

AUTUMN 25

PARISHMATTERS

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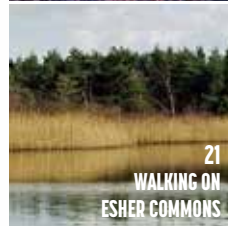
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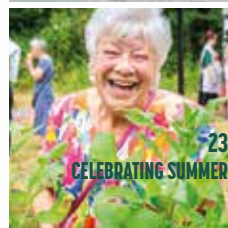
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PARISH MATTERS

AUTUMN 25

The beginning of July saw the sad departure of our vicar, John Hayward, as he retired after 17 years at St Mary's. In this issue we look back at the day of farewell and of celebration of John's time with us, and at the enormously successful summer fair which preceded it. And we also look ahead to the appointment of a new vicar, offering a historical perspective on the way the Church of England recruits clergy to parishes.

Vicars come and go, but some things are with us forever – for example, our beautiful mediaeval church building. We talk to the man who oversees its maintenance, celebrate the successful appeal to fund work on the bells, and launch our campaign to increase donor giving to enable us not just to maintain the building, but also to undertake the wider work of St Mary's in the community.

In this issue, as well as a preview of Wimbledon BookFest in October, you will also find regular features such as book reviews, a walk suggestion, and a profile of a well-known 'parish person'. We hope you enjoy it.

Simon Hillson, Editor

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Cover photo Tim Milner

Interregnum – the times in between

Following the retirement of the Reverend John Hayward, Simon Hillson takes a historical look at how the Church of England appoints its parish priests

ST MARY THE VIRGIN, MERTON
FOUNDED 1115
MERTON PRIORY PROVIDED CLERGY FROM 1115
UNTIL ITS DISSOLUTION IN 1538

VICARS OF MERTON

1558 MICHAEL WIGMORE
1562 JOHN MANTILL
1600 JOHN SALBY
1623 JOHN HARRISON
1639 JOHN STRICKLEY
1658 EDWARD RAYNFORD
1694 CHARLES LOVELL
1700 DANIEL STURMY
1712 EDWARD COLLINS
1737 WILLIAM HALFORD
1771 THOMAS WEBSTER
1783 JOHN CAPEL TOWNSHEND
1801 THOMAS LANCASTER
1803 JAMES HENRY BOND
1809 JAMES HENRY BOND
1869 JOHN CAILLARD ERCKMA
1887 EDWIN ALFRED KEMPSON
1899 ERNEST MURRAY ROBINSON
1904 JAMES EDWIN JAGGER
1937 HERBERT WALTER DUFF
1952 SQUIRE HEATON HEATON
1977 PETER GEORGE SOUTHWELL SANDER
1985 RICHARD ST. LAWRENCE BROWN
(HON. CANON M.L.T.T. B.D.)
1992 THOMAS GLASBROOK LEARY A.K.C.
2008 JOHN ANDREW HAYWARD B.Th

St Mary's is temporarily without a vicar and has entered a period colloquially referred to as an interregnum (technically 'vacancy'). Steps are now being taken towards the appointment of a new parish priest following a procedure of which important aspects, you may be surprised to learn, date back to the middle ages. In particular, the role of the 'patron' of the parish remains central. In this context the term does not refer to the patron saint to whom the church is dedicated, but to the person or body which has the right to select a candidate to be presented to the bishop for appointment as vicar.

England's network of churches has developed over the centuries. The Anglo-Saxon practice of local dignitaries founding parish churches accelerated after the Norman conquest. A lord of the manor would frequently provide land and pay for the construction of a church to serve himself and his tenants, also ensuring that sufficient income was available through endowment (such as the provision of glebe lands) for its upkeep and the maintenance of a priest. Having incurred this significant cost, not surprisingly the lord expected to be able to choose the priest, subject to the approval of the bishop. This became recognised as a legal property right – known as an advowson – which had value, often as a means of providing a career for a younger son, or as a reward for services rendered. Readers of Jane Austen may remember the part played by rights of presentation to a parish living in some of her novels. In *Sense and Sensibility*, for example, Colonel Brandon has the parish of Delaford at his disposal which he offers to Edward Ferrars in the hope that the income will enable him to marry.

Because advowsons could be transferred freely like any other property right, including until well into the 20th century by sale, a

patchwork of different types of patron has emerged over the centuries. During the middle ages many rights of presentation came under the control of monastic houses. A new cohort of patrons resulted from the dissolution, which began in the mid 1530s, as monastic property was granted to laymen or to collegiate foundations. Then



The lectern in St Mary's Church, which was a gift from the last active lay patron, the Hon Mrs Mary Corfield.

the universities of Oxford and Cambridge acquired many advowsons held by catholics in the early 17th century. A development of the 19th century, with the evangelical and catholic revivals in the Church of England, was the foundation of societies dedicated to the promotion of a particular brand of Anglicanism. One of their principal tools was the acquisition of advowsons, enabling them to ensure that the parish would always have a priest of their tradition.

Consequently, patrons today generally fall into five broad categories. First, in recent times more and more patronage rights have come into the hands of the bishops, who now control approximately half of them. Second, there are still private individuals, who sometimes have no personal link



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with the parish. Third, educational bodies (typically Oxbridge colleges) were estimated in the mid-20th century to hold about seven per cent of patronage rights. Fourth, guilds such as livery companies, figure significantly. The Mercers' Company, for example, has the patronage of eight benefices in different parts of England. And finally there are the 'party' based patronage societies. The Church Pastoral Aid Society (evangelical) controls nearly 700 parishes, and the Society for the Maintenance of the Faith and the Guild of All Souls (Anglo-Catholic) together nearly 130.

You may well ask where parishioners fit into this picture. Until relatively recently, the answer was not at all. The parochial church council (PCC) had no formal role in the appointment of a new incumbent, and until 1930 was not even entitled to be notified of the transfer of the patronage. The first and only significant overhaul of the system occurred as recently as 1986 when provision was made for consultation

with the PCC which, acting through two lay representatives, was given a power of veto over the appointment of a new parish priest (albeit that this can ultimately be overridden by the archbishop).

Some argue that rights of patronage provide a counterbalance to the centralising power of bishops, and in some cases there is an ongoing supportive and fruitful relationship between patron and parish. But it is a source of amazement to many that the procedure for appointing a new vicar can still be based on archaic property rights deriving from the feudal system, even though now heavily modified by legislation. More often than not, in practice the system works smoothly, but from time to time serious difficulties arise. In 2021, for example, the PCC of a parish in the diocese of London which took an inclusive approach to same-sex relationships was at loggerheads with its conservative evangelical patron. The dispute was only resolved after an 18 month stalemate, when the patron's rights lapsed under the provisions introduced in 1986. There are, however, no current plans to replace or further reform the system.

Thankfully, in Merton we are spared such difficulties. The last time a lay patron selected the vicar was in 1952 when the patron, the Honourable Mrs Mary Corfield, informed the churchwardens that she had offered the parish to the Reverend Squire Heaton-Renshaw. By the time he retired in 1975 the patronage had passed to the Bishop of Southwark, with whom it remains today.

The Bishop and the PCC are co-operating closely on the appointment of our new vicar. It is expected that an advertisement will be placed in October, with interviews in November. Allowing for necessary notice periods, and God willing, we should have a new vicar at some point in the first half of 2026.

Sudoku

7		3				6		
4	9				3	5		
			6	9				
				1		8	7	5
2	4	5		3				
				2	4			
		4	5				6	7
		8				9		1

Solutions on page 28



Farewell to John and Roger. 6 July 2025

'Endings don't get more beautiful than that!'

These words from one of John and Roger's friends, who had travelled up from Sussex, sum up a wonderful day of celebration, gratitude, and not a little sadness, on Sunday 6 July when many people from St Mary's, the wider parish, and further afield came together to wish them both well for the future. A sense of the special services, the reception and lunch, and the warmth and affection of all the personal and generous gestures is captured here in some of the photos Tim Milner kindly took throughout the day.



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SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER
NOVEMBER

WHAT'S ON

AUTUMN 2025

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.

Winter issue copy deadline: 10 October

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Delivery coordinators John and Judy Sargeant

Print Impress Print

Patronal Festival Sung Eucharist
Sunday 7 September 9.30am.

Sunday walks from the church
7 September, 26 October, 23 November, 10.40am. Short walks up to six miles involving public transport. For details see the weekly pew sheet in church.

Parish Players 2026 Pantomime 'Dick Whittington'
Read-through 9 September 7.45pm;
Auditions 16 September 7.45pm. Parish Hall.

Fellowship Lunches
Sunday 14 September, 2 November, 30 November. 12 noon for 12.30pm. Tickets 020 8543 3764.

Dedication Eucharist and launch of Planned Giving campaign
Sunday 5 October 9.30am.

Harvest Festival 'Children First' Eucharist
Sunday 19 October 10am.

John Innes Society exhibition 'Local Education History'
Coach House, Melrose Road SW19 25–26 October.

All Saints' Day
Sunday 2 November Sung Eucharist 9.30am.
All Souls' Service 6.30pm.

Remembrance Sunday Service
9 November 10am.

St Mary's Christmas Market
Saturday 29 November 11am–2pm.

Advent Carol Service by candlelight
Sunday 30 November 6.30pm.

Friends of the John Innes Park Gardening Group
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Local skills needed to help preserve St Mary's Church

Richard Price talks to Russell Penny, Chairman of St Mary's Building and Works Committee

St Mary's Church, Merton Park dates from the 12th century and is listed under planning legislation as Grade II*, which means that it is an important building of more than special interest.

Over the years there have been many changes to the building. During the Victorian era and right up to the 1970s, restoration work was carried out using cement rather than lime mortar. This means that water cannot escape from the building, resulting in damage to the stonework over time.

Every five years St. Mary's is required to be inspected by a suitably experienced qualified professional, appointed after consultation with the Diocese of Southwark's Advisory Committee. This is known as the Quinquennial Inspection and is conducted by our chosen Inspecting Architect.

The last inspection was in August 2021, with the final report published in April 2022. Many of the recommendations related to the stonework and roof tiles and those works have been completed at a cost of £24,000. The ancient north door also needed repairs to its hinges

and overall structure which cost £7,000, and recent boiler repairs cost £3,000. The boiler is now obsolete and parts are difficult to obtain, so a new boiler will be required within the next five years.

Internal cracks in the stonework need to be addressed at a time when the inside of the church is next decorated. It is twenty-five years since the last internal decoration, which will have to be undertaken again within the next five years or so. The overall cost is likely to be more than £100,000. In addition about £12,000 is required each year for routine maintenance and safety checks.



The ancient north door

The church has been fortunate to be able to fund much of the work to date from reserves, thanks to bequests, most notably from Honey Honeysett and Patricia Burrows. However, reserves are not infinite and to ensure necessary repairs and maintenance can continue, further financial support will be needed from the local community in order to preserve this ancient church (see page 19).

While finance is crucial, help is also urgently needed from those who have relevant skills and experience, especially in engineering, architecture, surveying and quantity surveying. Russell Penny said: 'We will value any help people can give in assisting us to monitor and facilitate the work undertaken by our contractors. You do not need to be a member of the congregation to support us. Anyone with relevant experience from the local community will be very welcome to help maintain this historic building.'

Thank you! THE BELLS APPEAL HITS ITS TARGET

We are delighted that the appeal to the parish and the wider Merton Park community to help fund the work on St Mary's bells has been successful and our target of £10,000 has been met. Very many thanks to all who contributed and for all the kind messages of support for the bells. We have now placed the order for the work to be done in the autumn. The bells will only be out of action for a couple of days.

Niki Tompkinson, Tower Captain



Please email Russell Penny for more information:
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and he'll be pleased to get in contact with you.



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Wimbledon BookFest

As Krysia Williams explains, for ten days
in October Wimbledon BookFest will be
creating a real buzz around the centre of Wimbledon



Starting in a marquee on the Common in 2009, Wimbledon BookFest has now graduated to Wimbledon Library and the Arts Centre in Wimbledon High School, welcoming over 20,000 people to listen to interviews with over a hundred authors on topics ranging through children's stories, politics, cookery, history ... you name it, it's probably covered! From poetry with Raymond Antrobus to Lady Hale exploring court cases in her expert guide to the law and explaining how it works and why it matters.



Rupert Everett will discuss his short stories drawn from his acting career and the inspiration behind them.

'Table talk', a weekend of food related events, allows you to meet Thomasina Miers, founder of Wahaca and champion of Mexican cooking. Others appearing at the festival include David Nicholls, Lord Heseltine, Jung Chang, Shirley Ballas and Anthony Horowitz. There's someone for everybody.

There are children's writers and, running alongside the festival, is its programme for state schools in London. It also partners with the Lahore Literary Festival, highlighting South Asian stories including events with Reeta Chakrabarti and actor Jassa Ahluwalia.

A list of recommended 'Summer Reads' offers you an opportunity to get to know some of the authors and their works before the BookFest. Along with Merton Libraries, the festival sponsors the annual 'Merton Big Read'. This year it's Kit de Waal's memoir about growing up in Birmingham with her family. In October the author will be discussing this book, 500 copies of which are being made available through libraries and community groups across Merton.

There's a range of writing workshops and a special screening of the documentary 'Shoot the People', introduced by its director Misan Harriman.

When asked, the authors say it's great to meet their readers in the flesh. Writing can be a lonely occupation and, even when the book is published, it can be difficult to get feedback, appreciation even. But the audience at a BookFest allows the authors to step outside their isolation and they're excited to meet their readers ... and other authors.

The festival runs from 16-26 October. There is much more information on the website, www.wimbledonbookfest.org where details of the full line up and tickets are available.





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The Baptistery window

Simon Hillson looks at the striking window in the Baptistery of St Mary's Church.

The window in the baptistery at the west end of the church is rather different from those in the north aisle which have been described in earlier issues of Parish Matters. Instead of a saint, we see the figure of Christ in glory (symbolised by the almond-shaped frame – or mandorla – of yellow light within which he stands) blessing a group of children – appropriate for the place in the church where countless children have been baptised.

This window replaced an earlier one installed in 1868 in memory of the wife of the then vicar, Annette Fixsen, who died in the same year as her four-year-old son, commemorated by a window in the chancel. The 1868 window was largely destroyed by a flying bomb in 1944, and initially was replaced just with clear glass because the War Damage Commission declined to pay for stained glass. Only the four leaved (quatrefoil) round window at the top, depicting the Lamb of God with victory banner, survived and is still in situ.

The two tall windows below it which we see today date from 1958 and are in memory of Laky Piers, who died in 1954. At the service of dedication one of Mr Piers's grandchildren was baptised. The curious figure of a Greek shepherd at the bottom right hand side of the window is explained by the fact that Mr Piers was of Greek origin and a prominent supporter of the Aid to Greece campaign. As President of Morden Rotarians he was a tireless speaker at Rotary meetings around the country, calling



attention to the plight of his homeland, which had been devastated by German occupation during the Second World War and the subsequent communist insurgency. The Greek state awarded him its highest civilian honour, the medal for which can be seen at the bottom left of the window with the memorial inscription.

The window was designed by the distinguished stained glass designer Frederick Cole. It must have been one of the last pieces executed by the Westminster glassmakers William Morris and Co, which closed down in 1958 (not to be confused with the entirely unrelated Morris & Co founded by the famous William Morris and based nearby at Merton Abbey).

When studying this window we should perhaps follow the advice of the vicar at the time: 'I suggest you take a chair from the back of the Church, stand upon it and study the face of the Christ, the children, and the Greek shepherd.... You will, I think, find a dignity and beauty not easily recognisable from ground level.'

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MUSICMATTERS

St Mary's Choir was privileged to sing Choral Evensong at Westminster Abbey on 28 July. Led by Musical Director Tristan Weymes, the choir sang compositions by Richard Ayleward, Herbert Brewer and Felix Mendelssohn. The Abbey was packed, with a congregation including visitors from all over the world.

A good read...



The Towers of Trebizond Rose Macaulay

This comic novel, first published in 1956, is widely regarded as Rose Macaulay's masterpiece. It recounts the ludicrous doings in Turkey of a group of Christian travellers, together with their long-suffering and emotionally unstable camel. They regard themselves as High Church missionaries, racing to get ahead of a rival Billy Graham group, but it's a mission like no other. A bygone age of travel is evoked beautifully, and the light, gossipy, stream of consciousness style of the narrator is a delight. But it's not all froth: there is an undercurrent of moral seriousness and an unexpected twist at the end.

Simon Hillson



Four Seasons in Rome: On Twins, Insomnia, and the Biggest Funeral in the History of the World Anthony Doerr

On the same day his wife gave birth to twins, Anthony Doerr received the hugely prestigious Rome Prize, which gave him a year-long stipend and studio in Rome. This book is an account of that year, where he reads Pliny (or doesn't), learns to be a new father and takes in the majesty and mysteries of their temporary home. There are beautiful descriptions of both intimate details and monumental moments, including the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Suffused with the atmosphere of the eternal city, this is a beautifully written memoir from the author of All the Light We Cannot See.

Louise Williams

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Planning your giving!

Did you know that it costs £5,500 a week to keep St Mary's Church open? That's £285,000 a year!

Eye-watering though that figure sounds, when you consider the expenses involved in just maintaining a Grade II* listed building dating back to 1115, heating it, and paying our small staff team, the sums soon mount up.

And, as a comparatively well-off parish, we also make a significant annual contribution to Southwark Diocese to help support other parishes in poorer parts of south London.

Over the past five years, inflation has increased our costs by more than 20%, whilst our income has remained almost static. We are fortunate to have some reserves (mostly legacies left by members of the congregation) which have, for example, funded the considerable, but very necessary, costs of the recent parish hall refurbishment.

However, most of our income comes from donations by our congregation – those attending and giving to St Mary's regularly, and those visiting us more occasionally (for example at Christmas) or even only once, such as at weddings and funerals.

Our regular donors invariably give what they can afford, and although some increase the amount they give from time to time, others may need a nudge! And that might mean reducing their donation.

Examples of costs in the past 12 months

- Repairs to the external walls £24,000
- Repair to the north door £7,000
- Repair to the boilers £3,000
- Heating, lighting and water £10,000
- Charitable giving £13,000 (we support

seven local and national charities)

This autumn St Mary's is launching a campaign to increase our regular donor income, which helps us to plan ahead. If you would like to help us financially, please consider joining our Planned Giving Scheme.

The St Mary's **Planned Giving Scheme** is very simple – you commit to regular giving, whether weekly, monthly or annually. The donation is by bank standing order or by cash given in personalised envelopes (which we will give you) through the collection plate.

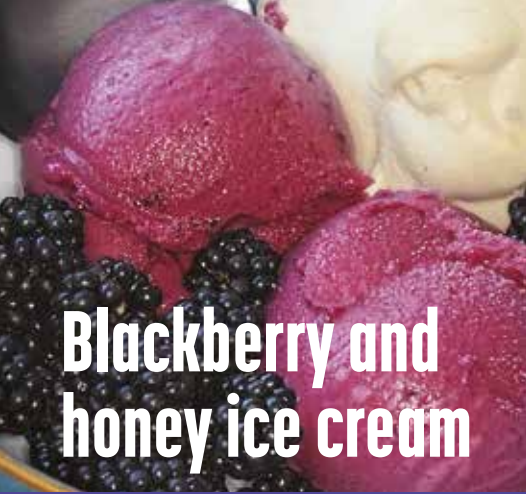
In most cases Gift Aid can be applied to the donation, meaning St Mary's can claim back from HMRC an additional 25% of the sum donated. A donation of £100 consequently is worth £125 to us, at absolutely no additional cost to the donor.

We'll be in touch with all our email subscribers in early October to ask current donors to review their current level of donation, and to encourage others to join the scheme.

You can also pick up a planned giving/Gift Aid form from St Mary's between 9am and 4pm, Monday to Saturday (all day Sunday).

If you do not wish to commit to regular giving we welcome one-off donations – the bank details are on the planned giving form. Alternatively, you can use the electronic card machine at the back of the church.

Thank you very much for taking time to read and consider this request.



Blackberry and honey ice cream

Blackberry picking is one of life's great pleasures – time slows down and at the end you often have very pink fingers and far more berries than you intended to collect in the first place.

They have ripened early this year, but there are still plenty in the hedgerows if you go walking out of London – possibly on one of the Surrey walks recommended by Simon in this magazine.

This ice cream tastes delicious, looks beautiful and is easier to make than it sounds.

Ingredients

4 egg yolks
75g granulated sugar
230ml whole milk
250g honey
2 tsp vanilla extract
1/4 tsp sea salt
450g fresh blackberries
plus extra to serve
230ml water



Put blackberries, water and 50g of sugar into a small pan. Cook over low heat until the berries begin to soften – use the back of a wooden spoon to mash the berries to a pulp.

Simmer for 10–15 minutes, until a thick sauce has been formed – the sauce will thicken further when cooled. Strain through a sieve, press gently so the liquid and fruit pulp go through the mesh, but none of the pips. Set aside to cool.

Make the ice cream base by adding the egg yolks and 25g sugar to a non-stick pan. Whisk until well combined and a pale-yellow colour. Stir in honey, milk, sea salt and vanilla. Place over a medium heat and bring to a low boil. Stir until the mixture thickens and easily coats the back of a wooden spoon – about 8–10 minutes. Do not to let the mix catch on the bottom of the pan.

Once thickened, remove from heat and transfer to a mixing bowl. Add the reserved blackberry sauce and stir to combine.

Cover and place in the fridge to chill thoroughly for about four hours or overnight.

Once the ice cream mixture is well chilled, churn in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions and freeze in an airtight container. Alternatively, place the cooled mixture in a freezer-proof container and freeze, stirring every half hour or so to produce a soft texture.

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A walk through a Site of Special Scientific Interest

Simon Hillson takes us on a walk across nearby Esher Commons

As we thunder down the A3, many of us perhaps pay little attention to the green areas on either side of the road just past the Esher turn-off. These are the Esher Commons, a Site of Special Scientific Interest which includes a couple of local nature reserves. The whole area, which takes in Oxshott Heath and West End Common as well as Esher Common itself, is well worth exploring, and this six mile walk gives an opportunity to do just that.

The direct train from Wimbledon to Oxshott takes less than 20 minutes and as soon as you get off you enter Oxshott Heath, following paths which lead to a footbridge over the A3 Esher bypass, constructed in 1974, which sadly bisects the commons

(the one drawback of this walk is the traffic noise from this road, although it's often quite faint). From the far side of the bridge

you begin to cross Esher Common, passing close to Black Pond, the largest of several ponds in the commons, and once used to provide a water supply to nearby Claremont Landscape Garden.

Taking care crossing the old Portsmouth Road (now the A307), you enter West End Common, soon arriving at the top of a steep bank known as the Ledges, below which the River Mole flows. When St Mary's walking group came here a few years ago we took the wide path along the top of the bank because parts of the lower riverside path were impassable, but if that path has now been repaired (as I believe it may have been) this may now offer an alternative - as long

as you are prepared for the steep climb back up to the top of the bank at the end!

Until the end of the First World War, the section of West End Common through which you now pass was used as a military rifle range, and remains of some of the original firing platforms and other structures can still be identified. A short detour for a cup of tea at the National Trust Claremont Landscape Garden café is recommended at this point, before taking the path back across Esher and Arbrook commons which eventually brings you to Claygate station, a quarter of an hour's train ride back to Wimbledon.

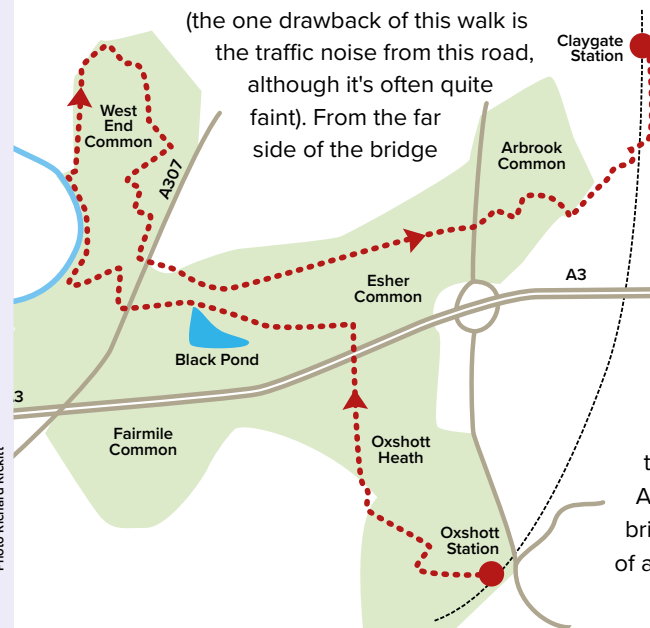


Photo Richard Rickitt

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A summer celebration

On an exceptionally hot Saturday afternoon in June, the parish hall and glebe field were filled with people enjoying a superb variety of stalls and entertainment at the St Mary's Summer Fair, the first for at least six years. There were activities for all ages, and plenty of opportunities to enjoy locally-produced food and cooling drinks. Thank you to all who contributed to such a successful community event, and especially to Roger Birtles, his team, and all the helpers who ensured everything ran so smoothly – not least those who spent many hours putting up and taking down the many gazebos which provided such welcome shade. The fair raised well over £5,000 for St Mary's Church and its charities. Thanks to Tim Milner for his photographic record of such an enjoyable occasion.



The Letter in The Window...

When I first saw the advert in the pharmacy window, it broke my heart. I thought, 'That could be my own mum in a few years time'.

I wasn't looking for a new career or anything, but I knew I could give someone a bit of help here and there. So, when I saw the ad, I went for it and called the number.

I spoke to a lovely lady called Sophia who filled me in on what Home Instead Wimbledon and Kingston were looking for and how they helped so many older adults. Honestly, it really didn't feel like I was talking about a job. For the first time in ages, I felt like I could really contribute something good to another person's life.

Deciding to offer a few hours of my week was a simple decision. Those few hours quickly turned into a full-time commitment. Leaving my job at the shop wasn't easy, but what I've found in return is so much better.

Home Instead stands out because everyone is so friendly and welcoming. The immersive training was incredible - it really felt like being in Betty's flat. It didn't just prepare me for the everyday tasks I'd need to do but it helped me understand depth of care, the importance of dignity, and the value of companionship to someone's life and wellbeing.

Now, four months in, I can't imagine doing anything else. The clients I visit, the stories I hear, the smiles we share - I love it. So, to anyone who felt the same as me when they read that note in the window, I'd say, make the call.

Caring and companionship, giving back to the community, that's what life is all about.

All the best,
Aanya



PARISH PEOPLE



John Gout

Krysia Williams talks to John Gout about his 70 years in St Mary's Choir

In 1955, when John Gout became a choirboy at St Mary's, the main reasons for joining were that his brother was already in the choir and his parents were regular churchgoers: 'it was something you did in a church family, Sunday was a day of rest ... there weren't clubs and things to go to.'



John will have been in the choir for 70 years this September. Starting as a treble he moved through the parts as his voice changed and eventually became a permanent member of the basses.

Walter Taylor was the choirmaster then (who himself served St Mary's for over 65 years as chorister and organist, retiring in 1999). With the choir stalls only able to hold 24 boys it was not possible for them all to sing at the same time. So Walter didn't allow John to actually start singing services until Easter 1956!

The choir now sings at the Sunday Eucharist and Evensong. 50 years ago they sang at Matins each Sunday but only once a month at

Communion. Rehearsals were every Tuesday and Friday in the early evening, a practice that continued until about 15 years ago.

John remembers fondly the Royal School of Church Music courses he attended, including one at Liverpool Cathedral in 1961. Other highlights were weddings, for which the boys received a payment of 'half a crown' (two shillings and sixpence in old money, 12½ pence in current). This was a princely sum, and as there were substantial tax benefits for the happy couple if they married at the end of the fiscal year, the vicar would oblige by fitting in up to eight on each of the last few Saturdays in March.

Life was more spontaneous in those early days. John remembers one Friday rehearsal when the choirmaster asked if 'they'd like to go somewhere tomorrow'. Someone said 'Cheddar Gorge', recalls John ... so the boys duly met at the station the following day and made their way to the Gorge via tube, train and bus!

In the 1970s the choir began the tradition of singing in a cathedral for a week in the summer break. These visits, which included Norwich, Salisbury and Hereford, were very exciting for the whole choir.

John's two daughters were not able to join the choir, as girls were first invited only in 1999. However, his grandson Matthew became a chorister when he was a similar age to John, and is still a member of the choir. John believes that he, and all choir members, receive a good musical education, learn about responsibility, time-keeping and team work. They also receive the gift of friendship.

John finds it difficult to pick out one favourite piece of music: 'you sing so much and like so much in 70 years, but in the end being a choir member is about giving of our best to enhance the worship to the glory of God'.

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The Board meets quarterly, with occasional email discussions as needed. Trustees visit the property/residents on a rota. Previous experience in housing or charities is desirable but not necessary – just a commitment to supporting others.

TO APPLY, please email your CV and cover letter to mertonunitedcharities@gmail.com
Application deadline: 30 September

PARISH TOGETHER

In addition to our services in church, St Mary's offers a range of activities which are open to all in our local community. You are sure to receive a warm welcome.



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
lindsey6456@hotmail.co.uk



Fellowship Lunch

Join us for an inexpensive lunch in good company – especially for those who might not cook a Sunday roast for themselves.

Sundays, 12 noon for 12.30: 14 September, 2 and 30 November.

To book call **Anita Simpson**
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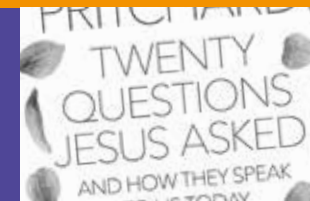


Bible Study Group

Meeting in the parish small hall at 10.30am alternate 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 Occasional 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

Parish Office

Open four mornings each week from

9.30am–1pm (closed Wednesdays).

Email office@stmarysmerton.org.uk

Telephone 020 8542 1760

Parish Hall

There is information about hiring the hall or glebe field and events and activities in the hall displayed on our website (under 'hire the hall'). For more information or to hire an event space please contact Laura Crosby on 020 8543 4777 or Email bookthehall@stmarysmerton.org.uk

Sudoku Solution. Page 5

7	5	3	2	4	1	6	8	9
4	9	6	8	7	3	5	1	2
1	8	2	6	9	5	7	3	4
6	3	9	4	1	2	8	7	5
8	7	1	9	5	6	4	2	3
2	4	5	7	3	8	1	9	6
9	6	7	1	2	4	3	5	8
3	1	4	5	8	9	2	6	7
5	2	8	3	6	7	9	4	1

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