

The

Keston Magazine

News of your Parish and Village



February/March 2023

Keston Parish Church

Church Rd., Keston, BR2 6HT kestonparishchurch.org.uk



Rector

There is currently a vacancy

Licensed Lay Minister & Parish Administrator Churchwardens

Tricia Coward	01689 854373
hallbookings@kestonparishchurch.org.uk	
Martin Chalker	07711 016891
warden@kestonparishchurch.org.uk	
Geoff Carr	07584 058872
warden@kestonparishchurch.org.uk	
Tonia Crouch	
tonia.cc@blueyonder.co.uk	

Verger

Treasurer	Anna Bailey	01689 852583
Organist & Choirmaster	David Cook	020 8289 5768
Church Hall	Tricia Coward	01689 854373
	hallbookings@kestonparishchurch.org.uk	
Magazine Editor & Book Reading Fellowship	Sally Churchus	020 8462 8750
	editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk	
Women's Institute	Helen Best	07715 880889
Beavers/Cubs/Scouts	gs127thbromley@gmail.com	
Residents' Association	www.kvra.org.uk	
Village Hall	Tina Lupton	01689 602993
Coffee, Cake & Kids	Victoria Madden	07866 509696
Welcare in Bromley	Caroline Cook	020 8289 5768
Keston C.E. Primary School	Julia Evison	01689 858399
Friends of Keston Common	High Elms Country Park	01689 862815
	www.friendsofkestoncommon.btck.co.uk	
Keston Residents' Road Safety Group	krrsg@hotmail.com	

Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the
love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:39

Thought for the month



God is Love

Flowers, cards and gifts are given as tokens of love being received and expressed. I remember the excitement of looking for the postman on St Valentine's Day while pretending, as an eight or nine-year old not to be interested in love, of being wanted and not forgotten.

The truth is we all want to be loved and, in some way, feel special. St Valentine's Day is one of those days in the year that allows these feelings to be shown and felt.

If you haven't already booked a table for two for 14th Feb – sorry, it's too late now. (Probably!). Restaurants will be crammed with couples, and the restaurateurs will perhaps breathe a prayer of thanks to St Valentine. Florists and card companies have good reason to be grateful to this saint, too. But who was St Valentine and what has he got to do with romance?

There are lots of saints called Valentine, but only two of them seem to fit the bill. They were both churchmen, (one was a priest, the other a bishop), both were martyred in Italy around AD 269, and both are remembered on 14th February. They were probably the

same man. In each case, Valentine healed a child, the child's family became Christians, and then Valentine was beheaded under Claudius Gothicus. So, we can be pretty confident that Valentine was a Christian clergyman martyred by the Roman Empire, like so many others. What is not clear is what that has to do with hearts and flowers.

So as disciples of Jesus we, of course, long to go beyond the power of the romantic and allow the love of God to change our hearts to become more loving in order that we might in some way change the world around us for the better.

Love is an effect. It changes hearts and minds and reconciles enemies. However, love needs to have a cause. 1 John 4:19 gives us the reason for love being in our hearts: ***"We love Him because He first loved us"***. God is love, he created us and redeemed us out of love. I would suggest if we reflect the love of Christ we will be changed. We do this through practice, through living close to Jesus. As metal takes on magnetic properties when kept close to a magnet so we begin to take on the properties of Christ's love as we walk close to him.

As followers of Jesus we recognise the love with which we have been embraced and in turn try to embrace others. According to 1 Corinthians 13 there is no need for the cards or flowers, just an embrace that speaks of a love that simply says – ***"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love"***.

Martin J Chalker, Churchwarden

From the Editor

As I write, it is the greyest of days with rain lashing against the windows and we are taking the Christmas decorations down. All that thinking about and planning for Christmas is over now. No more lights to cheer us on winter evenings but it's probably best to try and think positively and not dwell on the negatives. I shall be going to the Beat the Blues coffee morning next Saturday, which will be an enjoyable event; I read this week about the value to our mental health of going out, so I'll be braving the weather. There is also another Quiz evening coming up soon.

In this issue we look back at some of the Christmas events in Keston as well as things to look forward to. This year we hope to find a new Rector and the work on the church car park is just about completed with beautiful new gates and a walkway with handrail. We have a new Barber shop in the village and discussions are ongoing about Countryside Day. The Common continues to be a source of joy to many with its ever changing flora and fauna throughout the seasons – thank you Bob Harrop for producing an article and lovely photos at such short notice.

What a blessing the community of Keston is – how fortunate we are compared to so many others in the world. Still, within our community let us help to bear one another's loads and not fail to make someone happy if it is within our power to do so – and spring will soon be here!



Sally Churchus

Cover Story

I took this photo of the third pond, just below Fishponds Road, during the Prayer Walk on 16th February 2022. I think the ducks were hopeful we had some food!

Christmas Hamper Winners

Keston church raffled two hampers just before Christmas – the M&S one was won by Pam Broughton from The Dale and the smaller one was won by John Bakker, a member of the congregation who lives on Bromley Common. I expect they've all been gobbled up by now!

Thank You

Thank you to Sam Price, (who runs a stall in Bromley), for once again kindly donating all the oranges for our Christingle Service.

Snowman Photo wanted!

Does anyone have a, (preferably uncropped), photo of a snowman in Keston? If so, please can you send it at the highest resolution, largest file size, to the Editor Sally on editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk. Thank you!

Erratum

Apologies to Ayten who wrote about her Tot's Play class reaching the awards finals in the last issue, her surname was spelt incorrectly and should be Ozgu.

The Search for a new Rector

What would you look for when interviewing for a new Rector for Keston Parish Church? Every single person in the parish will have a particular idea of the perfect person for the job – who of course in practice simply doesn't exist!

The job will be part time ie. three days a week plus Sundays, the same as we had before. Keston Parochial Church Council, (PCC – the group of people from the congregation who help run the church), have put together a Parish Profile for prospective incumbents. This gives an idea of what the parish and church are like and includes some of the qualities that we would desire. A Person Specification has also been written, outlining ideally what we would like in areas such as training, experience, leadership and faith and practical and intellectual skills. These documents will

soon be approved by the Archdeacon, and the job will then be advertised on the Rochester Diocesan website and on the Pathways C of E website.

The 12 members of the PCC have chosen two Parish Representatives by secret ballot – Tricia Coward and Sally Churchus, who will be involved with the Diocese of Rochester when we have some applicants for the post.

Eventually, any candidate who has been offered and accepts the position will probably have to serve three months' notice in their present post, so we are not going to welcome the new Rector any time soon.

But where is God in all of this? Surely this is the most important question of all! This is God's church, and God is in it all from start to finish. He knows our needs, he knows our weaknesses (ouch!) and he has his plans for Keston. So we can be positive! We invite you, (if you are a person of prayer), to pray for those of us involved in the process.



Keston Parish Church Parochial Church Council members at their Christmas social event
From back left, John Bakker, David Cook, Martin Becker, Martin Chalker, Dave Rugg,
Geoff Carr and from left front, Anna Bailey, Pam Thomas, Sally Churchus,
Angela Godfrey, Tricia Coward and Pat Geiger

Christmas 2022 in Keston



Village Christmas Fair

At Keston Village Hall, on the 12th November 2022, Keston Village Residents' Association (KVRA) hosted the first Village Christmas Fair in quite some years. The event was a resounding success, with over 300 adults visiting throughout the day. The weather was also very kind to us, which was a blessing, as Father Christmas had flown in on his sleigh and was parked outside in Santa's Grotto. We had fantastic entertainment throughout the day and are so grateful for all who took part in making the day such an amazing hit.



We cannot thank the companies and local businesses enough for their raffle donations, we were overwhelmed by their generosity and the goodwill of local businesses for preselling tickets.

Thank you to all who came along to enjoy the day and who helped us put together what we hope will be a regular event in the Keston Village diary. The Christmas Fair is booked for Saturday 18th November 2023. Please put the date in your diary!

Raising money for the KVRA means we can continue to decorate the village with our Christmas lights. This year we were able to choose a different set from usual, for the same cost. We hope you enjoyed them.

We also want to rebuild our website as the old one is now not live. If anyone has any expertise in this area and could assist us, then please contact KVRA on kestonvillagera@gmail.com. Thank you.

Shelley Sturdy, Chair KVRA



Christingle Service at Keston Church

The church was packed, and extra chairs needed at 4pm on Christmas Eve for our Christingle Service. There were 182 adults and children, which made for a lovely atmosphere. We also raised an amazing £266.38 for The Children's Society, thank you to all who generously donated.

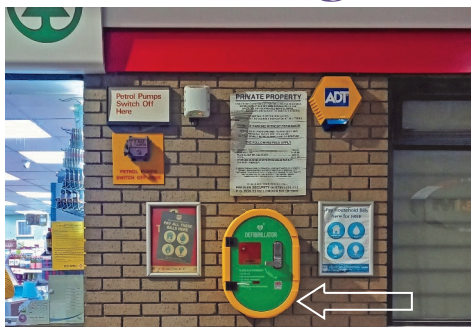
Other Christmas collections taken during the Midnight Communion and on Christmas Day as well as the Carol Service raised £611.53 to be split between Demelza Children's Hospice, Centrepont Homeless charity and Keston church.

Toy Service at Keston Church

At the beginning of December we collected new toys which were taken to the Salvation Army for distribution.



Defib at Garage



Keston Residents' Road Safety Group, (KRRSG), are delighted to report that they have purchased and installed a defibrillator in the Shell garage at the Keston Mark junction, making the fourth such device available in our area.

Acting after extensive research and with advice and support from the London Ambulance Service, a robust and simple to use machine has been provided, which 'talks' the user through the process to be followed.

Located under cover, adjacent to the night service window, the machine is readily available 24 hours a day to residents. Whilst members of KRRSG are undertaking familiarization in its operation, training is not required as it is semi-automatic. We are grateful to the petrol station for allowing the device on their premises.

Where am I?



This phone box is not in a private garden, so where is it?! It looks like the phone is working... with a minimum charge of 60p. (Answer on p22).

Morris Dancers

A huge crowd, (maybe 600 people?), the most ever, turned out on a cold but sunny Boxing Day to watch the Ravensbourne Morris Men dance outside The Greyhound this year. Donations of £496.23 were sent to their chosen charity, Bromley Foodbank. The pub staff did amazingly well to cope, apparently Dave started heating up the mulled wine hours beforehand – 120 bottles were consumed!



Reuben's



Hello, I'm Reuben and you will have noticed that I have recently opened the Barber shop on Heathfield Road. Sally, the Editor, has asked if I would say a bit about myself and my career for the magazine.

Well, firstly I am a local person, I'm 25 and was born and still live in Petts Wood. I have two brothers, an older and a younger one. My mother used to be a hairdresser in New Zealand, so I take after her in that respect although I didn't head straight from school to being a Barber. After attending Ravens Wood School I went to Bromley College to do a sports degree, I then worked in JD Sports in Bromley for about 18 months. I did a spell helping my dad as a cobbler then decided to do an intensive nine week course at the London Barber School which is the UK's leading Barber Academy, which was self-funded. I also did a shaving course, which gave you the basic skills for a cut throat, although like a lot of jobs you learn more from repetition and practise. From there I started work at The Cut in Locksbottom but after four and a half years decided the way forward was to set up on my own as I had gained enough experience. Through a client I gathered that premises were available in Keston, and I knew that some customers came from there. I signed the contract with the landlord

on the 14th October and opened after a complete refurbishment on the 1st December 2022. It has been busy! People mostly book appointments, (which obviously became the norm after Covid), but I try to accommodate walk-ins where possible.

As well as haircuts for all ages, I offer hot towel shaves, nose and ear waxing, and eyebrow and beard trimming. I love what I do, meeting people and talking – the social aspect of the job. I couldn't sit at a desk all day. I enjoy making people look and feel good about themselves and giving them confidence. I enjoy the variety too – from giving a child their first hair cut to people in their 80s or even older.

In my leisure time I enjoy sport, (as you may have guessed), in particular, football which I enjoy both watching and playing as well as boxing, plus I also go to the gym. My favourite foods are Turkish and Japanese and my favourite holiday destination is Dubai – it has everything!

As regards the future, I hope that the business continues to be busy and may look to rent out a chair. Eventually another shop or shops would be one of my dreams, including one in Dubai!

Reuben Cleary
07944 010869



Big Questions

Why do people suffer when they do not deserve it?

To be frank, there is no convincing answer to the question, 'Why am I suffering?' It is something that is experienced by every individual (indeed, everything that lives and breathes).

Jesus, who grieved, agonised and finally died in shameful circumstances, was no exception. It is an unavoidable part of the world we have inherited.

There are a few things that Christians are able to say with confidence. Firstly, you are not suffering because God hates you. Secondly, your suffering will come

wherever there is
suffering, somehow
God is alongside

to an end, and there will be an eternity in which peace and justice will compensate you. And thirdly, knowing the presence of God alongside you will make you stronger as you face painful circumstances.

The Christian faith teaches that God hates suffering. It was not part of His intention for humankind. However, He has created a world that has two features. Both these features are wonderfully beneficial to humans, but also result in a planet where suffering is inevitable.

First, the humans who are the part of creation that God loves are created capable of making choices. To a greater or lesser degree everyone chooses to do some bad things as well as some good

things. Much of the suffering of the world is caused by humans in large numbers choosing together to do things that are evil. Wars, poverty and hatred are not caused by God. They are caused by people who are rejecting the ways of God. Tragically, people who are entirely innocent often suffer most.

Second, the world is held in a delicate balance in which every part of creation is dependent on every other part. This is true from heaving oceans to microscopic seeds to meat-eating animals. Science calls this ecology. A planet that sustains human life as part of this glorious interdependent system needs certain features in its design. They include the movements of the planet's surface that set life in motion, but also cause destruction through earthquakes and volcanoes. They include the viruses that bring death to humans but life to other parts of our ecology.

How do we know that God cares about this? Christians recognise that God's loving commitment to a suffering world was so great that He visited it in person. Jesus was God. He experienced the very best and very worst of being human – living, dying in hideous circumstances and overcoming death. All we know of Jesus leads Christians to believe that wherever there is suffering, somehow God is alongside each human, hurting with them. Although Christians find pain terrible and hard to understand, this belief allows them to cling to the possibility that suffering is not meaningless and death will not be the end.

For answers to questions about Christianity see www.christianity.org.uk.

Article from Parish Pump

Church Services



Woodcut of Keston church for 1970s promotional material showing south side porch (original entrance) to which the church hall is now joined

Do join us, we have a variety of ministers come to take our services.

1st Sunday of each month

Informal Communion Service

All other Sundays

10am Holy Communion

Third Sunday of the month

10am Communion service plus prayer for healing and wholeness if wanted.

The Keston Prayer

Merciful God, as we trust in your love; increase our faith, feed us with your word and strengthen us for service.

Bless our community.

Make this place holy, to heal and transform all who come.

In the precious name of Jesus our Saviour. Amen

From the Registers

Memorial Service

26th November Olive May Hayler (aged 91 years)

Burial of Ashes

5th November Evelyn Janet Jane Sharman (aged 77yrs)

26th November Olive May Hayler (aged 91 years)

From Dope to Hope



I, (Raff Chaves), was ordained in July 2022 at St. Paul's cathedral. It has however, been a journey and a half to get there, after 13 years of drug addiction, crime and being an atheist.

I grew up in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and came to the UK at the age of 17 to escape from my family so I could use drugs. I was the only one in my family to ever get involved with anything like that: my dad is a successful lawyer, my mother a retired dentist and both my siblings helicopter pilots, and none of them ever had a problem with addiction. I went through some severe trauma from the age of four till seven, and at the age of 14 was kidnapped and taken hostage by a man that was pointing a gun at me for several hours and threatening to kill me.

I also experienced spiritual abuse in the church that I was taken to as a child. The church paid for actors to pretend to be disabled, and they would get miraculously healed in 'healing sessions' at the church, and the Pastor of the church was also later found to be having affairs with married women from the church.

All this was too much to handle, and the way that I found to cope with it was to use substances to numb my pain and trauma. Much to my family's horror, drug addiction led me into a life of crime. I was arrested multiple times, dealt drugs, and harmed myself and many others along the way. I was close to death several times, from overdoses, nearly had a heart attack because of drug abuse by the age of 17 and was in the middle of shootings a few times in Brazil.

One day, I realised that drugs were no longer numbing my problems. I found myself in a position where I could no longer live with, or without drugs, and that's when I thought of ending it all – but God had other ideas! Although I thought I was too far gone, I eventually came to understand and experience that for God, there's no one too far gone, from where His love can't rescue them.

After a failed attempt to get free from drugs by attending a rehab in Brazil at the age of 21, I relapsed not long after. I never wanted to stop using drugs, but only 'certain' drugs. I believed drinking and smoking cannabis was okay for me, and before I knew, I was dragged back into a hole, and I nearly ended my life.

I found a 12 step fellowship called Narcotics Anonymous, (NA), where for the first time I found people like me, who understood me, and by following the programme suggested by those in recovery, I stayed clean.

I wish that was the end of the story, but it wasn't. I found myself free from drugs for two and a half years, but addicted to everything else, and as depressed and broken as I was when on drugs. I realised that the problem wasn't



Raff and Louise's wedding in May 2022
at Keston parish church

drugs, that in fact alcohol and drugs were my solution, the medication I found to cope with a life of trauma. I also came to understand that a big part of the problem was myself, my choices and attitudes towards the way I saw the world and my place in it.

When at my lowest, free from drugs but totally lost, I knew I needed something, and something bigger than myself. A Pastor who attended NA suggested that I start attending church and seek a relationship with Jesus, but I wasn't keen due to the experience of spiritual abuse I had had as a child. This Pastor then helped me to understand that I didn't hate God as I thought, but that I hated and was let down by men that misrepresented God. The Pastor said that if I didn't encounter God in the first three months of attending church, that I could totally give up on going, which was a very bold claim to make, but one that worked. I

encountered the Holy Spirit in my first month of attending church, and started a process that was going to transform my life and set me on a journey with a life full of meaning and purpose.

I have also dealt with mental health issues alongside my addiction problem, and was diagnosed with ADHD, OCD as well as PTSD.

Today I lead a church in East London, called All Hallows Bow, where I also started and lead a ministry called Our Father's House, which serves as a bridge between 12 step recovery programmes and the church, a place where addicts can be introduced to a relationship with Jesus. I also run a podcast, where I covers topics such as: OCD recovery, addiction recovery, faith and much more on www.youtube.com/@fromdopetohope.

Today I can hardly believe I am an ordained member of the Clergy in the Church of England, was married at Keston church in 2022 to my beautiful wife Lou and am living a life full of meaning and purpose, helping those that are in darkness to also encounter the light of Jesus that I have found.

Raff Vinhas Chaves



After his ordination in St Paul's with wife Louise and mother-in-law Sally Churchus

The Wildlife of Keston Ponds and the Ravensbourne River

Keston is blessed with a pure spring at Caesar's Well that has never been known to run dry. Flowing out at the junction where the free-draining gravels of the Blackheath Beds meet the more loamy Woolwich Beds, the river Ravensbourne begins its 11 mile journey to meet the mighty Thames at Deptford Creek.



Common toads mating, male on top

The section between the source, and where it flows under the Croydon Road towards Norman Park, has been much altered over the years by different landowners, but still manages to retain a wild spirit in parts. The ponds were probably dug out as gravel pits and have served as swimming pools as well as the reservoir for Holwood House in the 19th century.

The spring flows first into the upper pond, where the local amphibians emerge from their winter refuges in mid February/early March to serenade their mates and lay their eggs. There is a good population of Common Toads, as well



Toad spawn

as Common Frogs and Smooth Newts. A stroll at dusk with a torch may reveal them floating in the shallow areas or crossing paths. Look out for the strings of toad spawn in the weed, as well as the large clumps of frogspawn. At the south end of this pond, you can see the introduced Cape Pondweed, *Aponogeton distachyos*, cultivated widely in South Africa for its edible buds.

This pond and the main fishing pond below contain a healthy population of native fish and are a popular destination for anglers intent on catching the large carp and pike present. Over the years, the ponds have also acquired some non-native species, such as Turkish Crayfish, terrapins and Koi carp, but as yet, not to the detriment of the local species. In summer there is a wonderful display of White Water Lilies, *Nymphaea alba*, covering the still water.



Cape pondweed

Many birds are resident on all four ponds, and you can expect to see Mandarin Duck, Mallards, Black-headed Gulls, Coots and Moorhens at different seasons, as well as the occasional Grey Heron, Teal, Dabchick and Cormorant.



Turkish crayfish

A small but beautiful resident, the Grey Wagtail, can be seen bobbing and ducking in shallow water edges, and you may be very lucky to catch a glimpse of a Kingfisher on the wildlife pond below Fishponds Road.

Also on this pond, the rare Willow Emerald Damselfly can be seen in



Grey wagtail

summer, along with many other dragonflies and damselflies. You may be rewarded by a rare sight of Hobbies chasing them above the water.

After sunset, watch the sky for a glimpse of Pipistrelle and Serotine Bats silently hunting insects over the pond and listen for Tawny Owls calling in the trees.

Continue down the river to the pond below Ravensbourne House. On the left in the muddy river channel, look out for Celery-Leaved Buttercup and Greater Celandine. Many plants were introduced here by the Victorian owners of the



Willow Emerald Damselfly

House – butterburs, bamboos and rhododendrons, which need constant control by the Friends of Keston Common/idverde work teams to prevent them swamping our native flora.

The river then runs down some landscaped waterfalls, recreating the bubbling brook it must have been in earlier days and then on through deep channels to the chestnut coppices of Padmall Wood, with moist green banks of Hard Fern, *Blechnum spicant*, mosses and liverworts. A truly special place of peace.

Bob Harrop

I'm Fine, Thank You!

There is nothing the matter with me,
I'm as healthy as I can be.

I have arthritis in both my knees
And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze.
My pulse is weak, and my blood is thin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

Arch supports I have for my feet,
Or I wouldn't be able to be on the street,
Sleep is denied me night after night,
But every morning I find I'm all right.
My memory is failing, my head's in a spin
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

The moral is this as my tale I unfold –
That for you and me who are growing old,
It's better to say "I'm fine" with a grin,
Than to let folks know the shape we are in.

How do I know that my youth is all spent?
Well, my "Get up and go" got up and went.
But I don't really mind when I think with a grin,
Of all the grand places my "Get up" has bin.

Old age is golden I've heard it said
But, sometimes I wonder as I get into bed.
With my ears in the drawer, my teeth in a cup,
My eyes on the table until I wake up.
Ere sleep overtakes me, I say to myself,
"Is there anything else I could lay on the shelf?"

When I was young my slippers were red,
I could kick my heels over my head.
When I was older my slippers were blue,
But still I could dance the whole night through.
Now I am old my slippers are black,
I walk to the store and puff my way back.

I get up each morning and dust off my wits
And pick up the paper and read the "Obits",
If my name is missing I know I'm not dead,
So I have a good breakfast and go back to bed.

Anon

Tragedy in a Cornfield by Chalkpit

The day started as any other for John Stoll as he set off from his home at 28 Verdant Lane, Catford where he lived with his widowed mother. He was employed as a tractor driver by Mr E. T. Banfield, a farmer who lived at 18 Shawfield Park, Bromley. His job for the day on December 2nd 1943 was to take a trailer load of barley to Parhams, a field behind the bungalows on the west side of Leaves Green Road. Having done that he was to take an empty trailer to an adjoining field before returning to the farm. However, before returning to the farm John Stoll met with a fatal accident.

The following is the statement by Mr William Allen Evans from the Coroner's Court: *Mr William Allen Evans, 106 Westerham Road, (now Leaves Green Road), stated that he noticed the tractor being operated in the field, which adjoined his house. When he first saw it there was a trailer attached. Later he went into his bathroom and through the window saw Stoll standing on the tractor. There were trailer racks on the tractor then and he noticed Stoll bend down and put the tractor in reverse. As he did so the racks were raised up and the man disappeared. The tractor continued moving backwards. After a lapse of a few seconds he could not see Stoll and then shouted to his wife that the man must have had an accident. His*

wife hurried to the spot in the field but she could not do anything in the way of helping Stoll.

Dr John Rohan was in the locality and at 11.40 am he went to the scene of the accident where he found the victim under the rear axle of the vehicle. He was lying face down in the mud and his death must have been instantaneous due to multiple injuries.

Arriving at the scene next was Inspector James Fraser and he too confirmed that the victim was lying face down with his right arm underneath his body and in the centre of the tractor's

back axle. The Inspector requested the R.A.F. at Biggin Hill to help and they dispatched a motor crane which was able to lift the tractor enabling the

trapped body to be retrieved.

The Coroner concluded that from statements submitted to the Court that the trailer racks were placed on the tractor where there was not provision for them and a chain from one of them caught in the back wheel of the tractor and pulled John Stoll to his death.

Mr Banfield stated that John Stoll had been in his employment for nine months and was an experienced tractor driver. The tractor, a Fordson Major, was in good order, fitted with rubber tyres and mechanically examined every week. The Coroner recorded a verdict of Death by Accidental Causes.



Keston Mother and Toddler Group



Mother and Baby Club with Joan far right in white beret

In 1958, after the birth of her first son, Joan Sheath started the Keston Mother and Baby Club in Keston Village Hall to ensure that the local mums could meet up and support each other. It was officially opened by the Mayor. Joan lived on Heathfield Road and died, aged 95 at the end of 2020.

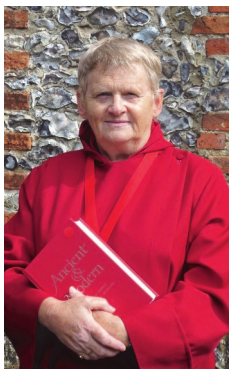
She was always interested in helping the local community. She was Secretary for the Friends of Coney Hall School for children with Spina Bifida and much involved with fundraising as well as being a volunteer. Joan was also known to many as the Head Dinner Lady and first aider at Hayes Primary School.

Nowadays, Coffee, Cake and Kids is a voluntary run parent/carer toddler group for babies and children from 0-Reception age. It runs on Tuesday mornings during term time from

9.30-11.30 at Keston Village Hall and it gives children and parents/carers the opportunity to socialise in a warm spacious environment. Entrance is £2 per child with discounts for multiple children. The children sit at snack time which is a simple healthy snack such as fruit or breadsticks. Parents and carers can buy tea/coffee and homemade cake as they wish and proceeds go towards the hall costs. It's a great opportunity to meet new people whilst your children play and practise their social skills. Please contact Charlie or Victoria on 07513 841290 or 07866 509696 if you would like to come.



Vergers and Virges



After more than eight years of serving as Verger for Keston Parish Church, Pat Geiger, (left), has retired and Tonia Crouch, (right), has kindly taken over the role. But what actually is a Verger?!

Duties

Historically, Vergers were responsible for the order and upkeep of the house of worship, including care of the buildings, furnishings, sacred relics, preparations for services, maintaining order and grave digging. At Keston, nowadays, the main role is one of hospitality, welcome and opening the church for weddings and funerals. During the latter, the Verger ensures the church is warm, clean and tidy and can help with handing out Orders of Service and hymn books etc. They can assist with disability access if needed and guide people to find their seats and toilets. Once the service is over they are responsible for securing the premises. I wondered how long women have been allowed to be Vergers in the Church of England, and the C of E Guild of Vergers suggested that maybe women took on the role when their husbands/fathers went off to fight. A search of their records revealed reference to

Charlotte Cross who was Verger in Birmingham 1931-1943 and Alberta Verills from Chelsfield, Kent, in 1936.

Name

The title of Verger comes from the ceremonial rod they traditionally carried, called a *virge*, which is from the Latin *virga* meaning branch, staff, rod. The maces used in the House of Lords and the House of Commons are examples of a modern use of the medieval virge. In the past, to maintain order a Verger may have needed to use their verge to control animals or unruly crowds.

Robes

Typically Vergers wear a black gown over a black cassock, but at Keston they just tend to wear their red choir robe!

Remuneration

Vergers are sometimes salaried and employed full time as well as voluntary/part time or ad hoc. The money may be provided wholly or partly out of the fees payable on marriages, burials and other occasions. Some Vergers waive their fees and donate them to the church.

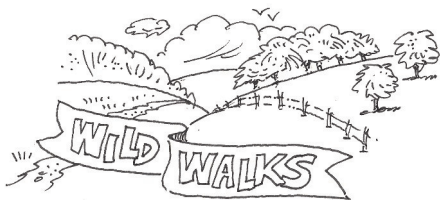
What's the difference between a Verger and a Sexton?

This is a tricky question! Not a lot, really, but a Sexton's duties include looking after the building and/or surrounding graveyard plus bell ringing whereas a Verger also acts as an attendant during ceremonies. Duties vary enormously from place to place.

TV Vergers

Older readers may remember the bumbling Verger in Dad's Army called Maurice Yeatman, played by Edward Sinclair. Also, The Vicar of Dibley featured Emma Chambers as the dim-witted but well intentioned Alice Tinker.

Sally Churchus



Old House Farm(house) on Leaves Green Road near The King's Arms, the early Georgian farmhouse which had the barns

When I turn right and walk up the field at the end of my garden I come to what remains of Old House Farm. In 1910 this was owned by Edward Cresswell and was listed as a dairy farm. Strangely in 1914 it was listed as Veronica Cresswell – referred to as ‘unpaid domestic’ – amusing! Did the outbreak of war have a bearing on this? Sadly the farm has long ceased to exist.

In the 1970s it belonged to the firm of Oldby who were retailers of sanitary ware and had several outlets in south east London, in Lewisham and elsewhere.

When I moved here in the early 70s it was still operating and I have photos of the children at the end of the garden with inquisitive young cows jostling for position the other side of the fence. Most of the farm was unused and the

great barn, (now a posh dwelling), was dilapidated with the roof at the rear collapsing and sagging – very sad! I actually crept in one day and it was like the ‘Mary Celeste’ – equipment and tools still where they had been left. In fact I purloined a couple of items which I thought may come in handy in the garden some day.

The workers consisted of a young ‘up and coming’ farmer named Bessant and the old original cowman, both of whom lived opposite The Crown public house. The old fellow eventually retired and moved away, as did the young farmer.

The farm then changed hands again and was owned by a Major Hitch – yes, you couldn’t make it up! His side-kick was a modest and likeable man named Rupert Bulimore who, as time went by, would ask me to assist in various tasks. As the farm changed to cereal crops and hay making I would act as an extra hand at hay-making time etc. Very enjoyable.

The farm then changed hands again and was owned by a Major Hitch

Eventually, as the airfield expanded, the property was acquired by the owners of the aforementioned business who leased it to a farmer based elsewhere. It continued to function as before.

Then came the fatal fire! The date of the fire I don’t recall other than the barns were full of hay bales. It occurred late in the evening, and as is the case with hay it took an inordinate time to extinguish and the sickly smell of smouldering hay took many days to



Haymaking in the 1920s. Not for Ron Funnell a noisy tractor, but the steady pace of a heavy horse, which provided most of the power on local farms. In the background, the old and new barns of Old House Farm can be seen.

fade away. To me that was – to make a pun...the final straw!

As the years went by, nature, as is its habit, healed the scars. The great holes in the roof let in the rain and both in and out of the barns life began anew. Eventually brambles, (always the first), took hold. Then saplings grew and the whole place developed the sort of charm you see in old engravings of ruins during Victorian times. Every summer in recent years I've enjoyed picking blackberries to benefit from later in the year either as lovely jam or in tasty puddings...mmm.

But – as I write, the demolition squad have moved in and clearance is under way. It looks like the final end of Old House Farm. The owners, rumour has it, need extra parking for the air-field. The end!

Richard Geiger

If it's true that we are
here to help others, then
what exactly are the
others here for?

Regular Events

Prayer Walks

We meet on the Green opposite The Greyhound pub at 9.30am on the 1st Tuesday and 3rd Wednesday in the month. We usually return about 11am.

Men's pub social

Do join us at 7pm at The Greyhound on the 3rd Wednesday of the month for social chat, a few drinks and a meal for those who want it.

Book Reading Fellowship

Come and discuss books with some Christian content that you have read at 2pm on Monday 20th February. Please ring Sally on 020 8462 8750 if you would like to come.

Keston Book Club

Our meetings are on the first Wednesday of the month at 7pm in The Fox. More information from 07503 268001 or angelahollamby@gmail.com.

New Keston WI

We meet from 1.30pm-3.30pm in Keston Village Hall on the 2nd Wednesday in the month.

Friends of Keston Common

We meet in the Westerham Road car park at 10am on Friday mornings for tasks that need doing including litter picking. Please do join us. Our next open meeting in on Wednesday 15th March at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Room of Keston Village Hall, Heathfield Road.

Mental Wellbeing Coffee Morning

Join us for chat over tea/coffee and cake with a mental health professional at hand. We will hear tips about how we can keep ourselves well on Saturday 18th March 10am-12 noon in Keston Church Hall.

Magazine Deadline

Please send photos and articles for the April/May 2023 issue of The Keston Magazine to the Editor, Sally Churchus, by 3rd March at the very latest via email to editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk or contact her to discuss ideas on Tel: 020 8462 8750. Thank you.

Laughlines

☺ Some children share their insights about love:

- Love is that first feeling you feel before all the bad stuff gets in the way.
- Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other.
- Love is when you go out and give

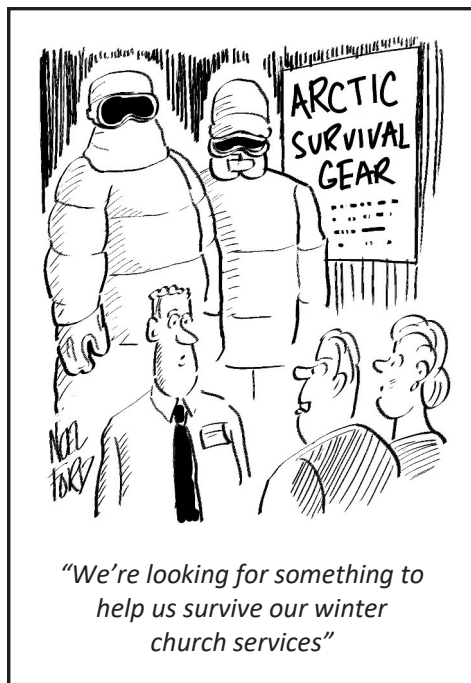
somebody most of your chips without making them give you any of theirs.

- Love is what makes you smile when you're tired.
- Love is when mummy gives daddy the best piece of chicken.
- There are two kinds of love – our love and God's love. But God makes both kinds of them.

☺ Giving up for Lent

At the end of the pre-Lent sermon, the Rector suggested, as an example to the rest of the community, that the congregation should worship in an unheated church for the whole of Lent. As they made their way into the chill Sunday air the Rector asked one member of the congregation what she had decided to give up for Lent. "Church" she replied firmly.

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Quiz Night

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