

# The Keston Magazine

News of your Parish and Village



August/September 2023

# Keston Parish Church

Church Rd., Keston, BR2 6HT [kestonparishchurch.org.uk](http://kestonparishchurch.org.uk)



## Rector

There is currently a vacancy

## Licensed Lay Minister & Parish Administrator Churchwarden

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## Verger

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Organist & Choirmaster	David Cook	020 8289 5768
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Women's Institute	Helen Best	07715 880889
Beavers/Cubs/Scouts	<a href="mailto:gsl27thbromley@gmail.com">gsl27thbromley@gmail.com</a>	
Residents' Association	<a href="mailto:kestonvillagera@gmail.com">kestonvillagera@gmail.com</a>	
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
	<a href="http://www.friendsofkestoncommon.btck.co.uk">www.friendsofkestoncommon.btck.co.uk</a>	
Keston Residents' Road Safety Group	<a href="mailto:krrsg@hotmail.com">krrsg@hotmail.com</a>	

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. *Genesis 1:27*



# Thought for the month



## Do you have a 'Passport to Heaven'?

It seems that even though it is well over three years since Brexit, it still crops up in the news. One result of Brexit has been a big increase in UK passport holders applying for dual citizenship – I have friends who have used their Irish grandparents as a way of gaining a second passport. The UK allows dual citizenship/dual nationality, whereas other countries do not. Every person is a citizen of at least one country, unless you happen to be stateless of course.

Now in Northern Ireland, but not in the other parts of the UK, every citizen born here can be a citizen of Northern Ireland *or* of Ireland *or* of both. So, after Brexit, those with two passports can be outside the EU (with a UK passport) and yet still be part of the EU (with an Irish passport). We have the “Good Friday Agreement” to thank for this quirk. For many of those unhappy ‘Remainers’ in Great Britain this is ‘passport heaven’ – having the best of both worlds.

I was thinking of passports this month as I will be travelling for work, and whilst reading my Bible, a passage from Philippians 3:20 stood out:

*But our citizenship is in heaven.*

The real ‘passport heaven’ is a passport to heaven itself. Even a passport to the most desirable country in the world doesn’t remotely come close to a passport to heaven! But as no one is made an automatic citizen of heaven through birth, there is a little ‘naturalisation’ to be completed first.

Mankind has no justification whatsoever in seeking a passport to heaven. We have no qualifying reason for requesting such a passport. We weren’t born there, we can’t buy our way to heaven and we meet none of the entry criteria! The Bible is clear that no sinful person can enter heaven.

But, (and what an important ‘but’ this is), because the Lord Jesus Christ died on Calvary’s cross to take away our sin, there is a route open for us to gain such a passport! If we believe Jesus did this for us, freely accept that we are sinners, and humbly ask that our sins would be forgiven, then forgiven they will be! (A type of ‘naturalisation’ process).

Jesus is our passport to heaven. We can’t get to heaven by any other means. *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.* (Acts 4:12).

The question is, have you taken up the offer of citizenship in heaven?

Martin J Chalker

# From the Editor

My friends and acquaintances will already be aware that I have recently become a grandma – I now have a wonderful grandson called Rio. What a privilege and a blessing! This issue has several articles about families, from the family of Vera Heath (centenarian), to Nicholas Dixon finding a memorial in the church of one of his ancestors, to the young family and experiences of Anika Toomer as well as information about what is going on in the church family at Keston.

At this time of year many of us are thinking about holidays, be they full blown world cruises or a night or two away in this country. Hopefully these will be enjoyable and give us a chance to come back refreshed with new ideas and renewed energy. Happy holidays!

Sally Churchus



# Cover Story

I spotted the family on the front cover enjoying the warm afternoon and the girls eating their candyfloss and thought it summed up the KestFest day – a great community event, a happy time with family and friends. The photo is of Jessica and Jamie with their girls, Patsy who is in Reception at Keston School and Darcy who will be starting in September. Thank you for letting me take the photo and use it.

Sally Churchus

# Magazine Donations

If you enjoy The Keston Magazine and would like to make a donation towards the costs we would be very grateful. BACS transfers with reference ‘Magazine donation’ can be made to Sort Code 20-05-57 Account 30543683. Please use the envelope enclosed for cash or cheques made payable to **‘Keston Parochial Church Council’**. (The bank will not accept variations). If you are a UK tax payer and fill in the Gift Aid slip, we can recover an extra 25p for every £1, whichever way you pay. Thank you.



I wish to Gift Aid my donation to **‘Keston Parochial Church Council’** to help meet the expenses of The Keston Magazine

Title	Surname	Forenames
House No/Name	Postcode	Date

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference. Please notify Keston Parish Church if you •want to cancel this declaration •change your name or home address •no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. Charities Ref: X90568



# One final Bender!



Vera Heath

No, not some sort of alcoholic weekend at a 60s rock concert, but the name coined, (possibly by Joan Wright), for the owners of the new homes in the cul-de-sac of Keston Gardens. Built in 1960 on a green field site behind The Greyhound and a mobile home park, (now Windmill Drive), this development of 29 three and four bedroom houses, small by today's standards, but then exceptional in a village setting, quickly attracted families keen to move out of town to more rural locations.

Vera and Stan Heath had met in the Air Force and married in 1945. In September 1960 they moved to Keston from Bromley North with their four children, Anthony, Margaret, Janet and Lynda and took up residence as the first family in the road, with building work still going on around them.

My parents were among the last to become 'Benders' in March 1961 when their smaller three-bedroomed property next door was purchased for what – my grandfather always claimed – was the 'extortionate' price of £5,200.

At this time the idea of landscaping seems to not have occurred to the developers and it was up to the new owners to cultivate the rough land and

design the 'garden'. For Vera and Stan this involved terracing the steeply sloping site, removing numerous willow trees along the banks of the stream, a tributary of The Ravensbourne, and providing a flat lawn for the children to play on. This initial work was completed with help from Frank Bradford next door, but they adored the garden and continued to make improvements for many years.

They also soon set about extending the property by adding a den/television room. This trend for improvement was replicated by almost all the owners in the '60s with my mum and dad adding a double storey 'playroom' and two tiny bedrooms in February 1963, a very cold winter to be without walls! Still today, owners of Keston Gardens' generous sized plots extend and improve. Only a few houses resemble the relatively modest homes originally conceived.

It wasn't just the sharing of a new life in a village location which seems to have brought these families together. There was something special about the community feel of 'The Benders'... think 'Call the Midwife' with less financial hardship. They happily shared their many skills and their friendship often extended to childminding on an ad-hoc basis, as well as an apparently inexhaustible round of parties!

Vera Heath celebrated her 100th Birthday on 2nd July 2023 and I would like to join family and friends offering heartfelt congratulations for reaching this significant milestone and suggest that, 63 years since moving in, there must be something special about Keston that kept her here!

Claire Becker

# Kestfest Remembered 24/6/2023



Sophie and boys with winning dog Lala



Sweetie pot tombola for all ages



Ravensbourne Morris Men



Sarah Naessens and girls



Keston WI working hard on their stall

## Keston's got talent!

Keston C.E. Primary School are very proud of their Year 4 Class who came 9th from over 1,000 schools who took part in the Online Multiplication Tables Check cup in May this year.

Also, in June, the school took part in the London Youth Games Primary Golf Finals at Gunnersbury Park Sports Hub. Keston represented Bromley with 21 other London Boroughs taking part. Positions are not confirmed but Keston came either 5th or 6th which is amazing. They were also mentioned as a team showing courage, honesty, and resilience. Well done to all!

## Play Area Upgrade

I am delighted to announce that our bid to the Jubilee Parks Fund for improvements to the play area at the end of Lakes Road has been approved by the Council. In essence the plans replace the carousel with an inclusive spinner and add three new items of play. We will also look to repaint some items and generally freshen-up the area. There may be changes as the project progresses but hopefully we will be able to deliver what is proposed within budget and timescale. Currently there are no exact dates for implementation other than an end point of December 2024.

I would like to thank everyone who helped in the application process, in particular Cllr Alexa Michael for her support and Gail Spencer (wife of Paul from Heathfields) and Julia Evison, (Headteacher, Keston C.E. Primary), for collecting the signatures.

Larry Herbert, Chair of The Friends of Keston Common

## Post Box Toppers

The Royal Mail noticed post box toppers appearing over the Christmas period in 2012 but they really took off during the pandemic and spread widely across the country. One was even featured on ITV's Coronation Street on Christmas Day 2022.

Many of you will have noticed that since Easter there have been post box toppers on our pillar box outside the old post office on Heathfield Road. These are crocheted or knitted 'hats' for our pillar box which have commemorated Easter, The Coronation of King Charles and the current one is simply Summer.

This activity would be wonderful if it was a community project. If you knit, crochet, or would like to learn and want to join a group to make toppers for our village pillar box or are interested in finding out more please get in touch by emailing me at [thekestonvillagenews@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:thekestonvillagenews@yahoo.co.uk). We could meet once a month, to work on the toppers.

Also, if anyone has any wool that they don't need, any contributions no matter how small would be greatly appreciated for use in future toppers. Thank you.

Leela





# Holwood Farm Shop Welcome a New Butcher



Alan Franck, Butcher

We are delighted to welcome our new Butcher, Alan Franck, into the Farm Shop family. He brings with him more than 30 years experience and passion as a butcher. He began training at the age of 15 and worked in South Africa and Portugal, until he moved with his family to the UK in 2013. Alan has an impressive skill set and is an expert on the subject of English and South American cuts of meat. He has been a judge at the World Steak Challenge for the last seven years.

## **A message from Alan Franck**

It is just a few short weeks since I joined the team at Holwood Farm Shop, bringing you a brand new range of traditional English and South African meat products which are causing a stir in the community and receiving excellent feedback from our customers.

The barbeque, (or braai, as we say in S.A.), season is here and we have a fantastic selection of marinated beef, lamb, pork and chicken along with homemade kebabs and koftas to tempt your tastebuds and excite your palate.

Just like Sarah and Gary, I am passionate about the sourcing of high quality produce and, over the years, I have built up relationships with many local farmers, who share my belief that well treated animals produce the tastiest meat.

Our beef comes from two local farms near Detling and Shoreham. We use mature dairy cows which are no longer producing milk and are grazing on pasture, where they fatten up on a natural diet of grass. The meat they produce is rich in nutrients and really packed with flavour – a flavour that only comes with slow growth and real maturity.

I have also created a “Holwood Signature Sausage”, based on an Old English recipe. This sausage has a distinctive herby taste and a minimum pork content of 85% – it is really meaty! An all round sausage for breakfast and particularly good in casseroles.



Holwood Signature Sausage

# My Faith Journey



I didn't grow up as a Christian. My grandparents went to church, but neither of my parents did. My mum and I would occasionally go to Carol services, but mainly because we enjoyed the singing. I've always been a keen reader, and one year I decided to work my way through a list of 'A Hundred Books to Read Before You Die'. Number two or three on the list was the Bible, (I can't remember what the others were, and I certainly didn't get through all one hundred!). I started reading the Bible, and became utterly convinced by The New Testament; that not only had Jesus existed, but that he was also the son of God.

My husband and I lived in Chislehurst at the time, and decided to start going to our local church. The church was running something called an Alpha Course, which looks at the claims made in the Bible, discusses their meaning, and peoples' beliefs. It helped me to understand some of the more challenging aspects of belief, and introduced me to other members of the church. The church had small groups of

people which met once a week in an evening to look at a particular section of the Bible, or an aspect of faith. This really helped me to grow my understanding of Christianity, understand other people's beliefs more deeply, and make some great friends.

My husband and I have moved around since joining our first church, working in Singapore and moving to Keston. Wherever we've lived we've continued to be part of a church. Going to church grounds me, gives me a sense of belonging, and helps me feel closer to God. There have been some incredibly difficult times in our lives where the last thing I wanted to do was pray or go to church. After the loss of our first child I was too angry to go to church for months. In the end I was able to see that God was there to help me, rather than to blame for what had happened.

## There have been some incredibly difficult times

Even when I've felt furthest from God, I've never been able to deny his existence. Talking to Him through prayer and being part of a church ultimately make me feel better and more complete.

We're now part of Keston church, who could not have been more welcoming to us and our baby daughter. We both sing in the choir, (albeit taking it in turns so one of us can look after the baby), and feel very much at home there. I hope our daughter will enjoy growing up as part of a church, and will find as much peace and comfort from it as I do.

Annika Toomer

# Giving made easy



Geoff Carr, left, and Martin Becker who have sourced and set up the machines

As a way to enable giving in the new more cashless society, Keston church has purchased two machines that allow the use of credit or debit cards to donate funds to support the running of the church.

The large machine by the door of the church has pre set donation amounts so you can simply press a button, tap your card when asked and the donation goes into the bank. It is also possible to set your own amount if the pre set ones are not the amount you want to contribute. This means during normal and more importantly special services, (such as Baptisms, Carol Service), people who have no cash are still able to give to the church. The second device is smaller and therefore more portable so can be used in the hall or even outside the church eg. for KestFest. This machine requires an amount to be entered first and then a card can be inserted or touched on the machine and once again the payment goes into the bank.

Please try this out when you are next at the church, it is simple to use. There are people you can ask who will demonstrate what you need to do if you are unsure to start with. Thank you in advance for your donations.

Geoff Carr

## From the Registers

### Baptisms

14th May	Ivy Sarah Rebecca O'Connor (dob: 9/10/22)
28th May	Noah Jonathan Brownlee (dob: 13/9/22)
2nd July	Ralph James Negus (dob: 15/1/2017)
	Neive Lucy-Mae Negus (dob: 3/10/2015)
	Austin Stephen Wallman (dob: 23/1/2012)
9th July	James Thomas Battista (dob: 10/9/2020)

### Funeral

28th April	John Bakker (aged 70 years)
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### Burial of Ashes

3rd April	Cecil Remington Allard (aged 95 years)
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# Church Services



View of west end of Keston Parish Church

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

## **1st Sunday of each month**

10am Informal Non Communion Service

As of 3rd September, we shall be having a non-communion, informal service on the first Sunday in the month. Rather than using the Service books, we will have the whole service printed in booklets so it is easy to follow. Singing will be accompanied by the keyboard rather than the organ and bags of toys for children will be available if wanted. We hope to welcome those who are not familiar with Church of England services to a shorter, less formal style of worship. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be served in the adjoining church hall afterwards. Do join us!

## **All other Sundays**

10am Holy Communion

## **Third Sunday of the month**

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

## **Harvest Festival, Sunday 1st October**

10am Holy Communion. Collection of non-perishable food for Bromley Foodbank and cash donations for Welcare in Bromley.

# The Chief Justice under the carpet



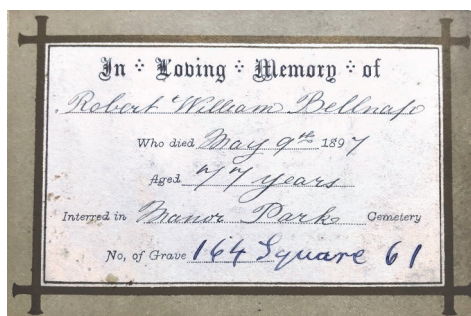
Site of memorial, shape just visible at the bottom of the steps to the chancel

Most visitors to Keston church must be entirely unaware of the highly significant medieval monument that is situated at the bottom of its chancel steps. Underneath a carpet is the probable grave of Sir Robert Belknap, lord of the manor of Keston in the second half of the fourteenth century. He was a lawyer and judge who was appointed Chief Justice of the Common Pleas but was temporarily exiled to Ireland by King Richard II after he challenged the authority of the king in relation to Parliament. On the tomb is a floriated cross and a French inscription partially deciphered by the antiquary A. J. Kempe in 1830. It appears to refer to Belknap's eventual return from Ireland and thankfulness for reposing at Keston. The words 'revenue de Irelande' in the inscription

means that it is almost certain that Belknap lies here. I think that the coincidence of time, place and wording leaves no genuine room for doubt in this matter.

The name Belknap, a variant of Bel(l)nap, is a very important one in my family history. My great-great-great-great-grandfather, Robert William Edward Bellnap, was a paper stainer and costermonger in East London who died in 1897. Despite having been married four times, he had no surviving sons, and the surname died out in Britain. One of his great-granddaughters named her bungalow on Canvey Island 'Belnap', trying perhaps to keep the name alive. Yet in the United States, there are many Belnaps and even a Belnap Family Organization, since one branch of the family emigrated to Massachusetts in the 1630s. An early and prominent member of the Latter-day Saints Church was named Gilbert Belnap. I have had the pleasure of connecting with some American cousins. While researching my family in 2015, I came across a letter from A. J. Kempe to librarian Sir Henry Ellis, (whose mother was a Bellnap), about the grave at Keston. Ever since, I have been trying to discover more. As I am now a professional genealogist and house historian, I am well placed to carry out such research.

Although the precise genealogy remains to be worked out, I think that there can be no doubt that Bellnap is a unique surname, and that every person who has Bellnap ancestry must be a relation of Sir Robert Belknap, the judge who was Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in the fourteenth century. This is



Memorial card of Robert Bellnap  
(my great-great-great-great-grandfather)  
from 1897

because the surviving branches of the Bellnap family were by the seventeenth century living in and around the small Hertfordshire town of Sawbridgeworth, where Robert Belknap had owned a part of the manor in 1369. However, Belknap had strong associations with the vicinity of Keston. In 1351, he had held court at Limpsfield in Surrey under the Statute of Labourers, a law enacted after the Black Death to punish labourers who asked for higher wages. The following year, he was appointed steward of Battle Abbey. This meant that he was responsible for managing the Abbey's extensive holdings across Sussex, Kent and Surrey, including Limpsfield and its dependent manor of Willey (part of Chaldon).

Not only did Belknap become lord of the manor in Keston; he was also lord of the manor in nearby West Wickham and briefly held part of the adjoining manor of Cudham. Additionally, he had other Kent manors and was closely connected to the priory of St Andrew in Rochester, which was then located at the cathedral. When he was exiled to Ireland, Belknap had all of his estates confiscated. After about a decade in exile, he was allowed to return to

England and regained a part of the manor of Lidsing he had formerly owned. He was then able to reinstate a chantry at Rochester he had established for the priests there to say masses for his soul. Yet the absence of a known tomb at Rochester Cathedral suggests that Keston is his resting place.

As the local antiquary George Clinch noted in 1889, there is a monument similar to that of Belknap at West Wickham to Sir Walter de Huntingfield. It also has a French inscription. It seems that the Belknap family were trying to emulate the memorial to Huntingfield, who had obtained a grant of a fair for West Wickham in 1318 and made a park at Addington. Their monument to the Chief Justice now lies concealed. But family history often comes full circle, and the recent move of my parents to Limpsfield has renewed my family's connection with this area. How wonderful that we should find that the Belknap tomb is extant, albeit covered over and perhaps largely forgotten. It is a rare and valuable reminder of the eventful era of the Black Death as well as the Peasants' Revolt, and of an influential person of that period.

Nicholas Dixon

*Dr Nicholas Dixon is a professional genealogist and house history researcher in London. He studied history at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and was awarded a PhD degree. He conducts research projects for clients and gives talks concerning historical and genealogical subjects. See his website [drnicholasdixon.com](http://drnicholasdixon.com) for more information.*





# The Summer flora of Keston Bog



Bog Beacon

A Bog in Keston? Aren't they in Wales and Scotland where you get wet and muddy on hikes?

Yet located just on the right of the path from the primary school to the main ponds is one of the very few remaining valley bogs in Greater London, created from a layer of impermeable clay overlying the sandy heathland soils. Pause a moment at the information board and look down: early summer can be a wonderful time to enjoy the special plants and insects only found here.

Tucked away in the wet mosses at the bottom from late June, two tiny fungi can be found growing on decaying leaves and moss, the colourful Bog Beacon and the rare Bog Waxcap. White fluffy heads of the Cotton Grass

wave softly in the breeze amongst the other many species of rush and sedges in the pools. The Lesser Skullcap, a rare and inconspicuous plant in the mint family, may be found twining among the rushes.

The daffodil yellow Bog Asphodel are at their best in July on the slopes below the board, alongside the pale pink of the Cross Leaved Heath, both species enjoying the damper ground where a variety of sphagnum mosses form their spongy cushions.

With the longer periods of drought and higher temperatures experienced over the last years, constant maintenance is needed to prevent the bog from drying out completely. This fragile habitat relies solely on the runoff from the acid soils of the heathland above Fishponds Road and in the past,



Bog Waxcap



Lesser skullcap



Bog Asphodel

leaky dams have been built to hold back the rainwater and create pools. There are many plants such as Purple Moor Grass, Soft Rush, Brambles and Bracken that suck up the moisture and choke the more delicate plants. Small birch and willow are quick to exploit any gaps and soon become small trees. It is the task of the Friends of Keston Common to keep pulling and cutting these invaders and give the rarer plants some space.

There is also ongoing work by Bromley Conservation teams to remove the larger trees and shrubs to lessen the drying effect and open up the slopes, encouraging more heather and mosses. This year, a new pool was created by careful work with an excavator. It has already attracted more dragon and damsel flies, and will be home to frogs and toads next spring.

Perhaps the newly exposed muds could hold viable seeds of the long lost Sundew, not seen since the early 1980's,

that Charles Darwin studied. Walk slowly in his footsteps in the still calm of a warm late summer evening, and reflect on the marvels of this unique and peaceful oasis of diversity so close to the village.

Bob Harrop



Cross Leaved Heath

# When you thought I wasn't looking

*A message every adult should read because children are watching you and doing as you do, not as you say.*

When you thought I wasn't looking I saw you hang my first painting on the refrigerator, and I immediately wanted to paint another one.

When you thought I wasn't looking I saw you feed a stray cat, and I learned that it was good to be kind to animals.

When you thought I wasn't looking I saw you make my favourite cake for me, and I learned that the little things can be the special things in life.

When you thought I wasn't looking I heard you say a prayer, and I knew that there is a God I could always talk to, and I learned to trust in Him.

When you thought I wasn't looking I saw you make a meal and take it to a friend who was sick, and I learned that we all have to help take care of each other.

When you thought I wasn't looking I saw you take care of our house and everyone in it, and I learned we have to take care of what we are given.

When you thought I wasn't looking I saw how you handled your responsibilities, even when you didn't feel good, and I learned that I would have to be responsible when I grow up.

When you thought I wasn't looking I saw tears come from your eyes, and I learned that sometimes things hurt, but it's all right to cry.

When you thought I wasn't looking I saw that you cared, and I wanted to be everything that I could be.

When you thought I wasn't looking I learned most of life's lessons that I need to be a good and productive person when I grow up.

When you thought I wasn't looking I looked at you and wanted to say, 'Thanks for all the things I saw when you thought I wasn't looking'.



# Did you just book it? Or Thomas Cook it?



Thomas Cook statue outside Leicester Railway station was unveiled in 1994 by his great-great-grandson Thomas Cook

Thomas Cook did not start his travel business with the primary goal of making money. Motivated by his Christian faith, it was to help combat the dangers of alcohol and to help the victims of alcohol misuse.

Thomas Cook was born in 1808 in Derbyshire. At age 20 he became a Baptist missionary and toured the region as an evangelist distributing tracts, and in the 1830s, he became involved in the temperance movement. He was a cabinet maker by trade.

With the expansion of the railway network around 1840, he had the idea of combining rail travel with the cause of temperance. He arranged to take a group of temperance campaigners from Leicester Street railway station to a

teetotal rally in Loughborough, 11 miles away. On 5th July 1841, he escorted 485 people, who paid one shilling each for the return rail journey and a meal, on his first outing. Many say that this is when the modern travel industry was born. Other excursions followed, including one in 1851 for 150,000 people to travel to the Great Exhibition in London. Four years later he was running trips abroad.

By 1865 he had acquired business premises on Fleet Street, which included a shop selling travel accessories such as guide books, luggage, telescopes and footwear. He and his wife also ran a small temperance hotel above the office. As the business grew, he built an imposing Temperance Hall and hotel in central Leicester and used much of his money to support the poor, often the victims of alcohol misuse.

In all the excursions he went on to organise, he wanted to bring people closer together and nearer to their creator by making “God’s earth with all its fullness and beauty” accessible and affordable to all.

Eventually his son, John Mason Cook, became a partner in the company and the name was changed to Thomas Cook & Son. Towards the end of his life his attitude towards profitability brought him and his son into conflict, including his allowing lower fares for fellow Baptists. He died aged 83 in 1892. After a number of mergers and takeovers the company collapsed in 2019, but he had given many the opportunity to experience the beauty and variety of God’s world because of his strong Christian faith.

Sally Churchus

# What I Do



David with the Allegrì Singers music library – in his basement!

When I am not pounding the organ keys in a dark and cold church on a winter's afternoon, or waving my arms around in front of our very loyal and hard-working church choir, I am often to be found singing in various choirs! It comes as bit of shock to realise that I have been doing this for over 60 years!

When I could finally read at the age of eight I joined the choir of Holy Trinity Beckenham. The Choirmaster often turned up late for rehearsals which allowed the choir boys to get up to all sorts of mischief, including playing nose snooker around the grand piano! As the youngest choir probationer, I had the task one Advent Sunday Procession

with Carols of carrying the candle to provide light for the Choirmaster as we processed around the church, and desperately tried not to set light to his flapping surplice. The service concluded with the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah. It was wonderful and very loud and I remember walking home very excited looking up at the stars and asking my mother as to whether God might have heard us!

I had just been awarded my surplice when my parents upped sticks and moved to Shortlands, where I immediately joined the choir at St Mary's where I eventually achieved the rank of Decani Head Boy. I held this position until one Friday evening choir practice when we were rehearsing 'Fling wide the gates' from Stainer's Crucifixion. A horrible noise issued forth and I was immediately "invited" to join the basses in the back row! The choir master initially described my bass voice as being a bit of a "dog's dinner", but it must have improved as I did one of the bass solos in The Crucifixion.

It was not until I had finished my training as a librarian that I was able to get involved with local choral societies. In 1975 I joined the Beckenham Chorale. The Conductor was researching French Baroque choral music and was using the Beckenham Chorale to give modern day first performances of works from that period. We actually got to perform at the Queen Elizabeth Hall which was a fantastic experience! We were somewhat upset when *The Times* newspaper gave us a very snotty review!

Around the time I started at Keston (1978!) I became involved with the

Royal School of Church Music and plucked up the courage to attend a course at Salisbury Cathedral, singing Choral Evensong for a week. It was here that I really found my voice. When I auditioned for the course the Choirmaster had hinted that I might

## It was one of the most nerve wracking experiences of my life

find myself singing the solo in Stanford's Nunc Dimittis in G at the final evensong. I did! It was one of the most nerve wracking experiences of my life but it went well and I felt encouraged to pursue other singing opportunities. A few years later I took part in a live broadcast of Choral Evensong from Canterbury Cathedral.

In 1982 I took the life changing decision to audition for a new choir that had recently been set up in Bromley by Paul Stevens with the aim of performing contemporary music. I auditioned and got into the choir. I'm still there. I thought I could sing, but this was a totally different ball game. Initially we did concerts every six weeks and we were expected to be note perfect in very difficult music from virtually the first rehearsal! But I stuck it out and have had a great time tackling a vast range of music over the years. There are many happy/scary memories – giving the first performance of St Mary Virgine by Michael Ball, (not the singer!), at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, attending the Cork Festival to give the first performance of Tempi by Robert Simpson, (no other choir was willing to

tackle it!), and taking part in a weird charity concert for healing crystals at Westminster Hall along with Paul Weller and Roger Lord. We had been booked to give the first performance of Today the Virgin by John Tavener, who in a break from rehearsing, came up and loomed over us, (John was over six foot tall), and urged us to sing “more earthy”.

It was almost inevitable that when it was discovered I was a professional librarian I should be asked to be the Allegri Singers Librarian – a job I have been doing for over thirty years! It can be quite a challenge getting conductors to decide what music they wish us to perform, but I get great satisfaction from sourcing music from other choirs and libraries across the UK.

And when I'm not singing – I help Caroline down at the allotment!

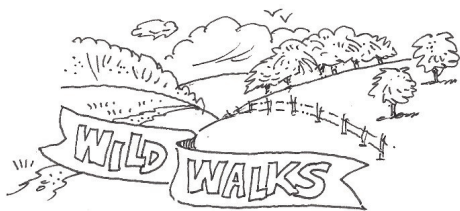
David Cook, Keston Parish Church  
Organist and Choirmaster

## Prayer

Lord of beauty and harmony, we give thanks for our world. We thank you for the amazing diversity of the natural world around us, for the soft music of wind through trees, for the pizzicato of rain drops, for the forte of waterfalls and waves, and particularly the beauty and harmony of birdsong. We thank you for the many gifts you have given to us, especially for the gift of song and the ability to create all kinds of music, especially hymns of worship.

*Extract from Tonia Crouch's prayers  
at church on 25th June 2023*





“Phew! What a scorcher!” or as the Daily Sketch, (or was it Daily Mirror), put it as a headline in 1941 – “Scorch what a Führer!” Clever eh? I’m referring to the weather as I write this on Friday afternoon 7th July. It started reasonably enough but as the day progressed it became steadily hotter and hotter. We don’t want another 1976!

However, it helps turn the corn in the back field to that beautiful amber colour. Talking of which, about a week ago I took ‘the dog’ for its evening walk out into the field and up to what remains of the farm, thence on the track down to the Gas Station parallel to the airfield and back to Leaves Green across the large cornfield. That was the plan but what I hadn’t reckoned with was as soon as we exited my garden the dog was off like a shot. We’d surprised a young deer looking for a cosy spot to bed down for the night. I’d seen flattened patches of long grass close to the bushes which I’d put down to deer lying down.

Now ‘the dog’ is a cross Collie/Husky so hunting reindeer, elks, sheep is in its DNA. I have to admit it was an impressive sight as each animal leapt and bounded through the corn. How was this going to end, thought I. Fortunately the deer was ideally suited to this kind of sport as it was lighter and



easily more adept at springing over the corn. Whereas ‘the dog’ try as it would, tended to crash its way through the corn and, coupled with my high intensity whistling it became clear who was Linford Christie and who wasn’t! Before they both became specks in the distance the dog gave up the chase and returned. Ah – what a good animal.

On the same note, when I take it over the other side of the airfield to the ‘Goblin Woods’— named this when the children were small and easily scared – then it rambles happily through the undergrowth and often comes hurtling by in pursuit of the aforementioned creatures. So far they always have the measure of her and I’m pretty sure both parties get a kick out of it. But then I’m not a deer!

Richard Geiger

# What's On

## Prayer Walks

**1st Tues & 3rd Wed 9.30am**

**The Green opposite Greyhound pub**

We usually return about 11am. Well behaved dogs welcome too!

## Men's pub social

**3rd Wed 7pm The Greyhound**

Join us for social chat, a few drinks and a meal for those who want it. More details from Martin Becker on 07484 609102.

## Book Reading Fellowship

**Mon 7th Aug 2.30pm Gravel Road**

Come and discuss books with some Christian content that you have read over tea/coffee and cake. Please let Sally Churchus know on 020 8462 8750 or [editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk](mailto:editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk) if you would like to come.

## Keston Book Club

**1st Wed 7pm The Fox**

More information from 07503 268001 or [angelahollamby@gmail.com](mailto:angelahollamby@gmail.com).

## New Keston WI

**2nd Wed 1.30pm-3.30pm**

**Keston Church Hall**

No meeting in August. More details from Helen Best 07715 880889.

## Friends of Keston Common

**Fri 10am Westerham Rd car park**

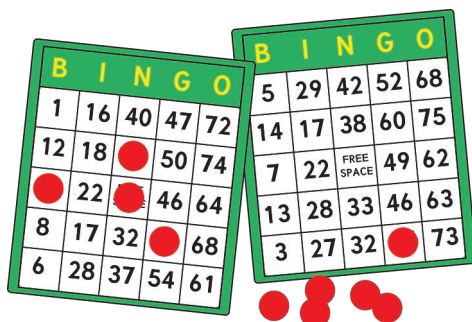
Join us for activities such as scrub clearance, tree/shrub pruning, pathway restoration and structural repairs.

## Mental Wellbeing Coffee Morning

**Sat 12th Aug 10am-12 noon**

**Keston Church Hall**

Come 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.



## Bingo

**Sun 3rd Sept 11.45am**

**Keston Church Hall**

Soup and a roll lunch included.

Tickets £10 from Chris 07988 712873.

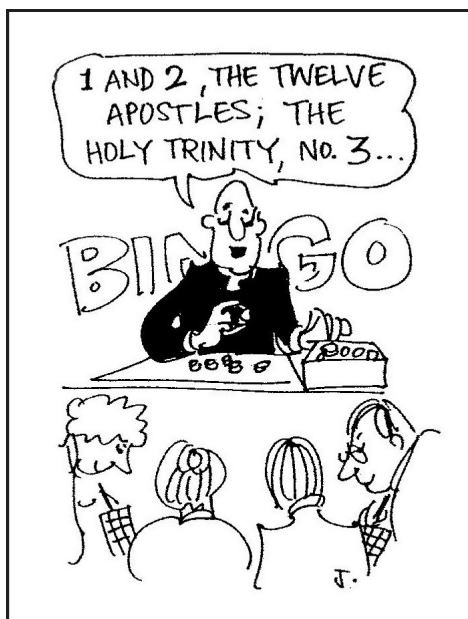
## Quiz Night

**Fri 6th Oct 7.15pm for 7.30pm start**

**Keston Village Hall**

Maximum of six people per team.

Nibbles provided but please bring your own drinks and glasses. Tickets £7 in advance, from 07765 252428 or [bbag1976@aol.com](mailto:bbag1976@aol.com). Proceeds to Bromley Bridleways Access Group.



# Magazine Deadline

Please send photos and articles for the October/November issue of The Keston Magazine to the Editor, Sally Churchus, before 8th September by email: [editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk](mailto:editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk) or contact her to discuss ideas on Tel: 020 8462 8750. Thank you.

## Laughlines

### ☺ This Next One

A local DJ was introducing a record at the annual church fete. "This next one", he said, "is for Yvonne, a choir member, who is a hundred and eleven! Hey, Yvonne, congratulations on a ripe old age!"

There was a short pause and then the DJ said in a somewhat more subdued

voice, "I'm sorry, I got it wrong. The next one is for Yvonne, who is ill."

### ☺ Grannie

After church, the mother asked her young son if he had enjoyed Sunday School. "Oh yes", he replied. "My new teacher is pretty cool – she is Jesus' grandmother". Startled, his mother asked what made him think that. "Obvious, she never stops talking about Jesus", he replied.

### ☺ One Liners

Why don't sheep shrink when it rains? (A question for anyone holidaying in the Lake District or Wales).

If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport the terminal?

If they squeeze olives to get olive oil, how do they get baby oil?

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