

The

Keston Magazine

News of your Parish and Village



December/January 2026

Keston Parish Church

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*So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph,
and the baby, who was lying in the manger. Luke 2:16*

Thought for the month



Photo by Greg Rosenke on Unsplash

The wonder of childlike hope

'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.' (Matthew 18:2, NRSVA)

Christmas is a very special time of the year. Most of us, whether we are Christian or not, dig out the tinsel and bask in the glow of twinkling lights interspersed within the leafy green holly and ivy wreaths and garlands which adorn our mantelpieces and doors. Christmas trees are decorated with baubles and trinkets collected over our lifetime and mysterious exquisitely wrapped parcels appear under the Christmas tree as if out of nowhere. Children everywhere get very excited, in anticipation. Quietly, in amongst the hustle and bustle nestles the gentle, redemptive story of a little tiny baby born in a manger.

Have you ever wondered, why God came into this world as a tiny helpless little baby? Biblical explanations would say that he had to fulfil the prophecies with a royal lineage that proceeds from king David. He had to be subject to the same law as humankind so that he became like them in every way, as a child completely dependent on others and subject to the whims of the world.

Perhaps there is something about a child that reflects the character of God.

True, if there are children in the home, Christmas takes on an additional dimension. But as we gaze on the baubles of bygone days, as we enact family traditions and as we make our way to sing carols or see a nativity play are we not transported back in time to our own childhood? Perhaps the birth of this very special tiny baby is part of God's plan to unlock the very child in each one of us.

Young people and teenagers increasingly voice concerns for their future. They are worried about the impact of climate change, their student debts, job prospects, the availability of affordable housing and the general shape of our country. The lost year or so of Covid isolation did not help matters as social gatherings were curtailed and are yet to recover fully. The future does not seem to offer much, even on the world stage. Yet one young lady from Buxton is quoted as saying that, even in amongst all this doom and gloom, she felt hopeful. When asked to explain, her response was 'things really can't get much worse, to be honest.'

This young lady had got it. With Jesus in the frame, hope is always just round the corner. Each Christmas we are offered a re-set, a chance to return to the carefree days of our childhood and savour the humility of knowing we are completely dependent on God to provide. God does not disappoint. In Jesus we have our Saviour, our hope.

Rev'd Belinda Beckhelling

From the Editor



As some of you may already know, I am fortunate enough to have just been blessed with another grandchild, Gabriel – rather appropriately named for this time of year. Baby Viviane has also just been born into the Toomer family, (Sam, Annika and little Morgana), who are members of Keston church congregation. Church member, Ann Blanc, has become a great grandmother again recently to baby Lottie and this issue of the magazine has somehow emerged with a baby and child theme!

Of course, this time of year we are also thinking about the coming of the Christ Child. No easy time for mother Mary, without the support of her community or mother even, no pain relief or the kind of environment that you might wish for your child to be born into or lovely little clothes as gifts from friends and family. A mother's love knows no bounds though, whatever the place or time; and what a miracle and a joy a new life is. Do come and celebrate the world's most amazing birth at Keston Church this Christmastide. A variety of services are listed on p11 for you to choose from.

I hope you enjoy the contents of this issue and I wish you a joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sally Churchus

Cover Story

I wanted a Christmas edition cover with a Christian message, and eventually decided on this photo. (Unfortunately I couldn't get an original nativity photo!). It reminded me that sometimes you have to take a bit of time to look carefully for the real meaning of Christmas amongst all the decorations and Christmas trimmings – plus it was nice and colourful!

Sally Churchus

Wanted!

You will notice that I have written rather a lot of the content in this issue. In order to make the magazine more interesting and appealing to a wider audience I would very much welcome some more contributions, including from children or young people. In addition, I need information and news about Keston people and events. Please do drop me an email, I would love to hear from you.

editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk.

A big thank you to all those who write and send articles on a regular or occasional basis, it is much appreciated. Receiving an article out of the blue recently from Chalkpit (in Devon) was a wonderful surprise and much needed as a couple of other possible pieces had not come to fruition. I know his childhood memories will be enjoyed by readers.



Member Editor 2025
Association for Church Editors

Marathon Effort



‘Nina the Nurse’

After having just run the Chicago Marathon, I write this a few days later with a very tired body, but with a huge sense of satisfaction. Running the 26.2 miles of the streets of the Windy City was incredible – joining another 53,000 runners, noisily cheered on by one million spectators. The weather was great – blue sky, sunshine and some 15° on the start line. Plus the previous four months of training had gone well, allowing me to shave five minutes off my previous best, (set in Berlin last year) coming in at 4 hours and 7 minutes.

The marathon in Chicago was the third element of what I called the ‘2025 Triple Challenge’ – which also incorporated running the London marathon in April and running London’s Big Half marathon in September, together with members of my family. Of the three elements, the latter was the shortest of the runs, but also the most challenging – why was that? Well, in my enthusiasm to raise donations, I agreed to run that race dressed in a 3 metre tall, and 10 kilograms weighted, costume which we call ‘Nina the Nurse’. You will see from the photo that Nina proved to be an

uncomfortable running partner. However, she captured the attention of the crowd, and it was their encouragement, and my family’s support, which got me to the finish line in 2½ hours.

The reasons for all of this are various. I think running is great for the mind and the body – it puts my body through a work-out and it gives time for my mind to wander, and thoughts to settle. Living in Keston, we are very lucky to have beautiful countryside on our doorstep, and it’s incredible to see how far we can run on woodland trails without needing to go on roads.

However, the overriding motivation for taking on these Triple Challenges each year is to raise much-needed funds for WellChild, the national charity for seriously ill children. More than 100,000 children are estimated to be living across the UK with complex medical needs. Many children spend months, even years in hospital, simply because there is no support enabling them to leave. Sadly, many families at home suffer inconsistent and inadequate levels of training and support. WellChild’s vision is for every child or young person with complex medical needs to be thriving at home – looked after by their families as well as a network of WellChild nurses.

I am delighted that this year’s Triple Challenge has raised more than £18,500 for WellChild which builds further on the £13,500 raised last year. I have been overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness of the congregation of Keston church, neighbours, family members, colleagues, customers and friends. Thank you to everyone!

Jonathan Bond

Church Giveaway

Keston church are pleased to announce they will be giving away free nativity sticker books to children from their stall at Keston Village Christmas Fair. Do come and say hello.



Churchgoers help local charities

● Welcare in Bromley

Just under £400 was raised for this local charity helping families in need at our Harvest Service at the beginning of October.

● Bromley Borough Foodbank

Over 100kg of tins and non-perishable foodstuff was collected and delivered to the warehouse following the appeal, also at Harvest. This exceeds the 81kg we managed last year and filled the boot, back seats and footwells of a Ford Fiesta. Thank you to Thomas Cridland and Brandon Southcott for helping to load it all up after the service!

● Poverty and Hope

A raffle at the Harvest Bring and Share lunch raised £50 for this overseas charity which is supported by Rochester Diocese. It helps to meet the basic needs of the world's poorest people aiming to restore their self sufficiency.

Open Tombs raise money for KAB

Thanks to the amazing generosity of visitors to the open Roman Tombs in Keston in September, (advertised in the last issue), over £1,000 was raised for Kent Association for the Blind.

New Toys Needed

As in previous years, we shall be collecting unwrapped toys during the 10am service on Sunday 7th December for the Salvation Army to give to needy local children. **Please Note:** This service will be combined with the Christingle service this year.

2025 marks the 160th anniversary of the Salvation Army. Their mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.



My Faith Journey



I don't quite know what I would do without my faith. It is something that has always been a key part of who I am as a person. But where did it all start?

I suppose my faith journey can be traced back to a time when the Portuguese ruled in Goa and brought Christianity into this little territory in India. My family were Catholic and I was baptised one week after I was born and have attended church nearly every Sunday, since then. From the age of seven I lived with my grandmother, a devout woman. I remember the family gathering to pray each evening – we said the rosary together, which I still enjoy praying.

I went to a Catholic Convent Day School run by Irish nuns. It was a faith school, and took in children first from Christian families and then anyone who actively practised their faith – Hindus and Muslims were welcome. I discovered God's magnanimous graciousness in that where humans see difference as divisive, God welcomes everyone. School retreats taught me to be attentive to God and what he was doing in my life – I still value time away to sit and wait on God. I loved the simplicity yet strongly religious and visible focus of Christmas and Easter in

Goa and still follow some of the traditions in my home.

I arrived in the UK, and subsequently married an Anglican. The local parish church 100 yards up the road became our family church, and we spent most Sunday mornings in worship and some afternoons in fellowship and caring for the church fabric. I became involved with the Sunday School and when the church went into a long interregnum (12 years) I found myself leading and pastoring a lost worshipping community. A personal trauma brought home to me how very close and personal Jesus gets in times of distress. I came through it stronger. My experience taught me that I am who God made me to be and I am deeply loved.

It was at this time that God came beckoning and I felt the urge to respond to a call to ordination. The first hurdle was having to be received into the Church of England. I had initially resisted this as I have a strong sense that we are all Christians together – all members of the one body of Christ. The Catholic faith that shaped my raw faith remains with me as I minister within the Anglican tradition.

My faith continues to grow as I follow in the tradition of the saints past and in communion with those with whom I worship today. As a minister responsible for establishing a climate that fosters and builds the faith of others, I try to retain the spiritual elements of worship. People must be able to come to church expecting to have an encounter with God and leave with a sense of a real presence of God. I am called here in Keston to facilitate that precious relationship.

Belinda Beckhelling

Don't Rush to Take Decorations Down

No need to panic – apparently we don't have to worry about rushing to take down our Christmas decorations by Twelfth Night! Indeed, we will not incur bad luck or attract bad spirits even if we leave them up until the beginning of February as, (pointed out by English Heritage), it was just a rule brought in

Although the risk of fire was considerable

by the Victorians so that business wasn't affected by continuing celebrations.

In Medieval times, the Christmas Season lasted 40 days until Candlemas on 2nd February – a Feast Day marking the presentation of Jesus at the Temple. Traditionally, this is the date that all the candles for use in church in the coming year are blessed by the priest. For Christians, the candles serve as a symbol of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. In John 8:12 Jesus said "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". In the 16th century as a reminder of this, Christians put candles onto Christmas trees, although the risk of fire was considerable. Thankfully, by 1882 the first electrically lit Christmas tree had been developed.

The February date also marks the ending of the darkest quarter of the year. It seems a good idea to me to leave a few festive lights up for a bit longer to keep my spirits up and dispel the gloom!

Sally Churchus

10th year of KVRA Christmas Lights

By the time you read this, the Keston Village Christmas Lights will have been turned on – in advance of the KVRA (Keston Village Residents' Association) Christmas Fair in the Village Hall. With this in mind we kindly ask for any contributions towards the expenses. Your donations in the past have helped make our Christmas lights such a special part of the season for everyone, and we really hope you will be able to support us once again this year. Our Santander bank details are: Sort Code 09-01-29 and Account number 353212237, Keston Village Residents Association. If you would prefer to drop off your donations, this can be done at 21, Heathfield Road. Thank you.

Shelley Sturdy, Chair of KVRA



"Of all the cheek! Rides up on his sleigh in his flashy red suit, pushes to the front of the queue to the stable shouting 'Ho! Ho! Ho!'... who DOES he think he is?!"

From Keston to LaplandUK



Christine Rowland and family

As featured in national newspapers and on TV, local couple Alison and Mike Battle are behind the magic of LaplandUK. Their four boys, Michael, Matthew and twins Christian and Joe all went to Keston CE Primary School. When the boys were small and still believed in Father Christmas, they were unable to find an immersive and realistic Christmas event to take them to without travelling all the way to Finland.

Alison said "I was passionate about what I call the 'wonder years' of childhood which I consider to be a time of imagination before it's replaced with information". She used to reply to the boys' letters to Father Christmas herself. In 2007 the couple decided to bring the stories they told their children to life and created an authentic representation of Santa's homeland and gave up their respective jobs, Mike's as a Hedge Fund Trader and Alison as a Primary School Teacher. They re-mortgaged their house to pay for the venture. Their first site was at Bedgebury, but sadly they had only been trading for a year when the

business went into administration due to a number of factors including a poor quality copycat enterprise. The couple then had to re-mortgage their house for a second time which was very stressful.

The Battles never lost sight of their vision, though, and now there are two sites, in Ascot and Macclesfield. They employ Hollywood set designers, West End production professionals to create the experience from scratch each year as well as 1,000 performers, but they are always aiming for improvements. Mike enables Alison's ideas from a child's perspective using his creativity and financial expertise. They work as a team, and two of their sons also help to run it.

With 200,000 visitors each year, the business is obviously very profitable but Alison and Mike have a heart to help children, so run subsidised 'Superstar Days' for children with additional needs and support a number of children's causes. Also, the Lapland Foundation has been set up to donate a stocking full of goodies plus a letter from Santa to children in need, particularly those in hospital or Hospices on Christmas Day.

Last year, Keston School volunteer Christine Rowland went to LaplandUK with her daughter Emma, (who had attended Keston School), and grandchildren who are currently at Keston School. They thought it was fabulous, the attention to detail amazing and are looking forward to going again this year! I'm sure Mike and Alison love to know that they are bringing joy into children's and families' lives even though their own children missed out on it!

Sally Churchus

Sunday School re-opens at Keston Church

Third Sunday of every month at 10.00am

Do you remember a time when you attended Sunday School? The friends you made, the fun you had, the wonderful things you learned about God and how much he loved you? I wonder how much this impacted you and the person you have become.

Keston Church last ran a Sunday School as recently as 2012, and was renowned for the Christmas plays it put on. It was called 'TGIS' (Thank God It's Sunday) but sadly closed due to dwindling numbers. Perversely, we are starting with small numbers but are looking to grow and bring Bible stories to life for our children, while also learning to walk in Jesus' footsteps.

Each session we focus on a theme around which we talk and do an associated craft activity. We may also read/act out a Bible reading, play games or even share food. Come along. Bring

your children. Tell your neighbours. Soon we will all be saying TGIS.

We would love to see more children at

Keston church, come along to Sunday School

on the third Sunday of the month, and together let us build a junior church that truly serves the families in Keston.

We next meet on Sunday 21st December, when we have, yes you guessed it, a Christmas focus. All our Sunday School leaders are safely recruited, are DBS checked and have undertaken safeguarding training.

If you would like to know more, pop into church one Sunday morning and ask for Natasha, Summer or Thomas or email Natasha at safeguarding@kestonparishchurch.org.uk

Natasha Beckhelling



Christmas Prayer

Father God, when your precious Son
became a tiny babe in a stable in Bethlehem
in poverty and simplicity,
you changed our world.

As we imagine those surroundings,
we join with the shepherds
and the wise men
in wonder and praise.

We thank you for our material lives,
praise you for your spiritual lives,
and trust in you for our eternal life.

Amen.

Church Services



First Sunday in the month

8.00am Holy Communion using Book of Common Prayer (1662)

10.00am Celebrational Worship (non Communion)

All other Sundays

10.00am Holy Communion

Every Monday

7.40am Morning Prayer

8.00am Holy Communion (said)
Except on 29th December

Healing & Wholeness Service

11.20am Saturday 20th December and Saturday 10th January
Anointing/Laying on of hands offered

Home Communion

If you are housebound and would like Christmas Communion please email Rev'd Belinda or leave a message on 01689 853186 with your name, number and saying Christmas Communion, by Saturday 20th December

Christingle and Toy Service

10.00am Sunday 7th December

Informal non Communion service with a Christingle for each child. Collection of unwrapped toys for the Salvation Army to distribute to local children

Carol Service

6.30pm Sunday 21st December

A traditional service of Seven lessons and carols. Followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the hall

Crib Service

4.00pm Wednesday 24th December

Non Communion service, children invited to come dressed up as a nativity character

Christmas Midnight Service

11.30pm Wednesday 24th December
Holy Communion

Christmas Morning Service

10.00am Thursday 25th December
Holy Communion and family friendly

Looking Back



Girl's netball team, 1944, Keston C of E School, showing Miss Jarvis, centre back row

My great-grandson Percy recently started his education at a small village school and it took me back 80 years, when suddenly the carefree days at home were replaced with the start of my education, to be precise on the 16th April 1945! As always with the memory some incidents are sharper than others and I cannot remember exactly how I journeyed to school at first or when, with other children from Leaves Green, we all walked to and back from school, which was then on the Common. On entering through the large front door of Keston School and into the infants' classroom, I was taken aback by the height of the room and the large windows facing the road, so different from the small bungalow that was my home.

Our teacher was Miss Jarvis, an austere lady better known, when out of

hearing, as 'Jam Jar'! Registration was followed by The Lord's Prayer and a hymn, both of which had been taught, along with the alphabet and times tables, by repetition. Under teacher's eagle eye, any misbehaviour or lack of concentration, the culprit was put in the corner facing the wall with their hands placed on their heads— very uncomfortable! Due to lack of paper, the result of the war, Miss Jarvis sourced unused rolls of wallpaper which she tore into a suitable size for us to draw on and write the letters of the alphabet over and over again.

Who can forget the School Nurse or, as she was popularly known, 'Nitty Nora', there to find those harbouring nits! Children unfortunate enough to be found suffering were sent home with a note on how to deal with the problem! Lunch before a purpose built canteen

was built was eaten at your desk and one wonders now where the meal was prepared?

We weren't always confined to the classroom, nature walks across the Common to the ponds were great fun. Miss Jarvis was solely in charge of a class of infants – a huge undertaking and so different to today's regulations. To my knowledge, nobody got lost or fell in the water!

One of the best times of day, after the break, was in the winter when Miss Jarvis would make herself comfortable in front of the fire or, in summer, beneath a tree on the Common, and we would listen to the adventures of Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends. By absolute coincidence, at a much later date, we were able to purchase, at the School Christmas Bazaar, the actual green leather bound copy of this book signed inside by Miss Jarvis! Now a family treasure.

History was to repeat itself when daughter Karen started at Keston School in 1969. Proving difficult to persuade her into school, Miss Jarvis came to the rescue, commenting that "she started her career with a Williams, (my sister Gillian in 1934), and she would end with one!" With that Karen was marched off by Miss Jarvis and was no more trouble after that.

There are many more memories of a happy school with kind teachers and school friends made for ever, such

was the nature of
Keston Church of
England School.

Country
Correspondent
(Chalkpit)



Happy Birthday Winnie-the-Pooh!

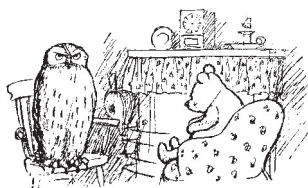
2026 marks 100 years since the publication of the Winnie-the-Pooh book by A.A. Milne and so beautifully illustrated by E.H. Shepard.

The character was inspired by a teddy from Harrods that Milne had bought for his son, Christopher Robin, named Winnie after a black bear that they often saw at London Zoo. Pooh was a friend's pet swan that they saw on holiday. Milne's inspiration for the Hundred Acre Wood came from the Ashdown forest where they had a country home and this is where father and son originally played Poohsticks – the location is now a tourist attraction.

Winnie-the-Pooh first appeared by name on 24th December 1925, in a Christmas story in the London *Evening News*. This then became the first chapter of the Winnie-the-Pooh book.

Many children must have enjoyed these stories and pictures over the years, and will hopefully continue to do so as a 100th anniversary range appears.

Sally Churchus



A. A. MILNE

Decorations by

E. H. SHEPARD

Part of the cover of a 1942 edition,
owned by Maureen Williams

The Fuller Family of the Post Mill Keston



In this photo, it looks like the mill was possibly still in operation as the sails and mill structure appear to be intact and in good order. The mounds of chalk and broken flint alongside the unmetalled road surface are for repairing the track, a glutinous mess when wet and dusty when dry, a very unsatisfactory outcome either way!

William and Anne Fuller are first recorded living in Hayes in 1649 when they took their first child to be christened at the parish church, but all subsequent children were christened at Keston parish church which suggests the family moved to live there around the 1650s or 1660s. These were the momentous years of Civil War, The Commonwealth and Cromwell.

The earliest record of a mill on this site is found in the Hearth Tax returns of 1662 when Jeremy Fuller paid tax on two hearths for the *'mill in 1/2 acre with additional 8 acres enclosed from the heath'*. In the hearth tax returns of 1664 Anne Fuller paid the tax on two hearths;

only four properties in Keston had two or more hearths in that year.

Of William and Anne's children only John had offspring and it seems only two of them survived to adulthood, Mary (1686-17?) and Jeremiah (1688-1777). Grandmother, Anne, died at the mill house in 1670 and the inventory of her goods describes a prosperous family living a comfortable life: *'3 flock beds with linen; 12 pairs of sheets; great cupboard, table, 3 chairs and stool; 8 pieces of brass; 30 pieces of pewter; napkins and table clothes; a cart, wheat valued at £4/10/0d; peas and oats; mare, cow, 3 shoats [piglets], wearing apparel and money in her purse. Total value £44/15/0d (£44.75p)'*. It is worth

noting farm labourers earned 10-12d per day (5p) at the time. The inventory named the rooms in what must have been a substantial house with a number of outbuildings. This was confirmed when Window Tax of £1/11/6d (£1.58p) for 19 lights (windows) was paid by Jeremiah in 1776. In the parish of Keston only Holwood House, the home of Prime Minister William Pitt (1785 -1803) had more 'lights'.

On Anne's death in 1670 her daughter in law Mary was named as leaseholder. However, it is clear that by early 1700s her grandson Jeremiah (1668-1777) managed the mill and made the decision to build a new one in 1716 making it the oldest extant mill in Kent. He paid poor rates to the parish between 1707 and 1770s and was appointed Overseer of the poor on a number of occasions. Jeremiah outlived all his children so on his death the mill was passed to his sister's surviving son named Jeremiah after her brother.

Mary's story is a tale suitable for the tabloid press. Her sons, John and Jeremiah were brought to baptism '*at the mill*' by their grandmother Anne and recorded in the parish registers as illegitimate. No father is named on John's baptism but Thomas Jenkins, seaman, is named as father to Jeremiah. The Parish clerk was brutally honest when he wrote '*bastard*' next to the baby's name. Seaman Jenkins seems likely to have been father to both boys. Soon after the death of the elder Jeremiah in 1777 his nephew Jeremiah did not renew the lease which was taken by William Lewis who in 1784 paid 5 shillings (25p) rent. By the 1830s the Ellis family held the lease and did so

until the mill ceased working around the 1870's.

A storm over southern England in 1878 demolished Olive's Mill on Commonsideside and possibly contributed to the closure of Keston's post mill. Joseph Gainsborough, a merchant of 'The Borough', bought the mill in 1880s and restored it as a garden feature thus saving it from collapse. The history of Keston mill in the 19th century followed that of all country mills which faced serious competition from imported grain milled by steam driven machinery. To see an example ride on the Docklands Light Railway from Lewisham; when at Deptford Station look right to Mumford's Mill, now modern flats. Imports of cheaper grain also contributed to the decline of arable farming across England.

Tudor Davies



Mill House living room fireplace 1995

Our Local Owls



Tawny Owl, *Strix aluco*
Photo by Andy Willis on Unsplash

In the quiet corners of the woodlands, farmlands, and gardens around Keston and Downe, three captivating owl species reign with silent grace: the Tawny Owl, the Barn Owl, and the Little Owl. Each possesses its own charm, ecological role, and mystique, making them beloved icons of the British countryside.

Tawny Owl: The Woodland Sentinel

The Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*) is perhaps the most familiar of Britain's owls, known for the male's haunting "hooo hu" call echoing through ancient forests. The female's usual call is a short "keewik". Tawny Owls are fiercely territorial and monogamous, often returning to the same nesting sites year after year. In late autumn, listen at dusk for their courting duets in Lakes Road and Padmall Wood.

The Tawny is a master of camouflage, blending seamlessly into tree bark. Primarily nocturnal, it hunts small mammals like voles and mice, using its exceptional hearing and silent flight to surprise prey. Their presence is a sign of healthy woodland ecosystems, and their eerie calls have inspired folklore for centuries – often symbolizing wisdom or omens.

Barn Owl: The Ghost of the Fields

With its heart-shaped face and ethereal white plumage, the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) is a vision of spectral beauty. Often seen gliding silently over open fields at dusk, it's nicknamed the "ghost owl" for good reason. Unlike the Tawny, Barn Owls prefer open countryside, nesting in barns, hollow trees, and even church towers.

Their diet consists mainly of field voles, and their hunting technique is a marvel – using asymmetrical ears to pinpoint prey in complete darkness. Barn Owls are sensitive to habitat loss and weather extremes, making them a conservation priority. Thanks to nest



Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*
Photo by Bob Brewer on Unsplash

box schemes and habitat restoration, their numbers have seen hopeful rebounds in recent years to around 4,000 pairs. They have nested at High Elms for many years.

Little Owl: The Feisty Foreigner

The Little Owl (*Athene noctua*) is a relative newcomer to Britain, introduced in the late 19th century. There are estimated to be around 6,000 pairs now. Despite its diminutive size – barely larger than a thrush – it’s packed with personality. With piercing yellow eyes and a stern expression, it often perches boldly on fence posts or telegraph wires during daylight hours.

Unlike its nocturnal cousins, the Little Owl is crepuscular, active at dawn and dusk. It feeds on insects, small birds, and mammals, and is known for its bobbing head movements and comical hopping. It thrives in farmland and orchards, often nesting in old trees or stone walls. In the fields to the south of Rouse Farm, on the Nash Circular Walk, you might be lucky to spot one in the veteran oaks.

Together, these three owls form a fascinating tapestry of British avian life. The Tawny’s deep hoots, the Barn Owl’s ghostly glide, and the Little Owl’s cheeky stare each tell a story of adaptation, survival, and beauty. They remind us that even in our modern world, wild magic still stirs in the hedgerows and moonlit fields.

Protecting these owls means preserving the habitats they depend on – woodlands, meadows, and old buildings. Whether you’re a seasoned birder or a curious night-walker, keep your ears tuned and your eyes peeled.

Bob Harrop



Little Owl, *Athene noctua*
Photo by Rusty Watson on Unsplash

Athena the Owl

In 1850, whilst on holiday in Greece, Florence Nightingale rescued a Little Owl from a group of children that were tormenting it after it fell from its nest in the Acropolis, in Athens. She took it back to her home in Derbyshire and had it as her pet, often keeping it in her pocket. Appropriately, she named it Athena. It died in 1854, just before she went off to the Crimea, and was stuffed. It can now be seen in the Florence Nightingale Museum which is situated next to St. Thomas’ Hospital, London.



Stipple engraving by F.Holl Wikimedia

Keep Your Car Safe



A few months ago, a friend of ours had their car stolen from their driveway by two men in hoodies. Footage from doorbells showed them going down the road trying several cars before they took his. There was also a post this week on the Keston Village Community Facebook page by someone saying they had had their (remote keyless entry) car stolen off their driveway at 9pm at night.

Nowadays, for thieves taking cars with keyless engines relay theft is their preferred method. The majority of cars now use a key fob that transmits a short-range radio signal for locking and unlocking which is convenient for owners.

However, criminals are finding it easy to steal cars working in pairs using a

relay box – one stands near the car and the other near the house where the keys are. This device amplifies the signal from the key fob and relays it to the car, so that it unlocks. The thieves can then just drive away.

You may have a steering lock that would make this difficult, or a tracking system to make it easier to get your car back, but one of the most effective ways to prevent relay theft is to use a signal blocking device. These are sometimes called Faraday boxes or pouches and block the radio signal emitted by your key fob, so that thieves cannot use the method above. A tin might do the job, but would not be as effective as a dedicated product. Many are available and are not overly expensive, especially the pouches, but make sure you get one big enough if you have a large keyring! Ideally the keys should be put in the pouch every time the car is not being used, but definitely overnight. Spare key fobs will need to be protected too. Police recommend Defender Signal Blocker but there are plenty of other makes to choose from as well.

Sally Churchus

The Great Global Greyhound Walk



On 28th September, an incredible 50 local Sighthounds from the Bromley group – Greyhounds, Lurchers, Salukis, Deerhounds, Whippets, Afghan hounds etc. met by The Greyhound pub for an hour's walk and returned for refreshments. What an amazing sight!

What We Do



David's love of brass band music started back in his home town of Gloucester at age six. He tells the tale that he was given a choice of learning to play a musical instrument or going to elocution lessons! He first played the cornet, finally ending up on the euphonium which he still plays today. Gloucestershire had a rich talent of brass bands which he plugged into from an early age. He played in amateur bands around the world during his RAF career and now plays in three Kent based bands on a regular basis, joining the Biggin Hill Concert Band in their early days in 2012. The band now practices every week on Monday evenings in Keston Church Hall. Brass music is his favourite genre of music but he likes the variety of playing in three totally different bands to keep his "lip" in and his interest sparked.

I got involved with the band about eight years ago when it was obvious a music librarian was needed. I am not musical at all, but have learned a great deal in my time as librarian. It has been

interesting watching the band grow and develop, especially when they are performing out on a public stage either raising money for local charities or to keep the band running.

Currently we have around 38 members, all are "amateur" players who just love playing music. They come from different walks of life, a range of ages and a wide mixture of abilities. We are extremely fortunate to have found a Musical Director who is very much a professional musician making her way in the competitive world of conducting who wanted to give something back to the grass roots music scene. Her expertise, patience and boundless enthusiasm have helped the band hugely over the past few years.

The band always needs to add to its membership and extends a very warm invitation to anyone who would like to pop along to a rehearsal night. You may be a regular player already or perhaps you have not picked up your favourite instrument for many years and would like to start again. Whatever your motivation, you will be most welcome to come and try us out. We particularly need Flute, Alto Saxophone, French Horn, Trombone and Tuba players. If interested, please go to our website bigginhillconcertband.co.uk and complete a contact form.

Our next concert is a joint venture with Biggin Hill Memorial Museum and Chapel on Friday 5th December starting at 7.45pm, taking you on a Magical Musical Christmas journey. Tickets are £17.50 each including museum entry and seasonal refreshments by email from ticketsforconcertsbhcb@aol.com.

Carol and David Wynn

Richard's Ramblings



“Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana”. When the ‘missus’ and me moved to Leaves Green way back in 1970, little did we imagine we’d be here all these years later as neither of us had lived in one place longer than five years. This has the effect of making us aware of the many changes that have taken place – as is natural.

The greatest change, without a doubt, is the use of the airfield. Club flying took place at the southern end and only on rare occasions did a large plane use our end. Security fencing was non-existent and the control tower was rarely in use. So... sometimes we used to take a short cut to the woods situated between the aforementioned place and the West Kent golf course.

I still walk to these woods but now it’s just me and ‘the dog’. I’ve created a path which runs parallel to the airfield for several hundred yards, (oops-metres!), then heads down to the golf course and

back to its start. When I started it many years back we used to collect Holly and Yew at Christmas and while the children and I were there we’d make a fire and sit round it toasting marshmallows* and enjoying a drink of some kind or other.

As dusk settled and the fire threw out warmth and light we would frighten each other with “What’s that? I heard a twig snap over there!” or a “Don’t look now but I can see eyes peering at me from over by that bush!” Or maybe “Did you hear that rustling behind us, it might be a goblin!” Oooh...spooky!

As the years progressed our little expedition grew in size as friends joined us and it became part of the Christmas tradition. I recall that one year back in the 80s, it was gently snowing as we set out in the afternoon and by our little fire in the woods we felt snug and secure. It was an icy sort of snow that made a pitter-pattering sound as it fell and through the trees we could see the golf course gradually turning white in the diminishing light of the day.

“What’s that? I heard a twig snap over there!”

The sequel to this little tale is that at the time I’d joined the church choir and it was choir practice night. Colin Child, with whom I sang at the time, remarked that he could smell wood smoke. When I explained that it was on my clothes and related the reason why he was totally enchanted and often recalled the event over the passing years.

*Actually it was bread and sausages.

Richard Geiger

What's On

Prayer Walks

First Tuesday & Third Wednesday 9.30am

The Green opposite Greyhound pub

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

Men's pub social

Third Wednesday 7pm The Greyhound

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

Keston Book Club

First Wednesday 7pm The Fox

More information from 07503 268001 or angelahollamby@gmail.com.

Friends of Keston Common Walk

First Wednesday 2pm from Keston Village

Sign opposite The Greyhound

Walks last up to 2 hours. Well behaved dogs welcome. Good footwear advised.

New Keston WI

Second Wednesday 1.30pm-3.30pm

Keston Church Hall

Contact Helen Best on 07715 880889.

Book Reading Fellowship

Monday 1st December 2pm Gravel Rd

Come and discuss books with some Christian content that you have read over tea/coffee and cake. If you want to come, please let Sally Churchus know on Tel: 020 8462 8750 or email editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk.

A Magical Musical Christmas

Friday 5th December 7.45pm

St. George's RAF Chapel, Biggin Hill

Biggin Hill Concert Band Christmas concert details on p19.

Christmas Flower Arranging Workshop

Thursday 18th December

1.30pm for 2pm start

Keston Church Hall

Do come and enjoy creating your own Christmas arrangement with us. There will be assistance to hand if required. You will need to bring secateurs, flowers, foliage, a container and maybe some baubles. Oasis will be available to purchase. There will be the usual raffle together with tea or coffee and biscuits. Everyone welcome. Further information from Maureen Marshall on 01689 857260.

Morris Men Boxing Day Dancing

Friday 26th December 12.30pm

The Greyhound pub

Come and join the throng and enjoy the 62nd year of this tradition.

Beat the Blues Coffee Morning

**Saturday 17th January
10am -12 noon
Keston Church Hall**



Coffee and cake £4
• Bring and Buy stall
• Raffle



Magazine Deadline

Please send material for the February/March issue of The Keston Magazine to the Editor, Sally Churchus, before Wednesday 7th January by email to: editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk or contact her to discuss ideas on Tel: 020 8462 8750. Thank you.

Laughlines

☺ Cheap at the price

A little boy was pestering his parents for a baby brother or sister. They kept telling him 'maybe one day, but we can't afford one yet'. Then, one Sunday, the little boy dragged his parents over to the noticeboard – there was an advertisement for a coming sale at the church and announced 'Children: free'.

☺ Father Christmas

Of course, I had expected that by the age of seven it was inevitable that my son would begin to have serious thoughts about Father Christmas. Sure enough, one day near Christmas he suddenly said: "Mum, I know something about Father Christmas, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy." Taking a deep breath, I asked him what that might be. "Easy," he said, "They are all nocturnal."

☺ Sign for Christmas

An old country preacher wanted a sign that told people driving on the nearby dual carriageway about the miracle of Christmas. The clerk at the sign-making company was astonished to receive the message: 'Unto us a child is born, 6ft long and 3ft wide'.

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