

SUMMER 26

PARISH MATTERS

ST MARY'S
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MERTON



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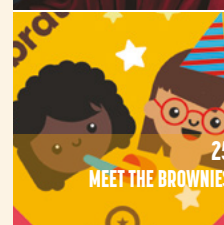
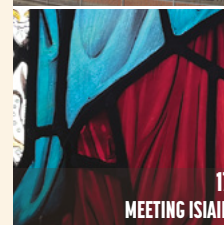
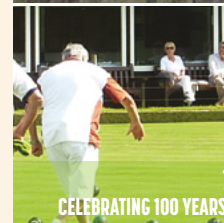
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Three historical local figures from the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries take centre stage in this edition – see articles on Dorcas Lackington (page 14), John Innes (page 3) and Richard Thornton (page 11). We also celebrate the centenary of Merton Park Bowls Club and the 105th anniversary of the local Brownies.

Alongside regular features – a walk, the history of a window in St Mary's and two recommended books, we welcome the first of a regular column from our new vicar, the Revd Ali Milne (page 8).

"Music Matters" contains information about two concerts and a special Evensong voluntary in aid of UNICEF.

We celebrate too securing the future of St Mary's bells and as we enjoy hearing them this summer, let's hope more people come forward to try the rewarding art of bell ringing.

Richard Price, Editor

St Mary's Church is open daily 9am–4pm and Sundays 7.30am–7.30pm

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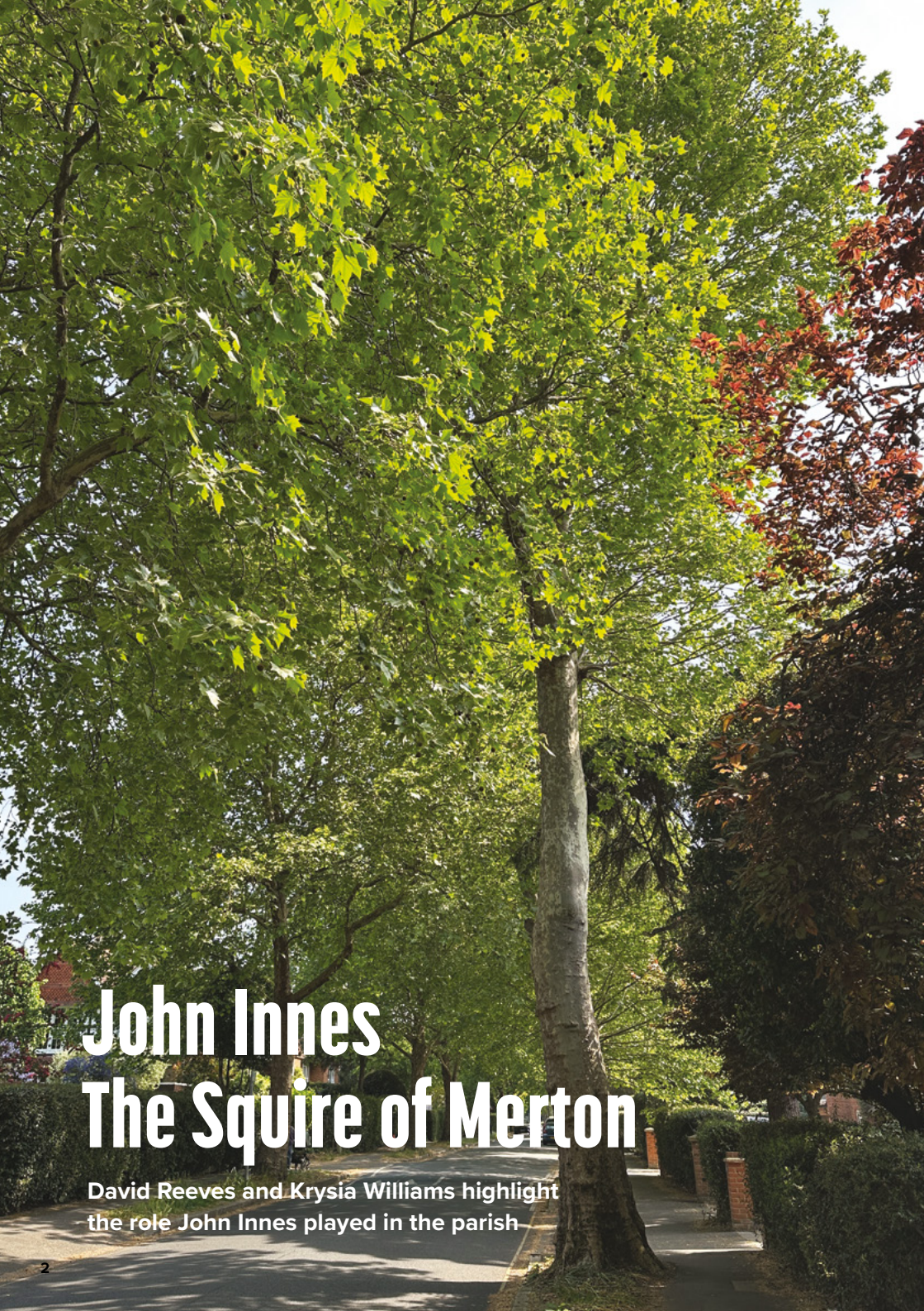
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John Innes The Squire of Merton

David Reeves and Krysia Williams highlight the role John Innes played in the parish

The name of John Innes is as synonymous with Merton as Horatio Nelson and William Rutlish. Many of you reading this will be members of the John Innes Society, you may have John Innes compost No 3 dug into your garden, and we've all enjoyed the peace and beauty of John Innes Park.

However, when John died in 1904 he had no idea that his name would become forever associated with compost and local conservation, nor of the internationally-famous John Innes Centre for horticulture.

So why is he so important to the area? Quite simply, he is the father of Merton Park. Born the sixth of eight children in Hampstead in 1829, John started working in his father's City business at the age of 16. Later he and his elder brother James set up an independent wine importing company. As they accumulated capital they began buying commercial property in the City of London. This culminated in 1864 with the sale of twelve properties for the sum of £329,000 to the newly formed City of London Real Property Ltd.

In 1866, spotting the emerging demand from City businessmen for housing in London's countryside and the building of lines west of Wimbledon by the London and South Western Railway, they expanded out into what was still then a very rural Merton. By 1882 they owned around 500 acres locally. The estate stretched predominantly from just south of the railway line in Wimbledon to Crown Lane and a track that is now Martin Way. Morden Road bounded it in the east and Cannon Hill Lane to the west. Whilst both brothers held an interest in this project it seems to have been the responsibility of 36 year old John to progress the residential development.

John moved initially to Morden Hall Farm situated at the junction of Morden Hall

Road and Kingston Road. By 1871 he was living in Manor Farm in Watery Lane, which he enthusiastically ran as a farm with arable fields, pigs and cows. He began improvements to the rather simple farm house which he continued for the thirty years that he lived there, turning it into 'a country gentleman's residence'.

From 1870, Innes started building his first houses on the Merton Park estate along the northern stretches of three new straight roads, Dorset, Sheridan and Mostyn. He was also responsible for the horse chestnut trees in Mostyn and Kenley Roads and the plane trees in Dorset and Sheridan. For over 30 years he and Henry Quartermain, who acted as his surveyor, architect and agent, worked together in the Merton Park Estate Company.

The first houses on these straight roads were similar to those springing up in other Victorian suburbs ... substantial yellow brick villas with slate roofs. The clay came from Innes' brickfield at the southern end of Mostyn Road, which now forms Mostyn Gardens. There was a local planning dispute when Quartermain was found to have developed ten cottages on Crown Lane for brickfield workers, whilst only having permission for four.

However, the vision of the garden suburb was not as successful as they had hoped. A railway station for 'Lower Merton' had been open since 1868, but it was not until 1875-6 that a decent road to the station was achieved by an exchange of lands with the Rutlish Charity. This made the area less attractive than those with better railway connections. It is thought that houses, or perhaps plots of land sold separately, were not occupied and so Innes ceased development in Merton Park for a while. In 1876 the number of houses in Merton Parish was 39 whilst 54 were completed in



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the northern end of the estate across the Kingston Road. However many more houses of varying sizes and styles were successfully developed in the years leading to Innes' death in 1904. Merton Park did not have the consistency of design that other 'garden suburbs' have displayed, but its layout and variety centred around the Church did achieve the village feel that the 'Squire of Merton', as he became known, had wanted to achieve.

But John was more than just a property developer. In 1868 he became a trustee of Merton National Schools and was instrumental in building a new school opposite St Mary's Churchyard (now Old School Close). Later, he became chairman of the Rutlish Charity Trustees and was a central figure in the founding of 'Rutlish Science School' (later renamed Rutlish School). It opened in 1895 in what is now Rutlish Road, with an initial intake of 200 boys between 10 and 17, moving to its present site in 1959.

John's aspirations for further development of the Merton Park estate were dashed by the railway companies' reluctance to improve the local lines to compete with the Wimbledon to Waterloo service; it wasn't until 1926, 20 years after his death, that the arrival of the Northern Line to Morden enabled the estate to develop into what we today recognise as Merton Park.

However, his legacy is immense. He founded both the Manor Club and Institute working men's club and what is now the John Innes Youth Centre, and built the Masonic Hall, all on Kingston Road. He left much of his fortune to found the John Innes Horticultural Institution, based at and around the Manor House; it moved to larger premises in Norwich in the 1960s. The composts that bear his name were



The changing faces of the street signs – sadly the most recent sign won't age with the same charm.

developed here in the 1930s. The trustees of John's estate were also instrumental in the opening of John Innes Park in 1909.

John Innes is laid to rest in St Mary's churchyard. His imposing tomb was designed by another well-known Merton Park estate architect, J. Sydney Brocklesby, and is easy to spot opposite the glebe field.

With grateful thanks to the John Innes Society, whose three publications were the main sources for this article.

'John Innes: his life and legacy', compiled by Neal Priestland (2004)

'John Innes and the birth of Merton Park' edited by Judy Goodman (1998)

'Merton Park – the original garden suburb' by Anthony Woolfenden (1979)

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Merton Park Bowling Club celebrates its centenary

Derek Cox reviews the history of the Club

2026 sees the official centenary for the Merton Park Bowling Club and our celebrations include a match against the Surrey County Bowling Association in June.

However, thanks to assistance from Chris Abbott who found an article in the *Wimbledon Boro' News* dated 25 November 1916 stating that the Merton Park Bowling Club held their annual supper at the Wimbledon Hill Hotel, it seems the club was in existence well before that date. I wonder if the terrible casualties from the first world war was the cause of the failure of the club.

However the club has been resident in what is now John Innes Park for well over one hundred years. It appears that John Innes treated his workforce very well and provided them with a place to relax. No doubt many of them attended the church, which I suspect would have been the norm then.

The original green (which is now the home for croquet) was used until 1962 when it was relocated to its present site. At the same time the Merton Park Ladies Bowling Club was formed and both clubs continue to this day.

There has been a long association with St Mary's as many members have been part of the congregation. The Rev H W Dunk was President of the Club for ten years from 1942 to 1951 and many officers came from the church.

Gone are the heady days when there was a waiting list for membership and public clubs do struggle to find new members so if you would like further information contact: Derek on Tyb49@hotmail.co.uk

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It has been a great joy for my family and me to begin our life at St Mary's. From the moment we arrived, we have been made to feel incredibly welcome; so much so that we are beginning to suspect you might be trying to keep us!

One of the first things that has struck me is just how impressively organised St Mary's is. Coming from parish life elsewhere, where things occasionally run on what

might be described as "creative timing," it has been both reassuring and slightly unnerving to discover that things here happen when they are meant to, and often exactly as planned. Clearly, I have much to learn.

I have also been hugely impressed by the music. The choir and organ together create something genuinely special. It's not simply a performance, but an offering of beauty that lifts the heart and soul. This is fortunate, as it takes an exceptionally uplifting sound to disguise the wobbly notes from yours truly! It is a real privilege to worship in a place where such care and skill are offered week by week.

In an effort to integrate fully into parish life (and perhaps foolishly), I have also ventured into the local sporting scene, attending my first net session at the Old Rutlishians' Cricket Club. It turns out that a number of years away from the game does not, in fact, improve one's batting. I remain hopeful that with time, practice, and a forgiving fielding side, I may yet redeem myself.

For those I haven't yet met: my wife Carrie and I have two daughters, Belle (6) and Didi (3), who have already settled in remarkably well. Belle is currently working her way through the Harry Potter books, while Didi brings a certain lively energy to proceedings!

We are genuinely delighted to be here and are very much looking forward to getting to know you all, whether in church, over coffee, or, in my case, somewhere near a cricket pitch trying to remember how to hold a bat.

Thank you again for such a warm welcome.

Ali
Revd Ali Milne, Vicar of St Mary's, Merton

Regular church services
see page 28

Sunday Club
see page 28

Children First Eucharist
see page 28

Parish Matters is distributed to 3250 homes in the parish of St Mary's, Merton, thanks to a goodly number of volunteer deliverers.

A different member of the editorial team edits each issue. We welcome your feedback.

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St Mary's Chorister Concert

Friday 19 June at 7.30pm. See page 21

Mozart's Requiem. Sacred Heart Chorus & Orchestra

Saturday 20 June at 7.30pm, See page 20

Anthony Knight plays closing voluntary for UNICEF at evensong

Sunday 21 June at 6.30pm

Music in the Park - The Merton Concert Band

Sunday 28 June 3-5pm. The Bandstand, John Innes Park

St Mary's Choir Gloucester Cathedral Tour

Thursday 13 to Sunday 16 August

St Mary's Patronal Festival Sung Eucharist

Sunday 6 September 9.30am

Harvest Festival and Children First Eucharist

Sunday 20 September 10.00am

Children First Eucharists (45 mins)

Sundays at 9.30am: 21 June, 12 Jul, 20 Sept (10am), 18 Oct

Sunday walks from the church

31 May, 12 July, September (date to be confirmed), 18 October, 22 November 10.40am.
Short walks up to six miles involving public transport

Fellowship Lunches

Noon for 12.30pm. Sundays 5 July, 13 September, 1 November, 29 November. Tickets £6: 020 8543 3764.
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The Richard Thornton Foundation

Bruce Robertson describes how the hugely wealthy Richard Thornton left a permanent mark on Merton education.



Richard Thornton of Old Swan Wharf, London and Cannon Hill, died in Merton in June 1865, leaving a massive fortune of £2.8m (much of it by securing essential supplies of Baltic hemp during the Napoleonic wars). From this he bequeathed the sum of £10,000 to the Vicar and churchwardens of the parish of St Mary the Virgin Merton.

From this capital fund, up to £2,000 could be used to build and maintain an upper and lower school for educating and apprenticing to some trade or business poor children of the parish aged from seven to 16 years old, the building to include accommodation for a Master or Mistress.

In 1868, the Charity Commissioners granted approval for the Vicar and churchwardens of St Mary's, and up to five additional local trustees, to run the scheme which remains in force today.

Following closure in 1969 of the original school funded by the Foundation, which was situated opposite St Mary's church (now Old School Close), a replacement was agreed and the Foundation now owns the majority of the buildings and land of The Priory Church of England Primary School in Queens Road, Wimbledon.

A stone plaque in memory of Richard Thornton is above the old church school building entrance opposite the church.

A brass plaque (see above) acknowledging his generous contributions to St Mary's, including paying for the building of the Victorian south aisle and the East window (sadly destroyed by enemy action in WW2), is located on the wall behind the lectern.

The Priory School is run by Merton Council and currently insured against fire by them, with approval from the Foundation, for £10m.

The Foundation funds a variety of capital and other projects proposed by the school's senior leadership team. In 2025 the Foundation donated £26,649 to pay for a new Teaching and Learning scheme, updates to the IT system, a new Outdoor Learning project and a new Lettings/Community Partnerships site improvement within the school building.

Trustee wanted!

There is currently one trustee vacancy. There are usually only two meetings each year – not onerous or time consuming. The Foundation policy restricts trustees to a term of three years which may be renewed for a further two terms.

If you are interested in knowing more about the role, please email the Churchwardens at churchwarden@stmarysmerton.org.uk, or you can speak to Bruce Robertson, Clerk to the Trustees, most Sundays in term time at coffee in the hall after St Mary's Parish Eucharist.

A good read...

The editorial team recommend some summer reading...



The Cleaner of Chartres Salley Vickers

This is a gentle, yet surprisingly meaningful, novel set in the famous French cathedral town. It tells the story of the quietly humble Agnès Morel and her interactions with some of the townspeople, including the cathedral's weary Abbé Paul, the malicious gossip Madame Beck and young restorer Alaine. An excellent summer read that paints a very human picture of French provincial life, all told in the shadow of the great cathedral.



A Time to Keep And Other Stories George Mackay Brown

The work of the Orkney writer George Mackay Brown, who rarely left the islands during the 74 years of his life, takes the reader into a magical, unfamiliar world – of fishing and crofting, of life in small isolated communities, of constant struggle with the elements of sea and weather, of Norse history and tradition. While they touch on universal themes and can speak to us all, these 12 short stories published in 1969, written in a style which is both poetic and striking in its simplicity and directness, are suffused with the strangeness and remoteness of Orkney.

You helped us get our bearings – thank you!

**Tower Captain Niki Tompkinson
expresses thanks and urges
more support**



Last summer we had a magnificent response to our appeal to fund current and future repairs to our historic bells, hanging on their 50 year old bearings. Just over £10,000 was raised and work was commissioned from professional bellhangers. In the months since then, there have been a few twists and turns, with rising costs, long lead times (there aren't very many bell hangers) and changing knowledge about the scale of the work required. But finally – the work has been completed! Three brand new and three good-as-brand new (hurrah – some savings here!) bearings. And other previously undetected problems identified and repairs completed. All within budget with funds left for new ropes and other items. Thank you again – our bells are behaving all the better for the attention they have received.

Now will you help us find more ringers?

We have secured the future of the bells. Now we need to secure the future of the art of bell ringing at St Mary's. We are therefore aiming to recruit more bell

ringers to join our small but expert band. Former ringers are very welcome, as well as complete novices. Our bells are excellent for beginners and experts alike. The current band ranges in age from 12 to 70+, and all ages in between. You don't have to be super-fit or particularly strong to ring, the bell does all the work, you are just guiding it on its way. Ringing requires coordination, a sense of rhythm, reasonable hearing and an ability to learn patterns.

Many new bell ringers quickly get "bitten by the bug" and find there is plenty of scope to practise their new art and make new friends locally and further afield. It's a very sociable activity. There is plenty for younger ringers too with wider area groups for 12–18 year olds and many active bell ringing societies in universities and colleges.

Want to hear more and maybe have a go? No commitment – just come and see us any Monday evening in the church between 19.45 and 21.15. Or get in touch at bells@stmarysmerton.org.uk



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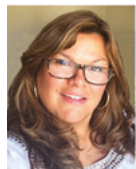
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Dorcas Lackington

Award winning author Jane Davis reveals the fascinating story of the life of Dorcas Lackington whose grave is in the churchyard



In this National Year of Reading, it seems appropriate to remember a parishioner who believed that reading could change lives.

Under the 18th-century doctrine of coverture, married women's identities were absorbed into their husbands'. What we know comes largely from parish records and the memoirs of her husband, the entrepreneurial bookseller, James Lackington who was featured in a previous edition of Parish Matters.

Dorcas was the fifth child born to Jemima Turton (1715 – 1773), granddaughter of Sir John Turton, an eminent judge. Proud of her lineage, Jemima kept her maiden name the only way an 18th-century woman could – by marrying her cousin, Samuel (1715 – 1775). He brought to the match a considerable fortune but wealth didn't protect them from sorrow. There are baptism records for five other children who didn't survive.

Dorcas was baptised on 1 April 1750. In the Acts of the Apostles we learn that St Peter raised Tabitha from the dead, invoking her Greek name: "Dorcas, there is work for you to do. Wake up." Perhaps Samuel and Jemima hoped the name would safeguard their child.

Like most girls of her class, Dorcas was probably educated at home, with an

emphasis on accomplishments rather than intellectual development. Yet she found an education in books. What she liked reading more than anything was novels. Controversial in the 18th century, they were criticised as frivolous, morally suspect, and downright dangerous – particularly for young women. But Dorcas's parents had other distractions.

Lawsuits and Samuel's gambling had exhausted his fortune. Eventually he was "obliged to have recourse to trade," opening a saddler's ironmongery close to Samuel Whitbread's brewery. Whitbread kept eighty horses, which should have assured a steady income, but Dorcas's father "was little acquainted with trade," and he couldn't resist a wager.

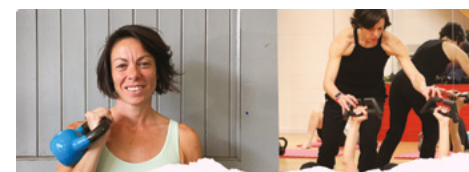
In January 1773, Jemima died from consumption. The illness had probably manifested over time, years in which other mothers were making matches for their daughters. Instead, it fell to Dorcas to care for her, painfully aware that she was passing from a young 'singlewoman' to an Old Maid.

Months after her mother's death came her father's "final ruin". Once again, Dorcas set aside her own hopes, taking in needlework and opening a day-school for girls. But for all her ingenuity, she couldn't balance the books. The only solution left was to take in lodgers, James and Nancy Lackington, who hailed from the West Country.

A shoemaker by trade, a love of reading had prompted James to venture into bookselling. During his first marriage, he struggled to establish his business, selling "improving" and religious texts from a small shop in Featherstone Street. When Samuel Turton gave up his Chiswell Street shop, James Lackington took on the lease.

A few short months later, in autumn 1775, Samuel Turton died. Dorcas would have inherited his debts and was perhaps pursued by creditors. But another crisis struck. James, Nancy and Dorcas fell dangerously ill. In time, James and Dorcas recovered, but city living had wrecked Nancy's constitution. She died on 9 November.

With what seems like indecent haste, James and Dorcas married on 30 January 1776. James tells us that they bonded over a love of reading, but alone in London without a protector Dorcas would have been vulnerable.



Women-only LEARN TO LIFT

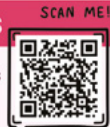
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From 1776, Dorcas emerges as a figure of quiet authority. Her husband's memoir notes that Dorcas introduced him to books that broadened his outlook. He enlarged his stock to include novels, philosophy, history, and a host of other subjects, frequently travelling to acquire more. Fortunately, Dorcas "delighted to be in the shop" and could "always lay her hands on whatever customers wanted." Her presence would have signalled that the shop was a respectable place for women to visit. In contrast to many of his contemporaries, James Lackington acknowledged female customers as essential to his success, writing: "The Ladies in particular have been very encouraging to me in my new method of selling books..."

That method was selling books at the lowest possible price while still making a profit. Although not an overnight success, eventually Lackington's doubled its footprint, enabling them to afford a carriage and to lease Spring House in Merton. Next, they turned publishers, adding to their success. In 1793, they acquired a premises on fashionable Finsbury Square, and created what was the biggest shop in Georgian London. Opened in autumn 1794, the Temple of the Muses was of neo-classical design topped with a glass dome, which flooded the spacious interior with light. Sadly, Dorcas died in January 1795, just as it was emerging as one of London's great landmarks.

Standing by her grave in St Mary's churchyard, I was reminded that Dorcas's example challenges us to look beyond the men whose names are recorded in history books, and to recognise the hidden women whose influence, though harder to trace, was no less profound.

Jane Davis' novels *The Bookseller's Wife* and *The Temple of the Muses reimagine the life of Dorcas Lackington*.



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The Isaiah window

Simon Hillson looks at another of the beautiful windows dedicated to the memory of John Innes.

In the last edition of Parish Matters we looked at the window in the south aisle depicting Moses. Further down the aisle amongst the series of Burne-Jones designed windows manufactured by William Morris & Co we encounter a striking portrayal of a bearded Isaiah in prophetic pose. Isaiah lived in the eighth century BCE in Jerusalem, capital of the kingdom of Judah, at a time of great instability during the ascendancy of the kingdom of Assyria. The biblical book which bears his name emerged in the form we know it today a couple of centuries after the time of the historical prophet. Its later parts, from chapter 40 onwards, are believed by most scholars to be the work of other authors, often referred to as 'second' and 'third' Isaiah, but most of the first 39 chapters reflect the message of the eighth century prophet.

That message was one of judgement, but also of hope for the restoration of God's rule of righteousness and peace. It is this second aspect that has played a major part in Christian tradition, which has read many passages as a messianic prophecy, widely



used in Christian liturgy with reference to the birth of Christ. The familiar Christmas service of Nine Lessons and Carols contains just two readings from the prophets, both famous words taken from Isaiah, respectively chapters 9 and 11. Chapter 9 tells of the coming of light into the world with the birth of a child, the prince of peace whose kingdom of justice will be established forever. Chapter 11 paints a moving picture of a world in which 'the wolf ... shall dwell with the kid; ... and a little child shall lead them... They shall not hurt nor destroy ... for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea'. Words to ponder as we look at the historic window in St Mary's church.

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MUSIC MATTERS

Our new organ scholar

Krysia Williams learns more about Ben Jarbin's background in music



Ben's pathway to the organ was not straightforward. His first meeting with an organ teacher didn't go well when asked to do a tricky move with his feet (organists play with both hands and feet simultaneously as well as pulling and pushing all those stops!). For some years he sang in the choir at Westminster Cathedral,

listening to the organ and becoming aware of how much he liked it and what fun improvisation was. So he set himself the task of improving his playing and managed to impress the first teacher enough to be taken on at his second attempt.

Musical opportunities also bring travel opportunities: with his previous school, The Oratory, he took part in concerts in California, Utah, Washington and New York. Ben also sings in his current school choir, Schola Cantorum, travelling with them most recently to give concerts in Australia. Soon he's going to Norway, France and Barcelona to sing in the Sagrada Familia.

Ben has also started his own choral octet at school, Cantus 8.

He features as a soloist on school recordings of Christmas music and has sung one of the main boy parts in Mozart's Magic Flute at the Royal Opera House, as well as in the chorus of children in Tosca.

His favourite repertoire ranges from Baroque music, including Bach, Buxtehude and Couperin, through to the modern French idiom, such as Vierne, who was an organist at Notre-Dame.

How lucky we are to benefit from talented musicians like Ben, so come along and hear him in action.



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Sacred Heart Chorus and Orchestra perform

Mozart's Requiem

Saturday 20 June at 8pm. Sacred Heart Church, Edge Hill, Wimbledon SW19 4LU

St Mary's Choir 'old boy' Bob Rathbone introduces his latest musical venture

Bob Rathbone has directed SHC concerts since 1997, having been Director of Music at Sacred Heart Church since 1996. From 1974-1980, Bob was a member of St Mary's Choir and was Assistant Organist for two years under former Organist Walter Taylor. Bob both sang and played at many cathedral tours with St Mary's Choir; he was also Musical Director of Parish Players from 1980-1983 (even acting in Hay Fever in 1982!)

The Sacred Heart Chorus (SHC) started life in 1997 as part of the tri-annual BT Voices for Hospices movement, when hundreds of performances of major choral works around the UK commenced precisely at 8pm. Sadly, BT stopped sponsoring these concerts after the 2000 event— so eventually we continued under our own steam. Since 2006 charities, many of them local, have benefited by more than £35,000.

The core of the SHC is the Sacred Heart Church Choir, of which I am Director of Music, but from its beginnings we have invited members of local (and not so local) church choirs and choral societies to participate. We do not audition and some of our members don't read music fluently, but we strive to achieve the highest standards. St Mary's Churchwarden and choir member David Reeves, and his wife Sally, have been singing with the SHC since its formation.

Mozart's Requiem is a powerful and moving work, composed in 1791. In addition, Christian Barraclough is performing the evergreen Trumpet Concerto by Haydn, and the Orchestra starts the concert with Mozart's Overture to The Magic Flute.

TICKETS: www.sacredheartmusic.co.uk/payments/ We hope you can join us for what will be an exciting evening.



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St Mary's' Choristers are putting on a concert of solo and group performances, featuring music from Stephen Schwartz, to Gershwin and to Bach on Friday 19 June at 7.30 pm in St Mary's church.

There is something for everyone to enjoy in this concert, and all performances are self-led by the choristers. With performances from choir members aged 7–19, it is the culmination of their hard work over years of choir membership. Entry is by donation, to support the music education that St Mary's offers, with drinks and snacks served during the interval. The evening promises to be a treat to listen to and watch.

The choir is recruiting soprano and treble choristers aged 7–16, from the local area. We offer choral scholarships for those aged 14–18, on any voice part, and




**Pilgrimage
of Hope**

RCM violinist Anthony Knight will
perform in aid of UNICEF

St Mary the Virgin, Merton
Sunday 21st June
**The closing voluntary at
6:30pm Evensong**

Meditation from Thais by Massenet



Choristers' Concert

Friday 19 June. 7.30pm

St Mary's Church, Church Path, SW19 3HU

successfully prepare choristers for Organ and Choral Scholarships at university. We also have space on the Back Row of altos, tenors, and basses, for adult volunteers.

To enquire about joining the choir, please email dom@stmarysmertonchoir.com, or speak to Tristan Weymes, Director of Music at St Mary's.

Pilgrimage of Hope Evensong. Sunday 21 June in St Mary's Church

Royal College of Music violinist Anthony Knight will be performing the closing voluntary at Evensong on Sunday 21 June in aid of the Disasters Emergency Committee Ukraine appeal and UNICEF. Having toured 63 churches in Somerset and raising £13k he embarked on a tour of 12 countries around Europe and now has a target of playing in 100 churches across London. When he comes to St Mary's he will be playing Meditation from Thais by Massenet.

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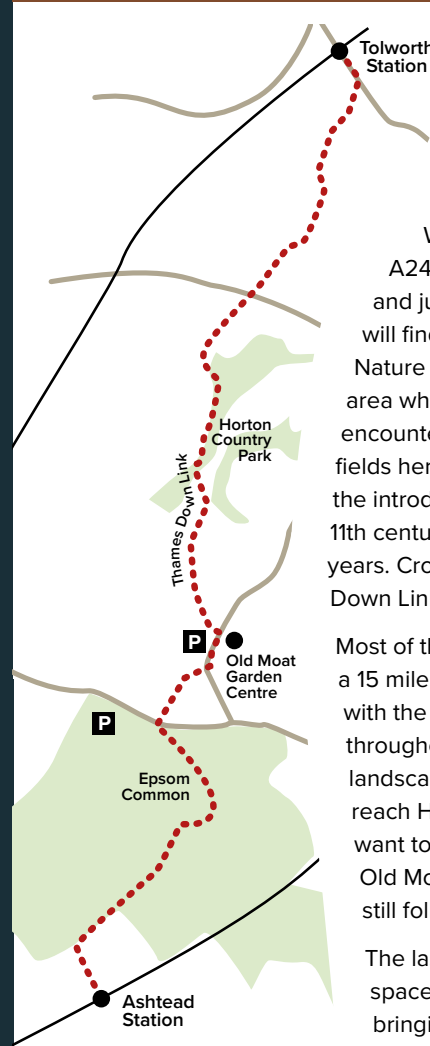
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A walk of just over five miles from the superficially unpromising starting point of Tolworth (less than 15 minutes from Wimbledon by train) to Ashted is a pleasant way to occupy a summer afternoon close to home.

When you come out of Tolworth station, follow the main A240 in the direction of Ewell for only a few hundred yards, and just after crossing Jubilee Way past the Lidl HQ you will find the entrance to the Tolworth Court Farm Fields Local Nature Reserve (not marked on the OS map). Surprisingly, in this area which we think of as unremittingly suburban, you will not encounter another major road until near the end of the walk. The fields here, which are going through a process of rewilding, with the introduction of grazing cattle, have been cultivated since the 11th century and the landscape has changed little over the past 150 years. Cross the fields roughly diagonally to pick up the Thames Down Link by a stream which is a tributary of the Hogsmill river.

Most of the rest of our walk now follows the Thames Down Link, a 15 mile route which connects the Thames Path at Kingston with the North Downs Way at Westhumble. The path is clear throughout and passes through Horton Country Park, a rural landscape of fields, hedgerows, woodland and ponds. When you reach Horton Lane, about three miles into the walk, you might want to cross the road for a cup of tea at the café located in the Old Moat Garden Centre before continuing to Epsom Common, still following the Thames Down Link.

The last mile and a half of the walk crosses the beautiful open spaces and woodland of Epsom and Ashted Commons, bringing the walk to an end at Ashted station, from where the train will return you to Wimbledon in 25 minutes.

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Merton Park Brownies are 105!

Alison Lister celebrates this milestone

1st Merton Park Brownies, who meet in the Church Hall every Tuesday, celebrated their 105th birthday in January. The unit's first meeting was on 14th January 1921, eleven years after the founding of the Girl Guiding movement and seven years after the first Rosebuds (later renamed Brownies) appeared. We celebrated our 100th birthday on Zoom during lockdown, simultaneously eating cake in our own homes.



This time we celebrated together, with cake and a look at some of the activities and games that our predecessors would have enjoyed. We changed some of our names to fit the period and polished shoes.

Over the years the wording of the Brownie Promise and the look of the badges and uniform have changed several times. A new look uniform made from more sustainable fabric is due soon. New Interest Badges were introduced last July. Girls can now earn Mechanic, Folklore, Kindness and Book Reviewer badges among others.

We have rebuilt a thriving unit of enthusiastic girls having lost some during lockdown. Brownies is an organisation for girls from 7 to 10. As we have no Rainbow or Guide units at the church, we do not have a guaranteed feed through of girls, though most of our Brownies go on to join local Guide units. If we are to continue to grow we need more seven year olds to join and more adult helpers to enable us to provide all the experiences that Brownies enjoy.

Our current group has been looking at the history of Brownies and trying on uniforms from the past. They would love to know more about the girls who met where they now meet every Tuesday. They are inspired by the knowledge that an opera singer who has performed at the Proms and a Lioness were 1st Merton Park Brownies. If you were, or know someone who was a Brownie here, we would love to hear from you with your memories.

If you would like to volunteer or register a daughter for Brownies, please go to www.girlguiding.org.uk.



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Wednesday Club

Meeting in the parish small hall
every Wednesday 2.30–4.30pm.
The monthly programme includes
film sessions, afternoon teas,
quizzes and lively talks with plenty
of opportunity for chatting too.
Suggested donation of £5pp.

For further information

Barbara Moreland 020 3874 7149
bmoreland43@gmail.com

Lindsey Jones 020 8715 6398
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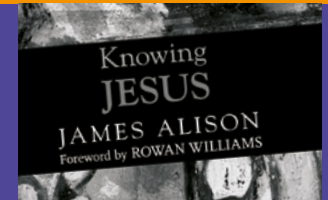
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Bible Study Group

Meeting in the parish
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Tuesdays.

Details can be found on the
pew sheet in the church or
for more information contact
Hugo Summerson
07808 959869



Pilgrim Group

The group meets on
alternate Thursday
evenings, and offers an
opportunity for informal
study, prayer and fellowship.

For further information
contact **Simon Hillson**
simonhillson@me.com



Book Club

Meeting monthly in different
houses across the parish.
About two hours.

For further information contact
John Combs
johncombs46@gmail.com



Occasional singers

A friendly group who enjoy singing but
are unable to make a weekly commitment
to St Mary's choir. They enjoy leading the
music when the choir is on holiday.

For further information contact **Nick Roberts**
slicknickroberts@hotmail.com



Walking Group

The Walking Group meets five or six times
a year after the Sunday Parish Eucharist
for short walks (maximum six miles), usually
in the Surrey countryside.

For further information contact
Simon Hillson simonhillson@me.com

Regular Sunday Services

8am Said Eucharist (Book of Common Prayer, fourth Sunday of each month)

9.30am Sung Eucharist ('Children First Eucharist', third Sunday of each month)

NB. On some Festivals the main morning service is at 10am

6.30pm Evensong (choral most Sundays)

Monthly midweek Eucharist

Third Thursday of each month said Eucharist 10.30am (30 mins)

Sunday Club for children. 1st Sunday of the month

Meets in the parish hall at 9.30 am, and joins the end of the service in church.

Children 3+ welcome. Parents/carers are asked to stay with under 3s.

judithbersweden@stmarysmerton.org.uk

Children First Eucharist. 3rd Sunday of the month

A family-friendly service at 9.30am. Please check website for details, or contact

judithbersweden@stmarysmerton.org.uk

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