

The wedding of the century?

It's been called the "wedding of the century". Kate Middleton and Prince William will be married on April 29th at Westminster Abbey. Prince William, second in line to the throne, proposed while they were on holiday in Kenya last October. William said he had been "carrying around the engagement ring in his rucksack for three weeks" before he found just the right moment to ask Kate to be his wife. The ring is the famous sapphire engagement ring that his father Prince Charles presented to Diana when he proposed. The whole country seems to be in a mood to celebrate this royal wedding and there will be a national holiday to mark the occasion.

According to the Church of England "Marriage Project", couples today see marriage as the "gold standard of human relationships". In England overall, marriage may have declined, but it continues to thrive in some quarters, particularly among better-educated couples who are both over 27 years of age. This couple fits neatly into that trend: Kate and William are both 28, and both have university degrees. Kate stands to become the first English queen with an earned university degree. In that regard, the new couple reflects the changes in the shape and nature of marriage.

Ideas about marriage have changed over the past 50 years, but not as much as you might think. According to current research, 66% of first marriages last a lifetime (until one partner dies). Young people aspire to marry; 92% of 15-year-olds want to marry one day. But people are waiting longer to marry. In 2001 the average age for first marriages was 31.8 years for the groom and 29.7 for the bride. The median length of marriages that

end in divorce is 11 years, which is about the same as in the 1960's.

National Marriage Week is the 7-14th February. The parish's Mothers' Union supports marriage, and its magazine, Families first, has some interesting articles on marriage. With all the bad publicity marriage sometimes gets you might wonder, "Why get married?" Recent statistics help. Boots have published an article on their website which pulls together some reasons from diverse sources. (See <http://www.webmd.boots.com/sexrelationships/news/20101116/royal-or-not-marriage-is-good-for-you> for the full article.)

Studies show that married people live longer and are happier, less susceptible to depression and illness, and have shorter stays in hospital. Marriage also reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, and encourages healthier life choices. And marriage usually includes a sexual relationship, which is also good for one's health and boosts self-esteem.

As Christians we worship and serve God, who is known as the "author of love". So it is only natural that we support and encourage loving and healthy marriages. This year three weddings are already planned for St James Church.

Each year we hold a Marriage Preparation course for couples from throughout the Cowley Deanery who are scheduled to marry. The course started Wednesday, 2 February at 7:00 pm in the St James Church Centre – and began with a romantic dinner. If you know someone who is getting married this year, it's still not too late to register.

Howard

Chronicle

Cowley Team Ministry

February 2011

Editor's Letter

Dear Readers

Now here is a question for you – what is Sir Winston Churchill doing in the parish churchyard? Well, here is the answer – one hundred new yellow daffodil bulbs named after the famous man have been planted there to add to those that bloomed with such success last year. Watch out for double the display in a month or so. By the way is there a Cowley Wordsworth out there to immortalise them in verse?

The parish has in its possession a lot of early copies of the Cowley Chronicle and we are hoping to get them filed and sent to the Oxfordshire Records Office in St Luke's as soon as their refurbishment programme is complete. There they will be safe whilst at the same time easy to access. However, there are some big gaps in the sequence and Sally and I were wondering if you, or anyone you know may have early copies of the church magazine that you would like to put in safe keeping? Do let us know.

This year sees the eightieth anniversary of the founding of St Francis Church. What an amazing eighty years it has been and the dynamics of that early beginning still go on. I know that there are all sorts of plans to celebrate the anniversary and we look forward eagerly to hear what they have

in mind. Dates and times for all the events will appear in The Chronicle in due course so do watch out for them.

I was invited to the Ark-T centre the other afternoon to add our parish dimension to an exciting project they have in hand there. Some of you may remember the "I Cowley" shop in Templars Square last year. From that has grown a scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to flag up the people of Cowley in the present day and in the past. Not before time say!! Watch out for more news of this in next month's issue. I promise I will keep you informed.

Now that the spring flowers are beginning to show their faces and the days are getting a little bit lighter it is good to think that winter is almost gone. Good gracious, it is only a few weeks before the clocks go forward!

God bless

Rosanne

OXFORDSHIRE RECORD OFFICE, ST LUKES

The Oxfordshire Record Office is closed to the public until May 2011 while it is converted to take in Oxfordshire Studies and the Oxfordshire Health Archives, creating a single history centre for the county.

Alpha Course

Our Parish Alpha course started on 28th January but please, if you missed the first one you can still join the course. Remember, it is a place where any questions and doubts are welcomed, no holds barred. The discussion after the talk is open and the leaders are completely unshockable.

We start with a good meal and go on from there.

If you wish to join or are hesitating please contact May Morgan or Una on Oxford 779855 or any of the clergy.

COWLEY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

**Next Meeting is on
Wednesday, 16th February 2011**

At St James Church Centre
Speaker: Mr J Paine
Subject: Barcelona

20 members enjoyed Cinderella on January 5th at the Playhouse.

Hope to see you on the 16th February.

I LIKE HUGS

It's wondrous what a hug can do
A hug can cheer you when you're blue
A hug can say, I love you so
Or, I hate to see you go.

A hug is: 'Welcome back again!'
And, 'Great to see you!' or
'Where've you been?'

A hug can soothe a small child's pain
And bring a rainbow after rain.

The hug! There's just no doubt about it,
We scarcely could survive without it.
A hug delights and warms and charms,
It must be why God gave us arms.

Hugs are great for fathers and mothers,
Sweet for sisters, even for brothers,
And chances are some favourite aunts
Love them more than potted plants.

Kittens crave them. Puppies love them.
Heads of state are not above them.
A hug can break the language barrier,
And make the dullest day seem merrier.

No need to fret about the store of 'em.
The more you give,
The more there are of 'em.
So stretch those arms without delay
And give someone a hug today.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Every year on the first Friday in March the women of the world come together in their churches to pray for each other. A different country each year prepares the format of the service and it is sent to almost every country around the world. These services are very meaningful and moving. This year's format is particularly poignant as it was devised by the women of Chile long before the terrible mine disaster which tugged at all our hearts.

This year the date of Women's World Day of Prayer is March 4th. Here in the Cowley deanery each church in turn acts as host for the others so women join together from Sandford, Littlemore, Blackbird Leys, Rose Hill, Iffley and Cowley. The gathering is truly interdenominational with people from the Baptists, United Reform Church, Roman Catholics, Methodists and Church of England. This year it is the turn of Cowley St James to act as host.

We are fortunate to have secured Rev. Amanda Bloor as our speaker and Brian Tidy to play the organ. We are hoping that a large contingent of women from our parish will want to come and help to welcome the visitors from other churches. There will be a tea party in the Church Centre after the service when there will be a chance to meet and chat with other people from our area. Do come.

The service starts at 3.15 pm. Oh and by the way, men are very welcome too.

Mothers' Union News Christian care for families

At our Annual General meeting held last month our hard-working branch leader, Connie Uren, stood down after an amazing year of progress in our branch. A vote of thanks was warmly offered by all the members there. After Pat Chung's departure from Cowley and her long-term service as branch leader Connie agreed to "look after" us for just one year. We were anxious that there might be problems in replacing her. However, we are really delighted to welcome Molly Oliver into the post to be willingly and ably supported by May Morgan as secretary. They will be quite a team!

The rest of the committee, also elected at the Annual General Meeting, are as follows: Marlene Shreeve, Cynthia Dales, Betty Mitchell, Connie Uren and Rosanne Butler.

It is with great sadness that we heard of the death of one of our much-loved and devoted members, Margaret Jeffries. She belonged to the Cowley MU for well over sixty years even enjoying her last meeting in December last year. She will be sadly missed and remembered with great affection.

Unusually, within the UK, we are a growing branch and enjoy our monthly meetings and out-reach activities. We are a friendly group and always welcome visitors to our meetings. We meet at 2.30 pm in the Church Centre on the third Monday of the month.

A LETTER FROM THE EAST END

Hello, you dear Cowleyites!! Let me begin by saying a massive “Thank you!” for your continuing support, financially and spiritually. Both are much appreciated, and very felt.

This might be a good time to fill you in on some of the street language I have encountered over here. Consider the following a flyby introduction to life as a young East-Enders!

Wha gwan: Roughly translated, this means, “What is going on?” and has originated from the Jamaican dialect.

Blood: A term originally used to greet a family member, i.e., of the same “blood,” now more widely used as a general term for a close friend.

Peng: A term used to describe someone of good physical appearance. “That girl is well peng!”

Butters: Pronounced “bu’ers.” Describes someone with an unattractive face. Derived from the phrase “but her face,” as in, “nice person, but her face...”

It really is like another language. When I first moved here, I could barely understand what a lot of the young people were saying. But now I consider myself a connoisseur on the subject.

After Christmas I moved house, and I now live near Green Street. A bit of trivia for you: my house can be seen in the opening of EastEnders. Some more trivia: Green Street has among the highest levels of marijuana consumption and number of brothels in all of England. Newham is the most ethnically diverse borough in England, and has the youngest population and highest birth-rate in the country. When you live in an area like this, you really see how much work needs to be done.

One boy I know was released from prison last week with a two-year ASBO, but within three days was dealing drugs again. This seems to be ingrained in the culture, and many young people don’t even recognise that their behaviour is wrong. However, hearing how the authorities deal with them, it sometimes seems the young people are responding to provocation. I met two police officers last week, who told me they bring birthday cards to the more

serious troublemakers when they turn 18, bearing the message, “Now you’re old enough, we’re gonna get you.” This seems unnecessary, because it fuels the hatred between police and young people, and creates a strong sense of “us versus them.” In contrast, a very caring youth worker I know has helped decrease crime in Britannia Village (another notorious area) by 60 percent. Facts like these are what keep me dedicated to loving the Hell out of these young people!

There’s been some sad news here. One boy I mentor stopped turning up to our sessions. When the school investigated they learned that he’d been stabbed by a rival gang member. I’ve seen him a couple times since, but he now wears a bullet-proof vest every time he leaves his house. The saddest part is that for this school, this is not unusual. Many of their students are active gang members, and this involves dangerous initiations, meeting group expectations and joining in the gang warfare rife in East London.

Although a lot of things are lacking here, I want to let you know that every day we see positive changes. There’s still so much work to be done, but we’ve already accomplished many things. St Augustine said, “Love is the beauty of the soul,” and when I look around here, I see so much beauty and I feel so much love. It’s exciting to be caught up in this revolution, and it would be great if you could all pray that we would see a tidal-wave of God’s love overtaking London! Thank you so much for your love and support, and I look forward to seeing you all soon!

Katie Thornton

Africa Bound

Katie hopes to join other XLP students on a short-term mission trip to Ghana in February. This will cost approximately £700, and to raise funds, she will be part of the London Tube Run on Tuesday, 8 February. In a ten-hour period, they will travel through as many Tube Stations as possible. (She hopes to get to at least 100.) If you’d like to sponsor Katie, there is a sign-up sheet at each of the churches, or you can speak to Howard or Carol.

The Origins of Cowley

Part Nine : The Feudal Village

Taxes - VAT, Council tax, income tax and so on. There seems no end to them! 'Twas ever thus. When Norman rule came to the little village of Church Cowley and the even smaller hamlet of Hockmore Street the taxation system made life hard. And so it continued throughout the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. Once the country had fallen to William, Duke of Normandy, the Conqueror, it was assumed that every square inch of land belonged to the King (though I have yet to learn whether inches were used as units of measurement back then!) The concept of William's total rule was quite alien to the Saxon way of thinking but it was irrefutable so it was a case of like it or lump it.

The King, in his turn shared huge parcels of land amongst his barons with, as in the case of Cowley, a tiny handful of Saxon lords being allowed to hold on to their domains, as long as they "behaved" themselves. The behaving side of the bargain meant paying sizeable amounts of taxes to the Crown. Where did the cash come from? The villeins or peasant farmers of the land. They were forced to pay taxes on their small plots. Below them were the serfs who worked in the fields and they too were taxed. The only folk exempt from taxation were slaves who worked for nothing except their food and meagre shelter. The other tax which the barons or overlords were required to provide was an assignment of able-bodied men and boys in their employ to fight in battle for the King when needed. Many barons got round this rule by paying an even larger tax in cash instead. The King could then recruit his army from elsewhere and use all that lovely money to build more castles, hold banquets, fund expensive hunting expeditions and do all the other things that kings like to do.

So what has all this to do with Cowley? Well, it is clear that taxation kept the peasants very poor. The other problem with the feudal system was tithing. The law was that an overlord's land should be divided into three large open fields – such as Southfield, the Ridgefield, the Westbury and so on. There would also be common grazing land – such as the Bulan Dene and Woodland. Each villein (each group of villeins' homes made a village by the way) would be allowed to farm a certain number of designated strips of land in each field. Not only did he have to pay rent for these but he was required to

grow the crops he was ordered to on them. Tithing meant that one tenth of everything he produced was the overlord's by right. On top of which the poor old villein had to pay the miller to grind his corn in order to provide flour for his family.

So how did the early cottagers of Cowley get cash? Mainly by taking as much of their produce as they could spare to market in Oxford. That was not easy either because in those early Middle Ages goods had to be transported to the city by boat along the Thames. The alternative was to carry them along the Hollow Way (dodging all the drovers hauling blocks of stone) up to Mud Lane (now Barracks Lane) across to Berry Lane (now the Cowley Road) and so into Oxford. Once over the wooden bridge (the Petty Pont) which spanned the River Cherwell and on reaching the east gate of the city, another tax had to be paid in order to pass through.

The peasants grew the obvious cereal crops, of course, plus peas and beans and hay. In their small cottage plots they kept bees for honey and wax for candles. They planted all kinds of fruit and nut trees. Chickens roamed around freely. The family pigs were kept in a sty against the cottage wall and were taken daily to the woods to rootle amongst the trees. In Cowley sheep were widely kept on land which was not cultivated and cattle and goats were kept for milk and meat in the winter. Butter and cheese would be taken to market. In fact anything and everything that would sell provided goods for the citizens and later the university.

As we read in the December article one of the important landlords in our area was the Abbey of Osney. However, a new overlord was about to have a long lasting effect on the origins of Cowley. When William I died he was not succeeded by his eldest son, Robert. He had blotted his copybook and was sent back to Normandy in disgrace. The second son, William Rufus took the Crown but his reign was cut very short when an "accidental" arrow killed him whilst he was out hunting. So, the third son, Henry, became King. He had a daughter, Matilda. All royal princesses needed dowries in order to seal their marriage settlements. Henry gave Matilda a large tract of land between Headington and Hockmore Street as part of her dowry and next month we shall find out how and why this land became known as Temple Cowley.

TEMPLE COWLEY SWIMMING POOL

The fight to save Temple Cowley Pools continues. Oxford City's Executive Board has decided to spend £200,000 on a feasibility study to explore the possibility of relocating pools to Blackbird Leys. It could be that the £200,000 could be put towards rebuilding Temple Cowley and Blackbird Leys Pools if the link with a financial partner does not materialise.

Watch out for dates of meetings on this. There will be a demonstration and media photo-shoot on Wednesday, 3rd February 2011 at 8.30 am outside the Temple Cowley Pool, and the next lobby is on Wednesday, 10th February 2011 at 5 pm at the Town Hall, St Aldates. There

Look at the website <http://savetemplecowleypools.webs.com>.

This is updated pretty much daily. As well as the regular Quote of the Day, events, news and requests for help are on there as well as general cuts information. It is also possible to email to give support or views at savetcp@gmail.com.

Dates for your diary

Snowdrop Weekends

5th and 6th February

12th and 13th February

10 am to 4 pm

Tea, Coffee and Homemade cakes will be on offer

Cowley Local History Society

Tuesday, Tuesday, 15th February commencing at 8.00 pm

At United Reformed Church, Temple Road, Cowley

History of the Covered Market

An illustrated talk by Malcolm Graham

Cowley Women's Institute

Monthly meetings at St James Church Centre – 3rd

Wednesday of month from 2 – 4.30 pm

Next meeting: 16th February

Barcelona

A talk by Mr J Paine

CHRISTIAN AID

A Quiz Night was held on Saturday, 29th January to raise funds for Christian Aid. About 50 people attended and all had a good evening, answering “difficult” questions and having refreshments. In all the evening raised £179 for Christian Aid.

COWLEY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Tuesday, 15TH February 2011

commencing at 8.00 pm

History of the Covered Market

An illustrated talk by Malcolm Graham

At United Reformed Church, Temple Road, Cowley

Membership fee £15 (OAP £13)

Visitors welcome £3 per meeting

Cowley Parochial Church Council

Wednesday 16th February

St Francis Church

7.30 pm

Mothers' Union

Monthly meetings at St James Church Centre – 3rd

Monday of the month from 2.30 pm

Next Meeting: 21st February

Alpha Course 2011

Friday Evenings from 28 January 2011

St James Church Centre

£3.00 per session

(The course will last 11 weeks, a ten week course plus a Holy spirit Day in the middle on a Saturday.)

Women's World Day of Prayer

Friday, 4th March

St James Church

3.15 pm

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?

When we walk into Church on a Sunday, we expect, not just a warm welcome, but a service booklet and a Link leaflet giving the readings and all details of what is going on that week. We expect to be warm in the winter, the lights to be switched on and candles burning. We expect an organist playing for us on an organ that doesn't sound wheezy and, of course, a rector or vicar to lead us in worship. We expect there to be bread/wafers and wine for the communion.

We also want the church surroundings looking tidy to show off a building which is cared for and not with peeling render, broken gutters and smashed windows. Well, if you have already noted who is writing this, you will know that, with my Parish Treasurer hat on, I am talking money!

All of the expectations that I have listed cost us money. If you come for a coffee in the Church Centre after the 10 am service at St James, you will see me most Sundays with my briefcase and cheque book, asking one of the Churchwardens for a countersignature on yet another cheque to pay yet another bill.

All of us, this year, will have higher bills to pay and the Parish is no exception. This year also comes with a nasty sting for all charities in that we lose the transitional relief on the Gift Aid that we claim from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. When the standard rate of income tax went down to 20% three years ago, a concession was made so that charities would not lose out straight away. Now on 6th April 2011, we will have less income from the Gift Aid that we claim. If you pay income tax and you have informed me (or a previous Treasurer), I claim back the tax you have already paid in the money that you give to the

Parish, but the parish will now get less back. If you give £10.00 each week, I have been claiming (with the transitional relief) £2.80 but from April I can claim only £2.50. 30p less will go in the pot every week. Whatever amount you give, we will be 3% short in our Gift Aid Income. If you give £2, we will be 6p short, if £5, 15p short. I have worked it out that it will mean a loss of £1,300 less income on top of all the other price rises.

In order to stand still, we would need everyone please to pray and ask that giving be increased by at least the 3% lost in Gift Aid.

Please note that if you now do not pay any tax on earnings or pensions or savings, please let me know as I don't want to defraud the Revenue and claim for Gift Aid we are not entitled to!

A final thought.

It is true that you "can't take it with you", as they say. There has been advertising and even TV programmes about making a will recently. We all should make a will containing all the decisions about what we want to happen about ourselves, our possessions and our money after we have gone. It is always a great boost to the Parish when someone leaves a legacy. Often it would be specifically for the church buildings themselves - and a lot of cash is needed in the near future and beyond to keep our wonderful St. James' and St. Francis' Churches in sound condition. Not to mention the bells, the organs.

Joan Coleman, Parish Treasurer

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Recipe

If you are planning a romantic supper for your loved one on Valentine's Day how about trying this suggestion from Nigella (no less!). It is called:

Champagne Jelly

Make up a block of jelly (orange or lemon looks best) with ½ pint boiling water. Leave until it is almost set. Pour into champagne flutes only half filling them then top up with Champagne (the cheaper kind will do!)

The bubbles stay in the jelly and as you chill the glasses they look very pretty. You could top each glass with a strawberry to add a bit more glamour.

Rosanne Interviews Amanda Bloor

If I told you that one of the clergy who quite regularly officiates and preaches in our two churches was, in fact, the real Vicar of Dibley I guess you would say, "Come on, Rosanne, it is too early for April fool tricks and too late for New Year teasing", wouldn't you? Having the headline at the top of the page, though, you might wonder what Amanda, the Bishop's chaplain, and Dawn French, the actress, have in common, apart from their dog-collars may be. Let me explain. After ordination and three year curacy Amanda spent a further three years as the vicar of the village of Turville and very happy years they were too. Turville was the place where the popular TV series "The Vicar of Dibley" was filmed. Amanda was not the incumbent during the original series but while she was there several "special" episodes were filmed. Yes, she did get to meet all the cast and the production team and describes them as lovely people. I had a lot more questions I wanted to ask about the programmes but we had so much more to cover in our interview. I will leave it to you to quiz her next time you meet if you want to know more. However she did tell me that the small cottage where Dawn French "lived" in the series is a real cottage owned by the couple in Turville who are the church key-holders. How's that for a scoop for The Chronicle!

Amanda came to live in Cowley three years ago and really loves it here. Although she and husband, Mark, do miss the countryside a little they find the community spirit, the friendliness and the sense of place which Cowley

people have very endearing. They also enjoy the convenience of being able to go to the theatre, cinema, concerts, shops and other amenities so good that they are very happy here. Not that Amanda is a country-girl by birth as she was born and grew up in West Bromwich, the first daughter of two teachers.

As the eldest of three girls she thinks that she learnt quite early in life to take responsibilities not only for herself but also for her two younger sisters. The girls all attended local primary and comprehensive schools each doing well academically but also musically. Their father was a talented music teacher so whenever he needed "someone to make up the numbers in one of his bands or orchestras" his eldest daughter was recruited. She told me that she plays a number of instruments to a reasonable, though not a high, standard. She plays several brass instruments, particularly the euphonium, the violin and the piano. I don't know if you agree with me but I find this month's interviewee full of surprises.

At secondary school her favourite subject was English by a mile. She is an avid reader and has been since she was very young. She declares that she will read anything, even the back of a cereal packet for want of other material! She enjoyed hockey and played in the school team though how she fitted in practices and matches I really wonder. She was a keen member of her local youth drama group, followed her Guiding career through Brownies and Girl Guides, was a Sunday School teacher and a member of both the local youth orchestra and wind-

band.

At eighteen she gained a place at Leicester University where she read for a Combined Degree. The combined subjects were English Literature, Music, Classical Studies and Archaeology. She describes university as a very happy time. Whilst there she joined the Officers' Training Corps and met Mark. She enjoyed a full social life including plenty of theatre-going and concerts. Mark and she became good friends but it was not until after university that they met up again at a summer ball. It was all very romantic and glamorous and their love affair flourished. By this time he had joined the RAF and she said, with a twinkle in her eye, that it was the uniform that swayed it.

Her first appointment in the world of work was with the Civil Service in London. She lived in South Kensington, a lovely area which she got to know well. Mark was stationed in Norfolk so Amanda spent many a weekend travelling back and forth to visit him. They were married in 1985 and she left her post with the Civil Service and moved into married quarters. As an officer's wife she began to do voluntary work with the RAF families on the station.

Of course as a serviceman Mark was posted to a new place every couple of years. They found themselves in various RAF stations, including South Wales and Northern Ireland. Amanda found their time in Northern Ireland a difficult and challenging time particularly as by then she and Mark were the parents of two small daughters, Sophie and Caroline.

When the girls were old enough for boarding school Amanda decided to train as a teacher. At the same time she continued her work with the welfare of RAF families as a part-time volunteer. Sometimes this meant lobbying their local MP who incidentally was the TV journalist Martin Bell. Almost inevitably she was invited to chair the RAF Families Association.

Thinking that she would be an academic for the rest of her life she embarked upon and completed a masters' degree at York University in Women's Studies. It was, however, at this juncture that she realised that God had plans for her. She knew she was being called and was absolutely horrified. She prayed hard, at one point believing that she might be a little crazy. At last she made her decision and one evening, over dinner, she plucked up the courage to tell Mark. To her utter amazement he was not at all surprised and supported her every step of the way.

As they were based at Benson by then Amanda had to meet the Oxford Diocesan Director of Ordinands. She was accepted to prepare for ordination and began her theological studies at Cuddesdon. She loved it. After ordination she spent her first three years in the ministry as a curate at Hambledon, in Hampshire. Then came those three years deep in the countryside at Turville.

The post of chaplain to the newly-appointed Bishop of Oxford was advertised. Amanda applied and was duly appointed in August 2007. Her role involves

supporting Bishop John in a wide-ranging capacity. She affirms what most of us suspect that he is a lovely person to work for. Her office is down at Church house in Hinksey but, of course, she is out and about in the diocese representing the Bishop on a variety of committees, arranging the liturgies for services, briefing him on many details she has researched and also attending services at the cathedral. She describes herself as the point of contact for Bishop John.

Mark, in the meantime, has left the RAF and is now County Organiser for the Air Cadet Force. He is also teaching young cadets to fly. Together their lives are as full as they have ever been, not forgetting that they need to keep up with their now grown-up daughters who are leading exciting lives of their own

Has there been anyone in your life who has had a strong influence on you?

Both sets of grandparents, especially my grandfathers. My paternal grandfather was a staunch Methodist, Chairman of the YMCA. He lived his life entirely on the things he believed in. My mother's father was an undertaker – a kind generous man. He would do anything for anyone. He came home one day without his coat. He had found someone without a coat at all. My grandmother was furious. His life was all about showing respect for the grieving.

Has your faith been with you since childhood?

I always believed that God was there. We were brought up to go to church and later on I

became a Sunday-School teacher.

Do you have any treasured possessions?

Photograph albums. They are very special.

What is your opinion of our present day society?

I am quite optimistic. People do tend to question things more – you cannot get away with clichés. I find people want to understand the meaning of life. Young people are often really committed to making the world a good place to live in.

If you could change something in a spectacular way what would it be?

I would like to change the fact that we are often afraid of the unfamiliar or the unknown.

Which period of your adult life has given you the most satisfaction?

The next one!

How do you like to spend your leisure time?

I try to keep fit by running a couple of miles three times a week. I also do water aerobics. I love reading. I enjoy the cinema and theatre. I have a wide range of taste. I did belong to choirs in earlier days but my time is short so I could not attend rehearsals regularly. I like holidays where you can do something interesting not just lie on a beach.

What plans do you have for the future?

I learnt my lesson that if you give your life to God it is best not to make too many forward plans but I do know it is going to be exciting.

SAINT OF THE MONTH St Colman

This month we have chosen a saint who is very rarely spoken of though in the seventh century he had a strong influence on the early church both in Ireland and the north of England. His name was Colman and his saint day is celebrated on 18th February.

He became a monk at Iona from where he was sent to the island of Lindisfarne to preach the gospel to the English. He was so highly revered that he was made Bishop of Lindisfarne. As such he was called to the famous synod of Whitby where, amongst other decisions made, the formula for deciding the date of Easter each year was settled. Sadly Colman voted against the decision which was finally made by the predominantly Roman Catholic Church. Having lost the vote he decided to go back to Ireland taking his faithful Irish monks with him.

The Venerable Bede writing about the religious settlement at Lindisfarne at that time told of how devout the monks had been under Colman. They had no wealth, only cattle because any money they received they gave to the poor. They did not collect money nor provide accommodation or entertainment for great men visiting the monastery presuming that such people resorted to their church simply to pray or hear the word of God.

Even when Oswy, King of Northumbria, visited

bringing with him an entourage of half a dozen men they were expected to perform their devotions alongside the monks and then join them in their simple meals.

Colman and his monks were greatly venerated by the ordinary folk in those northern parts and would be greeted in cottages or even the streets for a word or gesture of blessing. The monks in their turn travelled through the villages visiting the sick, baptizing, preaching and handing out alms to the poor.

After leaving Lindisfarne Colman spent four years on Iona accompanied by his faithful companions. They then moved on to an island off the coast of County Mayo called Inishbofin. There they built a monastery which they shared with a group of monks from England. However, unfortunately during the summer months the Irish monks went off on walk-about preaching and teaching leaving behind their English brothers to bring in the hay and corn harvest and gather fruit crops and so on. The Irish group would return to the shelter and comparative comfort of the monastery at the on-set of winter. Colman could see that this situation would not work so he built another monastery on the mainland of Mayo itself for the English monks whilst he continued to live in Inishbofin until he died in the year 676 AD.

CHURCH WARDEN'S REPORT

It is a welcome change for me to report on an enhancement to a building rather than just a repair which is usually the case. The new AV (Audio Visual) system at St James Church Centre was installed last week and we pray that God might use it for His purposes both for our own and for the outside groups who use it. We have an installed projector and screen linked to a sound system including wireless microphones and a hearing loop.

The policies, instructions and training as to its use have still to be worked out in the next few weeks as well as incorporating it in any advertising.

Feed-back from you (but not the sound system!) would be welcome so that everyone gets the best possible use of this new resource. Suggestions please also as to potential usage i.e. film night and in music worship?

David Stanley

JACK FROST

He's young I think
As young as me
But very impudent is he.
I've never seen him actually.
For mother says he comes at night
When trees are bare and fields are white.
He always keeps out of our sight.
I've seen his drawing lessons though.
All on the frosty window panes
He draws the fern leaves very plain,
And wiggly things all high and low.
I wish he's stay and let me see him
Line with white the apple-tree
And leave some icicles for me.

(It is said that as a 3-year-old I said "bicycles"!)

Submitted by Thelma Telling

SNOWDROPS

Candlemas bells and fair maids of February are two of the alternative names given to the lovely little flowers we know as snowdrops. Candlemas, of course, falls on 2nd February and by that time in most years snowdrops have made their welcome appearance to remind us that spring is on its way. Even as I write the snowdrops in my garden are beginning to show their little white heads. It never ceases to amaze me how they can be buried under deep snow and hard frosty ground waiting for just the right time to push into the light.

The writer and broadcaster Richard Mabey, whose huge book "Flora Britannica" is a treasure of mine and required reading regularly for me, has difficulty in determining whether snowdrops are wild flowers, native to Britain, escapees from cultivation or were introduced from the continent five or six centuries ago. One thing he has identified, though, during years of research is their prevalence in former monastery and convent grounds and in old churchyards. That, of course, is where we come in. With fingers firmly crossed (sorry about being a bit superstitious!) we, at St James are hoping that the thousands of bulbs lying under the churchyard will offer up their blooms for all to enjoy during the first two weeks in February. So by the time you receive your Chronicle of the month we shall be well into our snowdrop weekend. No matter if you missed it, there is always next week.

The church will be open on 5th and 12th of February from 10 am to 4 pm and on 6th and 13th of February from 2 pm to 4 pm. Tea, coffee and homemade cakes will be on offer so do come and celebrate the early signs of spring and bring family and friends too.

Of course the yellow aconites and blue scillas will add to the carpet of flowers and on a bright spring day it is one of the loveliest sights in Cowley.

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR REDUCING STRESS

Thou shalt not be perfect, nor even try
Thou shalt schedule time for thyself and thy supportive network
Thou shalt not try to be all things to all people
Thou shalt switch off, and do nothing, regularly
Thou shalt leave things un-done that ought to be done
Thou shalt be boring, untidy, inelegant and unattractive at times
Thou shalt not spread thy-self too thin
Thou shalt not even feel guilty
Thou shalt learn to say "NO!"
Especially, thou shalt not be thine own worse enemy, but they best friend

NOTABLE DATES IN FEBRUARY

3rd February 1966 saw the first controlled landing of a man-made object on the moon. The Soviet spacecraft "Luna IX" landed softly on the surface and sent the first TV pictures of the lunar landscape back to earth.

On 6th February 1918 British women over the age of 30 were allowed to vote. It was another ten years before women over 21 were granted the franchise.

Soap rationing was introduced during World War II on 9th February 1942.

England won The Ashes on 16th February 1933 after the controversial "bodyline" tour against Australia. England's fast bowlers had bowled at the batsmen's legs and bodies deeming their play to be dangerous and "not cricket".

On 22nd February 1804 Richard Trevithick drove the first steam engine to move on rails in front of an excited crowd in Penydarren in Wales.

The first ever £1 note was issued in England on 26th February 1797. Incidentally a £2 note was also introduced.

AMAZING GRACE

We are all aware of the fact that our Christian faith has been under fire from outside sources over recent years. People have been trying to marginalize it, to say that it is out of date and irrelevant in this modern world. And if it were just a matter of old words and traditions and rules, perhaps it would not matter so much if it went by the wayside. Yet, we who are close to it know that it is much more than that. We have the unique power of the Holy Spirit to change and transform lives, often against people's own inclinations. Had we have the positive power of prayer. St Paul experienced this in his own life and saw it at work in the early church. It is something coming from beyond ourselves, outside of our own will and plans. And there have been many examples of people changing throughout the centuries and in our own times. There have been few periods in our history when so many people's lives were in such a mess as they are today, particularly amongst the younger generation, who feel that their lives are empty and meaningless without hope or direction. They feel that if only they could become rich or famous everything would be wonderful, but life does not work like that. So they flounder about seeking all sorts of weird experiences and sensations, and missing out on the one thing that would give them real satisfaction and contentment. Can we who know the real answer turn our backs on things and give up the fight for our faith? No! We must continue to stand up stand up for Jesus, as soldiers of the cross. We owe it to our generation, we owe it to God.

John Shreeve

SEASHELLS

Between February 9th and May 31st vouchers for "Active Kids" will again be issued by Sainsbury's. As in past years we will be collecting them for 'Seashells' and would be very grateful for your contributions if you have no-one else to give them to. In the past you have all been very generous and supportive, enabling 'Seashells' to add to its collection of toys and equipment.

We shall also be collecting Tesco vouchers which will be issued around the same time. These will go to Church Cowley St James School.

Vouchers can be delivered For the attention of May Morgan either in Church or at the Church Centre.

With many thanks.

May Morgan

Dear Members of St James and St Francis Church

The Community Emergency Foodbank (CEF) team would like to wish all the members of St James and St Francis Church a very joyful Christmas. We would also like to thank the congregation for their support for CEF over the past year through their gifts of food as well as financial help towards our work.

The CEF café has been increasingly busy over the past 12 months as more and more people find themselves in financial crisis in these difficult economic times, with not enough money to buy sufficient food for themselves and their families. We have fed approximately 1500 people over the past 12 months. The stories we hear are many and varied and I enclose a few which hopefully will give some insight into the people we help.

'A' was a single girl, in her mid twenties, who had been working as a Christian community worker in London. She had been subject to a stalker aggressively harassing her and the police had arranged for her to be moved out of the area to a women's refuge in Oxford. She knew no-one, had no money as her benefits had not caught up with her, and she was in a very distressed state. As well as providing her with much needed food, we were able to put her in touch with a church community near where she was living.

ST FRANCIS NEWS

In our own quiet way we at St Francis have been carrying on the good work. In spite of the extreme weather, and much illness around, our Christmas Services went ahead as usual. We lost our organist for the Carol Service and had to use a guitarist, but we got him back for Christmas Day. We owe a debt of thanks to those who worked to beautify our church for the occasion, particularly to Shirley and Paul who did such a wonderful job on the Christmas tree. We are grateful to Susannah who stayed with us and never lost her cheerfulness. Also to the other clergy who supported us in our need.

We met recently to discuss present church care, and plans for the future. Sadly, Patrick who is our prime mover and shaker on our special St Francis Celebrations was not able to be there. So discussions on that were a bit limited. We know that Bishop John is not able to be present and we are currently in the process of inviting people previously involved with our church to join us for the occasion. On Saturday, 19th March we plan to have an open day and coffee morning. We are in the final stages of getting our church side doors renewed, and putting the work out to tender. The repainting will go ahead and we hope to have it completed by our Special Celebrations time. Drainage problems are still on-going. Joan put us in the picture regarding Parish Finance which does not seem too bad at present.

No more for now.

John Shreeve

'B' had just been released from prison and was living in a probation hostel when he was referred to us as his benefits had not been processed prior to discharge. He was very upset when he arrived as his friend had recently committed suicide in his home town and he was unable to go to the funeral because of his bail restrictions. He said that if he had still been in prison he could have received support from the prison chaplain but outside he felt lonely and vulnerable. During the three times he visited CEF one of the volunteers was able to spend time talking to him and he indicated that this had been very helpful.

Family 'C' was an American girl with a couple of children who had come to the UK with her partner two years previously. They were unmarried. He had recently walked out of the family home leaving her with no entitlement to benefits as she was not a British Citizen. She was desperate to stay in this country as the children were settled in school and she was happy here. She was surviving on the occasional £5.00 left by the father of the children. CEF was able to help her over a difficult period in her life.

There are so many stories like these so please continue to give both financially or in 'kind' if you can.

THE OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

By Kim Hughes

The orchestra consists of around 100 players of grade 7 standard and above from schools across Oxfordshire and some university players. The orchestra meets on Saturday mornings at Bayards Hill School in Barton. There are various concerts performed throughout the year including a concert for primary schools at the Sheldonian Theatre, finishing with a week long summer tour in July. Previous tours have been to Italy, Paris and even Canada. I joined the orchestra playing the bassoon in 2008 and took part in the tour of Leipzig in Germany which was a fantastic experience. One concert took place beside the Bach Memorial outside of St Thomas' Church, Leipzig. We ended up in Colditz Castle where the 'Great Escape' took place during WW2. Luckily we were only there for a day trip!

In July 2010 the tour took place in Madrid in Spain. The music we played at the concerts included:
España – Emmanuel Chabrier

The Firebird Suite – Igor Stravinsky
Symphony No 1 = Gustav Mahler

One of the concerts took place in St James Church of Santiago! Another outside of the beautiful Madrid Palace in very hot temperatures which can affect the tuning considerably! This was a fantastic experience and attracted a very large crowd of people. We played the William Tell Overture, which the crowd very much enjoyed and were encouraged to clap along in time. However, inevitably the clapping got faster and faster, so the Orchestra had to play faster and faster in order to keep up. Just as we thought we had finished and took a deep breath to recover, we followed the custom of an encore and

played the piece again to the delight of the crowd!

Each year the orchestra enters into the Music for Youth regional festival with thousands of other participants from across the country. This year we were chosen to play at the Birmingham Symphony Hall in July and received a Classic FM Award. The two pieces we played were The Russian Easter Overture by Rimsky Korsakov and The Young Persons Guide to the Orchestra by Benjamin Britten.

However, my most memorable experience in the orchestra was participating in the School Prom at the Royal Albert Hall on the 8th November 2010, which is an annual 3-day event, hosted by Music for Youth. There were a large range of different musical groups, large and small from all over the country. I remember being amazed at the size of the hall, and the amount of people in the audience. We, The Oxfordshire County Youth Orchestra were on at the end and played the last movement of The Firebird Suite and Pomp and Circumstance by Edward Elgar as well as a contemporary piece with a rock band. The atmosphere was fantastic and I remember the sound as the audience sang along to "Land of Hope and Glory ..." with lots of cheers and flags waving. A scene that I had often watched on TV; 'The Last Night of the Proms'. On the last note, I looked up to see mini fireworks above us and a mass of confetti and balloons streaming down. A Grand Finale to my time in the Orchestra!

Rosanne has a copy of the DVD and if you would like to borrow it we are asking a £1 hiring fee in aid of parish funds. It is already in circulation.

5th COWLEY GUIDES

Just before I launch into our news, I would like to make an appeal on behalf of Cowley District. The Brownies and Rainbows which meet at St Frances Church, will be closing down in the middle of February unless we can find volunteers to help run these meetings. Rainbows cater for girls aged 5 – 7 years old on a Wednesday, meeting for one hour from 4.45 pm to 5.45 pm. Brownies – ages range from 7 – 10 years old same night for one and a half hours 6 pm to 7.30 pm. There are girls out there waiting to join. If you know of anybody who may be interested in helping - please contact Cynthia Retter on 01865 711429.

A piece of good news – 2nd Cowley Rainbows and Brownies which meet in the Church Centre, have now decided to become part of Cowley District (they were in Iffley District).

Guides – We finished celebrating our 100 years of Guiding with a night of traditional games, remaking our promise plus two new members being enrolled. All those attending that night received a special 1910 – 2010 enrolment badge. We have also completed the World Traveller Badge. At the end of term the Guides had a Christmas Dinner instead of a party. Blackbird Leys also joined us.

CHRISTINGLE ORANGES

As most of our readers know, each year just before Christmas our two churches hold Christingle services. These are a chance for our children to understand the wonder of God's light in the world. It is also a chance to nibble away at the little goodies stuck on cocktail sticks which represent the bounty of the world. The collections taken at these services support the excellent work of the Children's Society.

Oranges are not cheap but each year the parish provides them for the children's Christingles. However this year we were given a very generous donation of £25 from the Midland Funeral Service in Bicester to help with the cost. The lady at the Service who set up this very kind donation is Mrs Nicola Dudley so we would like to thank her and her colleagues over at Bicester very much indeed.

Letter from Alison Kinnear dated 16 January 2011

Thank you for another enjoyable Chronicle – nice clear print as well. I don't know why there are things like recipes and gardening in it – might as well be any "Woman's Weekly" and you could save some paper.

Thank you to Sally for advertising Cowley Local History Society. We really need new members and I hope to see her and Les there sometime. The main purpose of this note is to thank Rosanne for printing the interesting letter that Father Whye wrote in the December 1950 Cowley Chronicle. I so enjoyed reading about Father Benson and also Father Whye's worldwide appeal for the new organ fund. I have cut it out to keep. Do you think we could have a regular series of extracts from old Cowley Chronicles, please? I would love that and I am sure others would as well.

Thank you for all the good work you do in providing our Chronicle – much appreciated.

Editors response to Alison's letter:

We at The Chronicle always welcome your letters and comments. Because we try to include something for everyone and we have had some positive comments about our gardening and recipes articles we do not feel they are a waste of paper. What do other readers think? To reply to Alison's other views we are pleased that overall she enjoys her monthly magazine and that the Father Whye letter was appreciated. Other people have also expressed a wish for repeats of earlier Chronicle news so we are working on that. We would like to thank Alison for writing as feedback from our readers is more than welcome.

Rosanne and Sally

Sunday Services

ST JAMES' CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE

8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Sung Eucharist
Every fourth Sunday: *Church at the Centre*
Every third Sunday: *Sunday Lunch*

ST FRANCIS' CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

10.30 am Parish Eucharist

Mid-Week Services & Meetings

Monday	8.15 am 2.30 pm	Morning Prayer – St James Parish Mothers' Union – St James (3rd Mon)
Tuesday	8.15 am 10.00 am 12.00 pm 12.30 pm 2.30 pm	Morning Prayer – St James Seashells Toddler Group : St James Eucharist – St James Tuesday Lunch Club – St James Friends of St Francis – St Francis (2nd & 4th Tues)
Wednesday	8.15 am 9.15 am	Morning Prayer – St James Morning Prayer – St Francis
Thursday	8.15 am 7.30 pm	Morning Prayer – St James Healing Service (1st Thurs) St James/St Francis (alternate months)
Friday	8.15 am 5.30 pm	Morning Prayer – St James Evening Prayer – St James

Home Groups

Leader	Time / Venue
Una Dean	Alternate Monday mornings at 10:15am in Una's home
Connie Uren:	Alternate Tuesday afternoons at 2:30pm in St James Church Centre Lounge
Friends of St Francis: (John Streeve/Moll Oliver)	Tuesday alternate afternoons at 1:30pm in St Francis Church
Tony Beetham	Alternate Tuesday evenings at 7:30pm in St James Church Centre Lounge
Patrick Gilday:	Alternate Wednesday evenings at 7:30pm in St Francis Church upper room
Rosanne Butler	Alternate Thursday mornings at 10:30am in St James Church Centre Lounge
Mark Oxbrow	Alternate Thursday evenings at 7:30pm in Mark's home

The Parish of Cowley office in
St James Church Centre is open

Thursday 12.45 pm to 4.30 pm
Friday 9.00 am to 1.15 pm
and by appointment.

Parish Secretary:
Elaine Ulett

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Team Vicar
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