

The Keston Magazine

News of your Parish and Village



June/July 2026

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*Jesus answered..., "the water I give them will become in them
a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:14*

Thought for the month



Looking up, looking forwards

Do you remember a time when you planned or looked forward to a once in a lifetime event, putting all your energy into making it the best it could be? The day arrives. The event takes place. Everything goes so perfectly that it is beyond your wildest imagination. But afterwards, all that follows seems to be a bit of an anti-climax.

In the Christian calendar, June marks the beginning of 'Ordinary' time. Most of the big Christian festivals have been observed. Jesus's resurrection from the dead at Easter is the climax. Jesus has the victory over death, a reason for joy and jubilation. The challenge is how to sustain the euphoria of the Easter promise.

For the disciples, two things happened. The first was the Ascension of Jesus exactly forty days after Easter, when the risen Jesus was taken up into

heaven as the eleven disciples gaped agog. The East window in Keston Parish Church depicts this scene with the words 'I will be with you alway'. The disciples looked up.

The second was at Pentecost, ten days later when the disciples were all gathered together. A violent wind came from heaven and tongues of fire settled on each of them and they were able to speak so that their hearers could understand them in their own language. The Holy Spirit became their guide. The future held no fear for them, but promise in Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. Though things would not be easy, the disciples were sent out with hope in their hearts to share the good news of Jesus Christ. The disciples looked forwards.

Ordinary time is anything but an anti-climax. It is an important time to reflect and work out how Jesus's life, ministry and teachings speak into our daily life and relationships, allowing us to grow in faith and discipleship. As we gather round the table week by week, we are reminded of the Father who cares for us, the Son who died for us and the Holy Spirit who is God with us. Looking up and looking forwards helps us to dwell indeterminately in the joys and triumphs of the extraordinary.

In the words of the prophet Isaiah, *Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint.* (Isaiah 40.31)

Belinda

Rev'd Belinda Beckhelling

From the Editor



Now some warmer weather has come, I feel more like going out and about and visiting places. On page 18 you can read about my (our) trip to Bromley College – no, it's not on Bromley Common and I'm not thinking of studying there! I also went with Keston resident, Diana Stalker Muir, to an unusual graveyard garden near London Bridge which is an easy train ride away. I'm sure you'll be interested to read her account on page 12. Both are places I knew nothing about until a couple of months ago.

Another simple train journey away is Rochester Cathedral, who are opening their three acre garden to the public for a day. Even if you don't go to see that, the cathedral itself would be a good day out. So often we visit these sorts of places when we are away but forget to go to those closer by. Keston is part of Rochester Diocese, (and the smallest parish), although in the past we have been part of Canterbury Diocese. Speaking of which, Archbishop Sarah Mullally completed a 140km pilgrimage walk from St Paul's to Canterbury, including a stop at Rochester Cathedral, prior to her Installation in March.

Whether you are venturing further away or staying close to home, let us enjoy exploring and be thankful for our freedom and blessings.

Sally Churchus

Rochester Cathedral Garden Open Saturday 6th June 10am-3pm

The three acres of gardens hidden behind the cathedral will be open to the general public with admission by tickets purchased in advance for £10, via their website www.rochestercathedral.org, although tickets are selling out fast.

Many areas of the garden have been planted to reference the Cathedral's long history. An Infirmary herb garden full of herbs which monks may have used to cure an array of ailments has been planted. A small vineyard inspired by references to the monks at the medieval Cathedral producing fine wines. The rose garden pays tribute to a Victorian Dean of the Cathedral, Samuel Reynolds Hole, famous for his knowledge and expertise about roses.

Visitors to the gardens will also be able to see the work which has been done to improve the biodiversity of this urban space. Beehives have been installed increasing pollinators in the grounds. A pond has been created in the fruit orchard attracting more wildlife including dragonflies. Wildflower meadows and trees provide space for wildlife to flourish.



Leaves Green Village Sign Restoration



Richard Geiger and the sign during restoration at the very end of March 2026

Around about the year 2000 there was a rush, up and down this land, to produce millennium signs – after all it's not every day this event occurs! Keston and Leaves Green were no exception and it fell to me to produce said items. This I considered an honour and a challenge! I produced a design for each and on approval set about their creation – even supplying and erecting the oak post for Leaves Green (the Keston one came courtesy of Bromley Council).

Digging the 'ole was quite straightforward and with the help of the farmer and his tractor, (we had a farm along from the Kings' Arms pub in those days), we carted it to the site and popped it in the 'ole. Once the cement in which it was embedded had set, it was a simple matter, with a ladder either side, to haul the finished article up and bolt it into place. There it sat through wind and rain for 20 or more years, unmolested.

Then along came the vandals! Now the material used, in which to create the image, was a sheet of 5mm perspex. The actual image on either side was created using various colours of self adhesive vinyl. The charming chappies had used the sign for target practice and blown away complete chunks of the image. They were doubtless satisfied with their efforts and went away content! In this condition the sign stood as a testament to current values!

However, nature had other ideas and intervened in the form of a powerful storm one dark night. When morning came, there hung the sign, sad and dejected it had hung its head, so to say, in sorrow and shame! Instead of standing proud and upright it now lay horizontal... aah! But what's this I hear... it's risen from its sorrow and will soon stand, I'm told, proudly with its head held up high.

Richard Geiger

Thank you, Richard, for restoring the sign! Ed



Photo of sign in 2023 by Roger W Haworth on Wikimedia

Orpington Repair Café



Bring along any broken small electrical items like kettles, coffee machines or toasters, clothes that need mending, woodwork or small general repairs and skilled volunteers will endeavour to fix your items in a sustainable way.

The service is free but donations would be welcome (£5 is suggested). One item per person please.

The café is at St Mary's Church Hall, Worlds End Lane, Orpington BR6 6AG and is open every third Saturday from 10am -12.30pm so the next dates will be 20th June and 18th July.

The charity aims to extend the lifespan of products, actively reduce waste and have a positive impact on the environment. Repair it, don't bin it!
Email: orpingtonrepaircafe@gmail.com

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee,
'How great thou art! How great thou art!'
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee,
'How great thou art! How great thou art!'*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
he bled and died to take away my sin:

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home – what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
and there proclaim, 'My God, how great thou art!'

Stuart K. Hine (1899-1989)

My Favourite Hymn



I have many hymns that I enjoy and it has been difficult to choose just one! The favourite during my early years was ‘All things bright and beautiful’ but now, in my later years, it has to be ‘How Great Thou Art’. The music may not be quite so lively but it is strong and powerful and the words evoke emotions and memories reminding us of our beautiful world.

The original version of ‘How Great Thou Art’ was written by Carl Gustaf Boberg, a poet and lay preacher, in 1886. He was walking home with friends from his church near Kronoback in South East Sweden on a beautiful summer afternoon when clouds appeared on the horizon and soon there was a violent thunderstorm. They rushed for shelter until the storm abated and calm returned. That evening, at his home overlooking the coast, he was inspired to write about the greatness of God in nature – ‘O store Gud, nar jag den varld beskadar’ (O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder) – and his words were set to an old Swedish folk tune.

Since then these words have been translated into many different languages

and the English version owes its origins to Stuart Hine, a missionary and country music singer who was working in Ukraine and Poland during the 1930s. The third verse was inspired by his observations of the joy in which the Ukrainian people responded to the Gospel of Christ. The final verse looks to the future and was dedicated to the refugees after the Second World War – one refugee thought he would never see his wife again and was longing for the day when they would meet in heaven. The hymn became very popular in the 1950s during the Billy Graham crusades and in 2019 it was 2nd (after Jerusalem) in the Songs of Praise vote for the UK’s favourite hymn.

As well as living in England’s green and pleasant land I have been fortunate to have visited several other countries and the magnificent beauty of the world around us is one of the things that I praise God for. The words of this hymn and its powerful music bring back memories...

... sitting on a quiet hillside overlooking Moraine Lake in the Canadian Rockies. The passing clouds and towering mountains were a constantly changing reflection in the still waters of the lake. We sat there, alone with nature, ‘in awesome wonder’.

... arriving in Switzerland on a dark evening and waking up the next day to see majestic snow-capped peaks glistening in the morning sunlight while church bells were ringing in the clear alpine air. ‘Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee. How great thou art! How great thou art!’

Pam Thomas

Do You Love Flowers?



Keston Church flower arrangement
without use of oasis

The Guild of Church Flower Arrangers are coming to Keston Parish Church for one night only – Monday 1st June at 7.30pm. The Guild started in 1966, and they are an ecumenical group which visits many churches around Bromley, where experienced demonstrators create beautiful floral designs suitable for worship spaces.

If you love flowers, and would like to broaden your knowledge, do come along on Monday 1st June. They meet on the first Monday in the months of March, June, October and December. Do go to their website for more details and to see where else they are demonstrating, and also look at their amazing gallery of incredible arrangements, which will encourage you to come along!

Membership is £10 per year, but they also invite anyone interested to attend and the entrance cost is £5. We will have refreshments after the demonstration.

We would welcome people to join our team of Flower Arrangers who take it in turns to arrange flowers throughout the year in Keston Parish Church, and at special festivals when we decorate the church extensively. Tuition and help can be given as well as reimbursement for the flowers. As recommended by the C of E we are trying to move away from using oasis as it is so damaging for the environment, so we are being quite creative! Please contact Tricia on hallbookings@kestonparishchurch.org.uk or Tel: 07748 655240 for more information and/or to book your place for the demonstration. Car park available.

Tricia Coward



Prayer that is shared at Guild of Church Flower Arrangers Bromley branch meetings

Obituary

Rosemary Cogswell

4th June 1932 - 15th March 2026



Dear mum, in her later years, often claimed to have had a boring life. We beg to differ. Mum was born in Tunbridge Wells in June 1932. Before her second birthday the family moved to a new home in Hayes. It was in Chatham Avenue that mum's sister Audrey and brother Francis were born. Mum's early memories were of attending George Lane school, Girl Guides and having to go into the Anderson shelter in the back garden during the Second World War.

At 14 mum went to Bullers Wood Technical College to learn shorthand and typing skills. These skills served her well throughout her life enabling her to work as she moved around the world with dad. On Ascension Island she worked for NASA as men landed on the moon and in Nigeria for the Danish Ambassador.

In 1953 mum married Barry, an engineer with Cable and Wireless. Mum travelled alone out to Brazil to join dad. Such courage and a sense of adventure. Can you imagine it? You leave behind everything and everyone you know and love to travel for three weeks by boat across the Atlantic to a country you

know nothing about and where you do not speak the language.

Mum's sense of adventure, spirit and 'can do' attitude stood her in good stead throughout her life. She integrated into life in Brazil, learnt to speak Portuguese and secured a job with an American who she had met on the trip to Bahia. Both John and I were born in Brazil and mum continued to travel with dad to Ascension Island and Nigeria. It was with great sadness that she had to accept that John and I had to stay in the UK at boarding school in Sussex.

In 1981 mum and dad moved to the house in Heathfield Road, Keston, which was home to mum for 45 years. It has been a home filled with family and friends, a home where we, as a family, have laughed, cried and had fun together, a house enjoyed by both four grandchildren and six great grandsons.

As ever, once settled in Keston, mum integrated into village life. She was the chair of the Tuesday Club, belonged to the local Women's Institute, was secretary to the local branch of The Guide Dogs for the Blind. She also played bridge as well as supporting Keston Church activities, Messy church, the flower roster and more.

Both Rosemary and Barry were long standing congregation members at Keston Church. The church community gave them a sense of belonging and for mum the support and love expressed following dad's death was invaluable.

We, as a family, would like to express our thanks to Tricia Coward and many others of the church community who have supported us following mum's death, in her home on March 15th, Mothering Sunday.

Alison Eagle

Father's Day



Father's Day on Sunday 21st June is a day to honour and appreciate our fathers and father figures.

But how do these special days ever get started, anyway? Well, Father's Day began because way back in 1909 there was a woman in Spokane, Washington, named Sonora Louise Smart Dodd. That year she heard a church sermon about the merits of setting aside a day to honour one's mother. Mother's Day was just beginning to gather widespread attention in the United States at this time. But Sonora Louise Smart Dodd knew that it was her father who had selflessly raised herself and her five siblings by himself after their mother had died in childbirth. So the sermon on mothers gave Sonora Louise the idea to petition for a day to honour fathers, and in particular, her own father, William Jackson Smart.

Sonora Louise soon set about planning the first Father's Day celebration in Spokane in 1910. With support from the Spokane Ministerial Association and the YMCA, her efforts paid off, and a 'Father's Day' was appointed. Sonora Louise had wanted Father's Day to be on the first Sunday in June (since that was her father's birthday), but the city council didn't

have time to approve it until later in the month. And so on June 19th, 1910, the first Father's Day was celebrated in Spokane. Gradually, other people in other cities caught on and started celebrating their fathers, too.

No two fathers are alike, of course, but various polls across the internet reveal some interesting similarities of what people have most valued in their dad. These traits include: being dependable, approachable, protective, patient, affectionate, honest, willing to listen, compassionate, and having spent time with them when they were young. That's quite a list! People whose fathers had even some of those strengths have a lot to be grateful for.

Thankfully, our Father in Heaven certainly has all those traits. Jesus said the Father is totally dependable and protective of us, longs for us to turn to Him, and is full of compassion and love. And we are to call Him 'Abba' – Daddy!

Parish Pump

MESS CHURCH

Tuesday 21st July
10 am - 12 noon
Keston Parish Church Hall
Church Road BR2 6HT

10am Welcome drinks/snacks
10.15am Crafts and Activities
11.30am Celebration with music
11.45am Lunch (provided)

Everyone welcome

Church Services



Photo by Ethan Doyle White on Wikimedia Commons

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

Third Sunday in the month

10.00am Holy Communion with Sunday School for children

Every Monday

7.40am Morning Prayer

8.00am Holy Communion (said)

Second Saturday in the month

11.20am Healing & Wholeness Service
Anointing/Laying on of hands offered and with the option of Holy Communion (wafer only)

Corpus Christi

3.00pm Thursday 4th June
Holy Communion

From the Registers

Baptism

22nd March

Jessica Cecile Akers
(born 20th March 2025)

Funeral

29th April

Rosemary Alison Cogswell
(aged 93 years)

Burial of Ashes

21st February

Margarethe Knox Blackman
(aged 87 years)



Akers family at Jessica's Baptism

What were The 'Winchester Geese'?



Diane looking at railings and plaque on Redcross Way

The Mysteries

I first came upon the story of the 'Winchester Goose' in the Southwark Mystery Play of 2010, which was written by the playwright John Constable in liaison with the then Dean of Southwark, Colin Slee. It was a very moving performance set within Southwark Cathedral itself, one in which the spirit of the 'Goose', one of the prostitutes buried in Crossbones burial ground, returned to tell her version of history. Mystery plays have been performed since the early Medieval period until the current time, depicting biblical stories enacted by the local community to both entertain and educate. In the Southwark Mysteries the 'Goose' is aligned to the figure of

Mary Magdalene depicted in the Gospels; the play became a very powerful testament of the grace of God towards the Goose and the forgiveness of Christ, very much in the same way as the story of Jean Valjean in the book 'Les Misérables' by Victor Hugo. There is a BBC clip of John Constable and Colin Slee talking about the Southwark Mysteries and the other central theme of the play: the idea that when we judge one another we lose sight of our own spiritual journey 'To judge another is itself a sin'. The Southwark Mysteries were not without controversy; some people were offended especially by the earlier 2000 version which was set within both the Globe and the Cathedral.

The Crossbones Graveyard

My next connection with the story was when I passed the gates of the Crossbones Graveyard and Garden of Remembrance one evening and noticed the multitude of ribbons and keepsakes attached to the gates with the names of those who have died. It was a striking sight and one that motivated me to then visit the graveyard. It has been estimated that 15,000 lie buried there, at first 'Winchester Geese' – prostitutes who were not allowed to be buried in consecrated ground and then those who could not afford a burial, over half of whom are thought to be children. It is the unconsecrated site for those outcast from society in Southwark.

The History

From the 12th-17th centuries the Bishops of Winchester controlled Southwark, which was outside the jurisdiction of the City of London, and had the right to license and tax the borough's prostitutes known as 'Winchester Geese'. There were just under 40 Ordinances (rules) signed by Thomas Becket in 1161 in order to give an element of safety to both clients and prostitutes, who worked for brothels or 'Stews'. Even though the Stews were controlled by the Bishop, the 'Geese' were still considered to be outcasts and were recognised by the cloaks they had to wear whenever they ventured outside. Licensed Stews ended in the 16th-17th centuries, but the graveyard remained in use for the very poor until 1853. Skeletons were discovered by archeologists in the 1990s when London Underground built an electricity substation for the Jubilee Line extension. Sadly, amongst the dead, they

found examples of extreme suffering such as a young woman's syphilitic skull with multiple erosive lesions; she would have been only 4 foot 7 inches and aged between 16-19 years old.

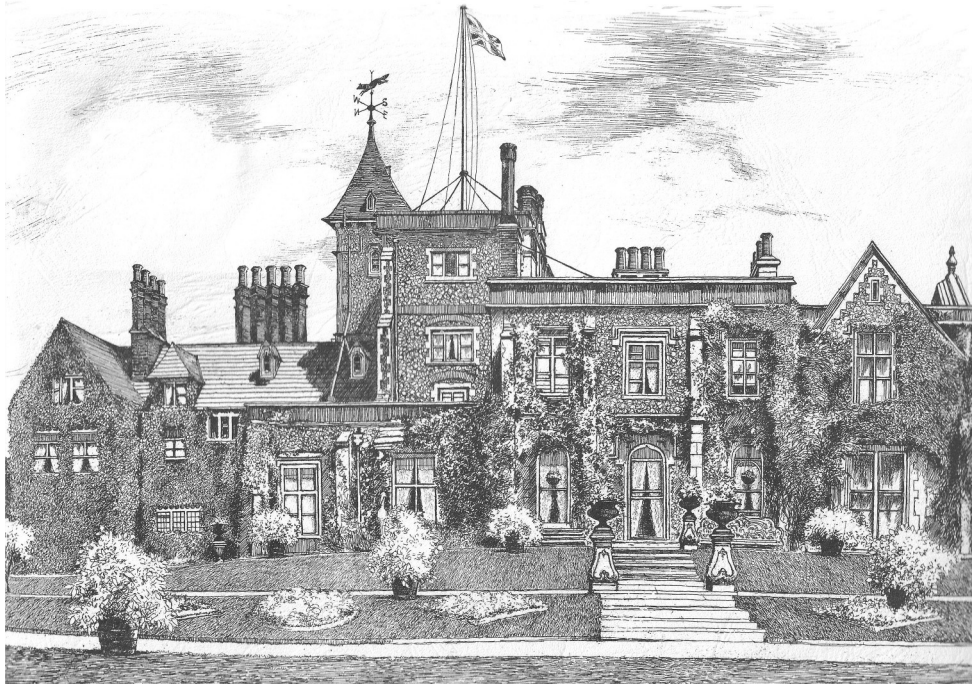
The Garden of Remembrance

Friends of Crossbones and others worked with Bankside Open Spaces Trust to create this Garden of Remembrance on the site of the old burial ground found on the corner of Union Street and Redcross Way, SE1. It is open to the public from 12-2pm Wednesday to Friday each week and is well worth a visit. Vigils are still held at the gates to honour the outcast, both dead and alive, and they have a calendar of other events throughout the year. I have attended an evening memorial which gave all those present a chance to 'pause' and consider those who have died in very sad circumstances. There are sculptures, other artwork, shrines and plants set around the garden in memory of those who have been sidelined, misunderstood or have greatly suffered in society as were the Winchester Geese centuries ago.

Diane Stalker Muir



Ravensbourne House



Pen and ink drawing of Ravensbourne Lodge 1905 *Courtesy of Angela Godfrey*

Ravensbourne House, accessed now from Brockdene Drive off Westerham Road, was commissioned by Mrs Joanna Maria Bonham-Carter after she bought the plot in 1853. She named it Ravensbourne Lodge. In the census of 1861 she is recorded as living there with three children, four guests and seven servants.

On occupying her new home she immediately began designing a garden that involved considerable landscaping and a major planting scheme. This included exotic species from many parts of the world including a redwood (*Sequoia giganteum*) from Western America. The Sequoia is thought to have cost £50 when planted, which equates to the annual salary of the Head

Gardener. The tree (pictured on the front cover of the magazine) is now about 28m tall, making it one of the tallest trees in Keston.

Unfortunately, the cherry laurel and rhododendrons have now become invasive species that need controlling.

She also authorised the building of a boating pond in her garden (now Pond 4), fed by the diverted river Ravensbourne which entered the pond via a metre high waterfall; the stonework can still be seen but no longer with a flow of water. Additional small waterfalls were inserted in the stream to add interest for those walking in the garden.

Mrs Bonham-Carter, with the help of her daughter Alice, found time to



Bonham-Carter grave in Keston churchyard

promote a night school for men. The aim was to improve the men's education and enhance their prospects of employment. The family were friends of the Darwins and her sister Frances was the mother of Florence Nightingale. Mrs Bonham-Carter bore 10 children but was widowed for the last 46 years of her life. She died in 1884 at the grand age of 92 and is buried under a Celtic cross in Keston churchyard.

By 1890 the house and grounds were leased to Mr Percival Hambro, but one of Joanna's sons, Henry, continued to live at 'Woodside' on Commonsides, so the family's connection to Keston continued. In 1896, Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, High Sheriff of Kent, bought the estate. He had achieved remarkable success in business as an importer of meat, making him a very wealthy man and a generous benefactor to the village. One of his gifts was the land at Keston Mark on which the Methodists built their new church of brick in 1926, (now the Al-Emaan Centre), replacing the earlier one of wood which stood on the opposite side of the road where the car showrooms are now.

Renowned parties were held at Ravensbourne in the years prior to 1914. On the Coronation of George V

in 1910, an evening house party was entertained with torches and floating lights placed on the boating lake to illuminate the scene while guests used the punt in moonlight to enjoy the full effect of the spectacle. At his daughter's coming out ball in 1914, a ballroom was built over the lawn overlooking the pond.

Sir John's widow lived there until 1934 and on her death the property was sold to Jeffrey Ellingham, whose family occupied the estate until 1947 when it was sold to Tate & Lyle, the sugar refiners. In 1967 Seisomograph Services, an oil consultancy company, bought Ravensbourne. Lawdon Property services were the next owners and in 1981 planning permission was granted for detached houses on land east of the river Ravensbourne with access to Westerham Road, now Rolinsden Way and connected roads. Ravensbourne House has been converted into luxury apartments.

If the double barrelled name rings a bell, the famous film actress Helena Bonham Carter is a descendant of Joanna Maria and John Bonham-Carter.

Tudor Davies, edited by Sally Churchus



Ravensbourne House and Pond 4 today

Keston's Crayfish Population



Traps supplied by Environment Agency team

As part of the Keston Ponds restoration project aimed at improving water quality, enhancing biodiversity, and restoring riparian habitats, a series of ecological surveys was undertaken to investigate the crayfish population long reported within the site.

The primary objective of these surveys was to identify the species present and to develop an understanding of population density across the ponds. Fieldwork was conducted by the *idverde* Biodiversity Manager and Bromley Council's Project Manager, under the supervision of the Environment Agency and in accordance with all required permits. Surveys were carried out during the autumn and winter months using baited traps, which were strategically positioned along pond margins and retrieved within a 24-hour period.

Survey results confirmed the presence of a well-established population of non-native Turkish crayfish (*Astacus leptodactylus*) within Pond 2, the main waterbody adjacent to Fishponds Road.

No evidence was found of other invasive species, such as the American signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), and traps placed in Ponds 1 and 3 remained consistently empty throughout the study period.

Turkish crayfish were first introduced to Britain in the 1970s for the restaurant trade. Since then, accidental escapes and deliberate releases have led to the establishment of wild populations, particularly across parts of South East England. It is likely that the population observed at Keston Ponds was introduced within the past three decades.

As omnivorous organisms, Turkish crayfish feed on aquatic plants (macrophytes) and invertebrates, and high population densities can have



Crayfish claws are smaller and more even than those of their relatives, lobsters

Friends of Keston Common Walks



Adult Turkish crayfish can reach between 15cm and 30cm in length and their colour can range from pale yellow to dark green depending on environmental conditions.

detrimental effects on sensitive aquatic ecosystems. Within Keston Ponds, their presence may contribute to competition with fish for food resources, interference with angling activities through bait removal, and potential declines in fish recruitment due to habitat degradation. While Turkish crayfish could outcompete the native white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) if their ranges were to overlap, they are not known to carry crayfish plague, a disease that has severely impacted native populations.

Ongoing monitoring of the Turkish crayfish population will be undertaken by the Environment Agency, with strict biosecurity measures in place to prevent further spread into the wider Ravensbourne catchment.

Ben Jarvis, Biodiversity Manager *idverde*



The twelve of us on the FoKc walk on the 6th May had a wonderful time! After setting off we soon came across cowslips, broom in full bloom and a large swathe of lily of the valley. Crossing over to Padmall Wood, some bluebells were still in flower plus beautiful Solomon's seal and there was plenty of birdsong. Passing the ponds and along the gravel 'ditch' we crossed Westerham Road to take the footpath to the Wilberforce Oak, which had come into leaf and looked in good health. We returned on the lower footpath past ancient oaks and headed towards the Keston Bog, finding delicate cow wheat on the way. We were all lucky to see a sizeable roe deer on the far side of the bog as it came bounding across in front of us.

Different routes are taken each time, and sighting of a deer cannot be guaranteed! Do come along at 2pm on the first Wednesday of the month, meeting at the Keston village sign. Walks can last up to two hours and well behaved dogs on leads are welcome.

Sally Churchus

The Secret Behind Bromley's red brick wall



Entrance to Bromley College from London Road

Many of us have spent years wondering what lay behind the long red brick wall on London Road, opposite Beckenham Lane by the Swan & Mitre pub. In April, a group of us from Keston Church enjoyed a tour of the ancient building and discovered it to be Bromley College, built in the 17th century. In 1666 Dr John Warner, the then Bishop of Rochester, died leaving £8,500 for a hostel or alms houses for 20 widows and the children of clergy, to save them from destitution. The widows were each given an allowance of £20 per annum. The original plan was for it to be built near Rochester Cathedral, but no suitable site could be found. A special Act of Parliament allowed it to

be built in Bromley, near the Bishop's Palace on the (old) Civic Centre site. Though the Wren Quadrangle is now attributed to Captain Richard Ryder, one of Christopher Wren's surveyors, it has the hallmarks of his influence. It consisted of 20 houses built round the quadrangle with a Chapel and larger residences for the Chaplain and Treasurer. Each small house had four stories, with room for the maid in the

Confusingly, the word 'college' can also mean a body of clerics living in community and supported by endowment. (Collins dictionary)



The Wren Quad, with clock tower. The 36 Doric columns almost certainly came from the Royal Exchange destroyed in the Great Fire of London. Blackened fire damage can still be seen on them.

attic, whose duties included getting the water from the pump and fetching in coal.

In 1774, the then Bishop of Rochester, Zachary Pearce, started plans for the 'New Quad' to be added on and in 1840 Sheppard's College was founded for unmarried daughters who had lived with their mothers in Bromley College but had nowhere to live once their mothers had died.

The current Chapel on site, the third one, is Victorian and fittingly features women of the Bible in the stained glass windows (as well as Jesus). The small 1934 Compton organ has 15 dummy pipes above the console concealing the

mouth of a duct leading the sound up from the organ chamber on the floor below. This unusual arrangement can cause a bit of a draught!

Nowadays, the Colleges accept retired C of E clergy and spouses, widows, widowers and daughters of clergy; with those from Rochester Diocese given priority. It currently houses 50 people on the four acre site and is a real oasis in the middle of Bromley.

The Colleges will be open in September for Open House Festival and (free) tickets will be available a month in advance for those wanting to enjoy a tour themselves.

Sally Churchus



Water pump



Current Chapel

What I Do



For me, food has always been about more than just flavour – it's about connection, memory, and bringing people together. Since founding Concerto Catering in 1999, I have spent over 27 years creating unforgettable dining experiences, from intimate private dinners to vibrant weddings and large-scale festivals.

Every event begins with a simple conversation. It's about understanding how people *feel* about their event. What they love to eat, how they want the day to flow and then building the food around that. The result is a completely tailored experience: elegant canapés and full bar service, beautifully curated three to five course meals, relaxed buffets, theatrical BBQs, colourful paellas, or late-night munchies that keep the celebration alive.

Despite the variety, I have a soft spot for two standout cuisines: curry and paella. They couldn't be more different, but both are full of life – rich in spices, natural colour, and designed to be shared. That's what food should do.

At the heart of Concerto Catering is a commitment to quality that has never

wavered. Every dish is prepared from scratch, with the business still rooted in our home kitchen in Keston. Today, the company is also proud to be the recommended caterer for Bromley Old Town Hall. Alongside this, Concerto Catering has consistently maintained a 5* Food Hygiene rating, reflecting its dedication to the highest standards of safety and care.

My philosophy is simple: start with the very best ingredients. Years of working closely with trusted suppliers mean I know exactly where to source exceptional meat, fish, and seasonal produce.

But for me, the real reward lies beyond the plate. Talking about food brings people to life, so many memories are tied to what we eat. It's that emotional connection – seeing guests light up, hearing the buzz of a room, clearing empty plates and knowing an event has truly come together that keeps my passion alive after nearly three decades. Of course, working so closely with life's milestones from engagements and weddings to christenings and, sometimes, final farewells, I have been part of many deeply personal journeys. There are occasions that stay with you but it's a privilege to be trusted with them.

It's this blend of skill, care, and genuine love for what I do, **along with my amazing family and team**, that defines Concerto Catering. And if you ask me what makes it all worthwhile, the answer is simple: That feeling at the end of an event, when everyone is happy – that's everything!

Fiona Harry, Concerto Catering
www.concertocatering.com
01689 860560/07870 584880

What's On

Prayer Walks

First Tuesday & Third Wednesday 9.30am

The Green opposite The Greyhound pub

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

Men's pub social

Third Wednesday 7pm The Greyhound

Come for chat, drinks and a meal.

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 on leads welcome. Good footwear advised and water to drink in warm weather. See article on p17.

New Keston WI

Second Wednesday 1.30pm-3.30pm

Keston Church Hall

Contact Helen Best on 07715 880889.

KestFest 2026

Saturday 6th June 1-6pm

The Green opposite The Greyhound pub

Come and enjoy this community event with friends and family.

Armed Forces Day

Saturday 27th June 10am-5pm

RAF Biggin Hill Museum & Chapel

Entertainment and fun for all the family plus Antiques and Militaria valuation from 11am-2pm with Charles Hanson from TV's *Flog It* and *Bargain Hunt*.

Bring your treasures to get them valued for a donation to the charity.

Book Reading Fellowship

Monday 13th July 2pm

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.

Mental Wellbeing Coffee Morning

Saturday 1st August 10am-12 noon

Keston Church Hall

Come for a chat over tea/coffee and cake. We will hear tips about how we can keep ourselves well.



... er Vicar, it's about that flower Mrs Brindle's brought back from her foreign holiday...

Magazine Deadline

Please send material for the August/September issue of The Keston Magazine to the Editor, Sally Churchus, before Wednesday 1st July by email to: editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk or contact her to discuss ideas on Tel: 020 8462 8750. Thank you.

Laughlines

☺ Do Not Bend!

This morning I saw an envelope on my doormat that said 'Do Not Bend'. I stood there for ages trying to figure out how to pick it up.

☺ Question

If your supermarket has been lowering prices every day, how come nothing is free yet?

☺ Press

For the benefit of those who doubt the power of the press, here is a clip from a newspaper: 'Owing to the overcrowded conditions of our columns, a number of births and deaths are unavoidably postponed this week.'

☺ Growing Up

Your child has started growing up when he stops asking you where he came from and starts refusing to tell you where he's going.

☺ Exam

In the examination paper, the professor wanted us to sign a form stating that we had not received any outside assistance. Unsure of whether he should sign the form, a student admitted that he had prayed for the assistance of God.

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