worship

Reverend Marion has continued to show support with video and weekly 'Thoughts' which have been printed to share at The Chapel and also circulated via social media. She certainly has a way with words in relating the value of faith in dealing with current anxious times. A collection of these is available in booklet form if you would like a copy, one from Easter week and another for May.

Practicalities

Electricians have been undertaking work to overhaul the electrical installation, improve lighting and more importantly, heating in the Chapel. We still have the builders' site hut in the car park and are very much hoping that they will soon be able to return to the School Nursery site. Then the agreed grass matting can be installed to enable the car park to be used more before winter sets in.

Celebrations

May was the month we had planned to start celebrating the Chapel's bicentenary, but obviously this is now postponed. Recent historical research suggests this to be rather a flexible feast, so we will be celebrating at a later date! The memorial garden is also on hold until the car park renovation can be completed.

One event that we could hang out the flags for was VE Day, and we were very pleased that our neighbour's children drew some charming posters that were also able to be displayed.

If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact either Sally on 07870 545431 or Elizabeth on 07791 621778, or indeed speak to Marianne or June at the Stores.

Dates to note, though lockdown will likely postpone or cancel most of them:

Sunday 19 July	Memorial Garden Blessing
Sunday 29 August	Village flower and produce show
Sunday 27 September	Harvest Festival
Saturday 3 October	Harvest Supper



longcomptonebenezerchapel@outlook.com

Compton Creatives

The Compton Creatives have been busy during lockdown, sewing much needed supplies for front line workers.

We have had many messages of thanks, expressing appreciation not just for the items, but for the fact that we are thinking of them. Many thanks to all those who donated fabric - your sheets and duvet covers have been transformed into scrubs, bags, and headbands, and even an NHS flag!

Our items will go to an organisation delightfully named the Warwickshire Scrubbers (because they are also making theatre scrubs) and will then be distributed wherever it is needed, including hospitals, care homes and social care providers. I have already had grateful messages from the nurses in Warwick A and E.

How you could help:

- If you can sew and have a machine, maybe you would join us. If you don't have the necessary materials, we will see if we can source them from within the village.
- We need the following items: large buttons, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1-inch diameter. Wide elastic, $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1-inch diameter. Pillowcases (to convert into drawstring bags) fun ones and flowery ones absolutely fine, they don't have to be sombre clinical colours.
- Do you know anyone who might be able to sew for us but does not do stuff online? If so, perhaps they could give me a call and I can give them written instructions
- I am shielding for three months so can't deliver and distribute items, could anyone help with this? Either on foot around the village or by occasionally delivering items to a properly socially distanced collection site in Wellesbourne?
- We would like to look after the healthcare workers in our village. If you know anyone who would benefit from these items, do let me know

Contact Caroline Nixon 07557 022531 caroline.nixon@btinternet.com Instructions for making headbands and drawstring bags can be downloaded from my website <http://www.handmadetextilesbycaroline.co.uk/433923837> (look for COVID on the drop-down menu). Any others who can sew in the village are welcome to join us in this activity - contact Caroline for details. Hoping it won't be too long before we can meet again and create together instead of working in isolation. To find out more about joining this sociable group please contact jhburras@yahoo.co.uk or caroline.nixon@btinternet.com

Long Compton Neighbourhood Watch

Our local co-ordinator is Jordan Boswell, who would very much welcome reports of suspicious behaviour. Do let him know about anything that seems to you to be out of the ordinary. Your information might just be the little piece of the jigsaw that helps solve a problem. All calls and emails are completely confidential – your name will not be made public. Contact Jordan on 07795 008998, or at jordanboswell@hotmail.com



Our next meeting is on Thursday 11 June - 7.00 pm start
(via Zoom)

We will be discussing 'The Beekeeper of Aleppo' by Christy Lefteri
All Welcome

Contact: Carole Clements 01608 684938
carole.r.clements@googlemail.com

100 Club News

Due to the present restrictions and to be on the safe side, the monthly 100 Club draws will be suspended until such time as we can all gather in the village hall again. There will then be a Grand Draw to cover those that have been missed.

There are ten Draws left this year, so if anyone would like to join in at a cost of £10 (or buy another ticket!), please contact me on 684234.

Chris Galloway 684234

Bridge Club

There will be no further planned meetings until September, when I hope we will be able to meet in the village hall again. In the meantime, if anyone is having problems with online bridge please let me know.

Chris Galloway 684234



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Village Organisations

Long Compton and District Garden Club - Contact Anthony Wells 684337 or Lesley Roberts 684545 or lesleyroberts46@gmail.com

Compton and District History Society - Contact Diana Cook 684771

Comptonians - Contact Margaret Welsh 684238

Village Hall - Mo Read on 684130, 07814802814 or lcvillagehall@yahoo.co.uk

Compton Creatives - caroline.nixon@btinternet.com or jhburras@yahoo.co.uk

Long Compton & District Walkers - Jan Treadaway 684553

Long Compton Short Mat Bowls - Club Contact Adrian on 684024

Long Compton Bridge Club - Chris Galloway 684234



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Long Compton Village Hall

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Hawk Moths in Long Compton



- 1 & 2 - Privet Hawkmoth
3 & 4 - Lime Hawk Moth
5 & 6 - Elephant Hawk Moth
7 & 8 - Poplar Hawk Moth

Many thanks to Caroline Richardson. All photographs taken in Long Compton

Whichford & Ascott Flower Show & Fete August Bank Holiday Monday

It is with enormous regret that we have to announce the cancellation of our annual Flower Show and Fete, which was to have taken place on Monday 31 August. We do appreciate how disappointing this will be for the local community who always look forward to this traditional show.

Very careful consideration has been given to the circumstances we all find ourselves in and we have concluded that we cannot plan and run a show as usual. It is particularly sad for us as 2020 would have celebrated 100 years since the show started and we were planning some special events over the weekend to mark the occasion. However, public safety is paramount, so we must all stay safe and we look forward to seeing you for a great weekend next year.

With best wishes
The Flower Show Committee

The Reading Room Draw

Congratulations to Ann Bond, who was the winner of the May Reading Room draw.

Jenny Scrivener

VE – Day, Friday 8 May

To celebrate this special anniversary of 75 years since the end of the war in Europe, villagers in Whichford & Ascott decorated their homes and gardens with Union Jack flags and bunting. The Norman Knight pub attracted much attention when it went back in time with bomb blast cross taped windows and hosted a delightful Teddy Bears Tea Party in the front garden.

In the evening we were drawn to the War Memorial by the sound of our village piper William Forsyth Forrest playing his bagpipes and creating a communal moment for us all to reflect on the enormous courage and sacrifice which saw us through the war. (Photos: Joanna Cook)





Jan Knight

Horological Breakthrough – Thanks to Andy Chapman

We are all very grateful to Andy, who somehow has managed to cleverly mend the church clock. Bravo Andy!

Mandy James

Immi Murphy – World Challenge Update

During the past eighteen months, with the very kind help of various people in villages across the SW7 Benefice, I have been fundraising for a trip with the company World Challenge to Malaysia and Borneo that was to take place during July of this year after my GCSEs. As expected, after all the restrictions that the government enforced a little over eight weeks ago, World Challenge cancelled the trip and issued a full refund that is to be sent to me between August 2020 and January 2021.



I have now contacted all my individual donors to advise them of my plans and I cannot thank people enough for the generosity they showed me, whether it was a job I did for them or at the Quiz night we held in the Wolford's Village Hall during April last year. I intend on donating the money raised that night to the Wolford's Village Hall, as it is a local amenity that has also suffered from the lockdown enforced by the government.

If you would like any help, or for me to do any jobs, I am still available to do these if needed. I have plans for a later trip after my A Levels in 2022.

If needed, you can contact me over the phone at 01608 674005 or 07598 744711, or you can email me via imogenmurphy@btinternet.com

Thanks once again for helping me fundraise the money for the trip, and whilst it is sad that it is no longer happening, I really enjoyed the various things I did in order to raise the money. Thank you.

Immi Murphy

VE Day in Great Wolford

A selection of VE Day photographs by Amanda Anthony from Great Wolford.





More photographs from Wolford Woods by Gabi Duck from Great Wolford (age 13)

The Wolfords Village Hall One Hundred Club

The May winners were as follows;

1st prize – Mark Antony 2nd prize – Bob Large 3rd prize – Roz Warriner

Many congratulations to the above. Please let me know if you would like to have more shares as the club is still short of 100 shares. Proceeds help with the upkeep of the hall.

James van Helden

Chairman's Corner

Universal Credit

When gazing out towards the western sky at dusk during the first couple of weeks or so of May, you may have noticed a bright object dominating the heavens. This celestial event could almost be described as a *We Three Kings* moment - it certainly appeared to be a 'star of wonder' with 'royal beauty bright' and was definitely 'westward leading'. Technically, though, it wasn't a star – it was actually the planet Venus. The reason that Venus is so bright is because the planet is perpetually covered in white cloud, which reflects sunlight back to the observer.

Our nearest 'proper' star is, of course, the sun. Currently, the closest stars to Earth, other than the sun, are Alpha Centauri A, Alpha Centauri B, and Proxima Centauri (collectively known as 'Alpha Centauri'). These are located within our own galaxy, the Milky Way. Thinking too much about outer space can very easily make your head hurt - the facts and figures are quite literally brain-achingly mind-boggling. In the Milky Way galaxy alone, it is estimated that there are between 100 billion and 400 billion stars, and at least 100 billion planets.

The old adage that there are more stars in the universe than there are grains of sand on Earth is probably true, according to calculations by scientists. There are at least 100 billion galaxies in the universe, and probably as many as 500 billion – this suggests there are approximately 10 sextillion stars (that's a 1 followed by 22 zeroes), and possibly even up to an astonishing 200 sextillion. The rough estimate of the number of grains of sand on Earth is around 5 sextillion.

The universe is so vast that distances are measured in light years – i.e. the distance covered in one year if travelling constantly at the speed of light (670,000,000 miles per hour, give or take), which is about 5.88 trillion miles. The size of the Milky Way galaxy is 105,700 light years across – so it would take more than 105,000 years to travel from one end of it to the other. And that's just within the confines of the 'local neighbourhood'. The next nearest galaxy, the Canis Major Dwarf Galaxy, is 25,000 light years away. That then still leaves at least another 99,999,999,998 galaxies out there to explore.



Nebulae (giant clouds of dust and gases, some of which are formed by the explosions of dying stars) are fascinating, both in their sheer size and intriguing shapes. The Horsehead Nebula, situated in the constellation of Orion, is a mere 1,375 light years away. It is a dark cloud of dust, blocking the light of stars behind it and, like its name suggests, is shaped like a horse's head. The Eagle Nebula, in the Serpens constellation,

contains the famous star-forming 'Pillars of Creation' (pictured here), which resemble huge stalagmites protruding upwards into space. The nebula is about 6,500-7,000 light years from Earth, and its overall size covers an area 70 x 55 light years. The Pillars of Creation themselves are 10 light years tall. One of the largest known nebulae is the Tarantula Nebula, a gigantic star-making factory – located in the Dorado constellation, 170,000 light years away, it is 1,000 light years wide.



Recent evidence from the boffins at NASA suggests that the universe is still expanding/accelerating, and at a rate that's 9% greater than originally calculated. If there is nothing beyond the boundaries of the universe, what is it expanding into...? Well, I did warn you that the universe makes your brain hurt!

Simon Lewis-Beeching, chairman@swlink.org.uk



***Blooming Broadway* by Great Wolford Artist, Jenny Henderson.**

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We have been lucky this month as Simon, our LINK Chairman, has been moved to write us a poem entitled *Out of the Darkness* on the subject that is dominating our lives today.

Out of the Darkness

Out of the darkness always comes light
Birds now sing where traffic once roared
People care more and ask how you are
Flamingos breathe the fresh Indian air
Gardens thrive and flourish and bloom
Wild goat herds roam quiet Welsh streets
Skies are bluer than ever before
Stars in their millions shine so bright
Our teams haven't lost a game for weeks
Staying in is the new going out
Healthy home cooking is on the rise
Time on our hands is put to good use
We find new skills and facts to learn
Neglected books are avidly read
Tech is embraced, rather than feared
There's no more fighting on Question Time
Venetian canals are crystal clear
Altruism has come to the fore
Love and life are more precious than work
Out of the darkness always comes light



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Thank you for Simon. Please keep your poetry suggestions coming; writing them for us would be even better! Please be sure to submit your suggestions in good time bearing in mind that more recent poems will often be protected by copyright and if this is the case, the publisher's permission will need to be obtained.

Keith Murphy, editor@swlink.org.uk

This new feature in the online LINK is a serialised short story, or book, which hopefully will keep readers entertained during the lockdown. Any featured work(s) will either have connections with the SW7 Benefice villages, or the author will live in the Benefice.

The first part of *A Job for Life* was published last month. This month you can read the second part of the three-part short story. If you'd like to catch up, both parts are now available at <https://editor794.wixsite.com/sw7link/link-lit>

The author will be revealed when the all the story has been 'published'. Happy reading!

Keith Murphy, editor@swlink.org.uk

A Job for Life

2

More quickly than John had imagined, he found himself sitting at a desk in the local primary school. Some attempt had been made to introduce the 'new boy' into the class, but most of them were known to John through his days in the local infant classes. John found the teachers a little less harsh than those at Priorton and soon found his place in his new world. Struggling with reading was not an unknown problem in the class, and John didn't find himself singled out on this count. He was however labelled by his classmates as 'Posh John' on account of his 'sensible shoes', smartly cut short trousers and socks that appeared to be able to keep up all by themselves. It wasn't long before John made the necessary adjustments in his clothing, but the label 'Posh' stuck.

As his time in school ticked by, John became picked upon not for his 'posh' clothes, but because loose talk in some of the village families had let slip to some of the boys that John had arrived 'before his time' to his parents. The epithet 'Posh' was quickly dropped by some of the more advanced boys in John's class and the playground taunt became 'John the B_____'. Now John knew very well the meaning of this new label. You didn't lie alone in your room listening to the evening bar room talk filtering up through the open windows without learning a thing or two. In fact, had there have been an examination in the use of swearwords in the English language, John would have been top of the class by a long way.

He put up with the taunts for quite some time, chasing the name callers but never quite managing to catch them. In truth, he wasn't quite sure what he was going to do

with them if he did catch them. Finally, one day just before his tenth birthday he'd had enough. He decided in his own mind how the chase would end. During one of the playground breaks, David Ryan, as usual, started the casual abuse that John had become so used to. John turned quickly on his heels and grabbed David by his lapels and floored him with one mighty blow of his right fist. John turned calmly around and sauntered off as if nothing had happened, leaving David Ryan a blubbing bloody mess on the rough potholed tarmac of the playground.

Before the event, John had realised that there would probably be consequences to his planned course of action. After the event he was not wrong. An immediate trip to the headmaster's study was the result shortly after break was over. The head was a somewhat kindlier man than the head at Priorton. As a consequence, John was not afraid as he faced the headmaster alone. David was being patched up in the medical room and his mother was already on her way to collect him. Despite repeated questions on the matter, John refused to say why he'd struck David Ryan, just repeatedly telling the head that 'he'd have to ask David that.' After a number of pointless circular conversations, the head gave up. He was more than aware from the tittle-tattle around the school what the provocation was, but there was no way that he could extract it from John.

There was a meeting the next day between the head with Donald and Rose to which John was not invited and John thought he saw David's mother coming into the school at the same time. David Ryan was off school for three days and when he came back, looking a little the worse for wear, he and John never exchanged a word. There were no more playground taunts relating to John's parentage.

The struggle with the printed word continued. By the time the dreaded 11+ arrived, he was firmly in the bottom of the class position for English on the weekly updated chart posted helpfully on the back wall of the classroom. His position in Maths was better, showing an average ability. It had been recognised by his teachers that he possessed some exceptional skills manipulating numbers but when it came to applying mathematical concepts, as was required in the forthcoming exam, he fell down every time. The teachers tried their best, Rose his mother tried her best and even John put in the effort but despite all this, the words on the page refused to resolve themselves into any sensible order in John's mind and anything beyond writing his own name proved pretty nigh impossible.

The big exam came and went. John took little notice. He knew where he was heading. The aspirations of his classmates were all pretty much met, but John was not really bothered where they went or what they did. He had become pretty much a loner since the incident with David Ryan. His fate was sealed, the secondary modern in the nearest town some seven miles distant, would be where he was headed. A few of his old classmates accompanied him on the bus the first day to school, but they all found themselves allotted to different classes to John Sheen by the end of the day. John was quite happy with this state of affairs, he wasn't particularly keen on any of them and in a way pleased to be rid of his old classmates. His new class was composed mainly of boys from the town where the school was located, and John was perfectly happy to rub along with them. They never gave him a hard time about his reading.

As time progressed, a few subjects at school grabbed John's attention. By his efforts, the school garden eventually became little short of immaculate. Gardening instruction

was given to a number of classes and when John realised that there was little 'paperwork' in the syllabus, he took to it straight away. It was clear that any craftwork with his hands was going to be successful. He had excellent retention of instructions and quickly learnt the skills of woodwork and metalwork and was able to provide instruction to his fellow pupils. The instructions would always be on his terms and he had little patience with the unfortunate boy who deviated from his 'tuition.' A few choice words from the public bar would be directed toward the offender and no one put up any objections. John had sprouted a good few inches since junior school.

Occasionally cries of 'John the B _____' were raised by those who had just discovered this open secret. Truth was, that there were lots more in his position, but through one means or another, their particular secret had not been exposed to view. Once or twice, John had silenced the perpetrators by waiting for them at a secluded spot on their particular route home. Before he dealt out the necessary punishment for this offence, he told them that yes, he was what they had called him and what's more, he was a 'right one'. His return home on the later bus was easy to explain away and increasingly, no one was prepared to mess with John Sheen.

When John reached a certain age, it became cool to experiment with the acquisition and the consumption of alcohol. It was of great interest to his fellows that he actually lived in a pub. It was the equivalent to the somewhat younger boyhood dream of having parents who owned a sweet shop. Many of John's acquaintances, (he had few who could claim the title 'friend'), were really surprised at his attitude. John made it clear that it was his intention never to touch the stuff; he had seen the damage both to the body and the wallet caused by drink to some of the regulars of the Red Lion.

John was subject to state education until the age of 16. He was forced to stay at school a term extra until he became of age. By this time, his father had long given up any aspirations of grandeur that had seen John abandoned on the steps of Priorton Park Preparatory School. Even his mother had recognised that once John had set a course for himself, it was pretty hopeless to try to change his mind. There was no point in trying to make him take the exams later in the year, all advice from the school was urging getting John out into the world of work or the Services as quickly as possible. There was an unfortunate incident when the hapless careers teacher at John's school suggested he might like to look to The Army for a future. John calmly told him to shut up and got up and left the room. He was for certain, not following his father's path.

John was not fussed particularly what future role he took in life and when one of the more trustworthy regulars at the pub hinted that he could fix John up with a job in the local haulage firm, with a view to getting some training as a driver, John grabbed the opportunity with both hands. The job started a few days before it should have done, and John skipped the last days at school that should have seen him say his farewells. He wasn't however that bothered and spent his first weeks teamed up with one of the old boys on the firm who gave John a pretty good grounding in what was required, both legitimately and not so legitimately, from a truck driver. The 6.00 am starts and the thirty-minute cycle ride proved no obstacle to John arriving on time and it has to said, that John's no-nonsense approach found quite a lot of favour with the owner of the business.

At the particular moment that John joined the haulage company, business was good and contracts plentiful. As a result, the company were prepared to pay for John to progress through all the driving test requirements and, like most things of a practical

nature, John had no need to be told twice and quickly picked up the necessary skills to be able to handle even the largest HGV in the fleet with confidence and ease. This was quite unusual and may have an explanation rooted in the rather larger number of regulars who were now frequenting the Red Lion who had some connection with the running of the haulage firm for which John was driving. Donald and Rose felt sure that the free and discounted drinks that were now coming the way of these new regulars would be worth it in the long run.

John enjoyed his driving. It required little in the way of writing and most of it was numbers anyway. It allowed him the time to play his opera aria tapes in private. He found it easy to memorise routes and being of a punctual turn of mind, could be relied on to get the goods to store on time. Most of the contracts John got involved with were for goods deliveries from central supermarket depots to the growing number of out of town superstores. Most of the time it went pretty smoothly, but truckers can be an argumentative bunch and on more than one occasion, John had to stand his ground against some older more established practitioners of the art. Standing his ground was something that John had gained first class honours in earlier in life and he was indeed suitably equipped for the task.

In his spare time, John had taken up with the boxing gym in nearby Brighton. After a few introductory sparring rounds and a number of weeks of suitable preparation, the gym put him up against a test opponent. To be honest, John walked it, but it gave him no satisfaction. As he was leaving the gym, he had an approach from Harry Walker. Now Harry was well known in Brighton and well known by reputation to John through the bush telegraph that had an office below his bedroom in the public bar of the Red Lion. Harry was offering John work in a number of the bars and nightclubs in which he had an interest. His place of work would at least initially be on the door. Later Harry promised more lucrative employment for 'this and that', but nothing was made entirely clear about this future potential. John knew that it would be silly to mess with Harry, so most uncharacteristically, he very politely and graciously declined Harry's offer and never stepped foot again in the Brighton gym.

He had however acquired the taste for training with weights. The attraction of an ever-increasing number of pounds lifted and the availability of resources locally and away for the Brighton 'influence', all helped grow John into an imposing figure by the time he turned twenty.

John's socialising was somewhat limited by his lack of drinking credentials, but he'd found a number of like-minded individuals away from his home village and there was enough social activity for him to meet others of his age. He even managed to form a few relationships with girls who were certainly attracted to his physique but didn't seem to be able to deal with his uncompromising approach to life. In typical John fashion, he just wrote them off and said to himself - 'that's their loss.' Eventually, he and Valerie joined forces. I say forces, as Valerie came with a pretty uncompromising pedigree herself.

Quite early on in their relationship, they discovered that they would fight like cat and dog when one stood up to the other. However, as was the way with both of them, they wouldn't hold a grudge, seem to arrive at an agreement and move on as if nothing had happened. It was certainly a cause of great amazement to all their friends that the untameable Valerie and the unmovable John had paired up. It was an even greater shock when they announced that they were going to get married.

In a rather drunken state, one of John's friends not too discreetly enquired of John if Valerie was pregnant. John more or less bought the assembled partying throng to a stop with a verbal assault on his friend, telling him he would not want to put any child through that experience. It was the last time that John's friend ever spoke a word to him.

John and Valerie got married in the village church with the reception in the Red Lion. The local authority, as it was in those days, provided them with a home close to Valerie's widowed mother and they both settled down to married life as much as their volatile natures would allow.

To be continued....

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Watercolour *Resting Boats* by Stourton Artist, Colin Beckett