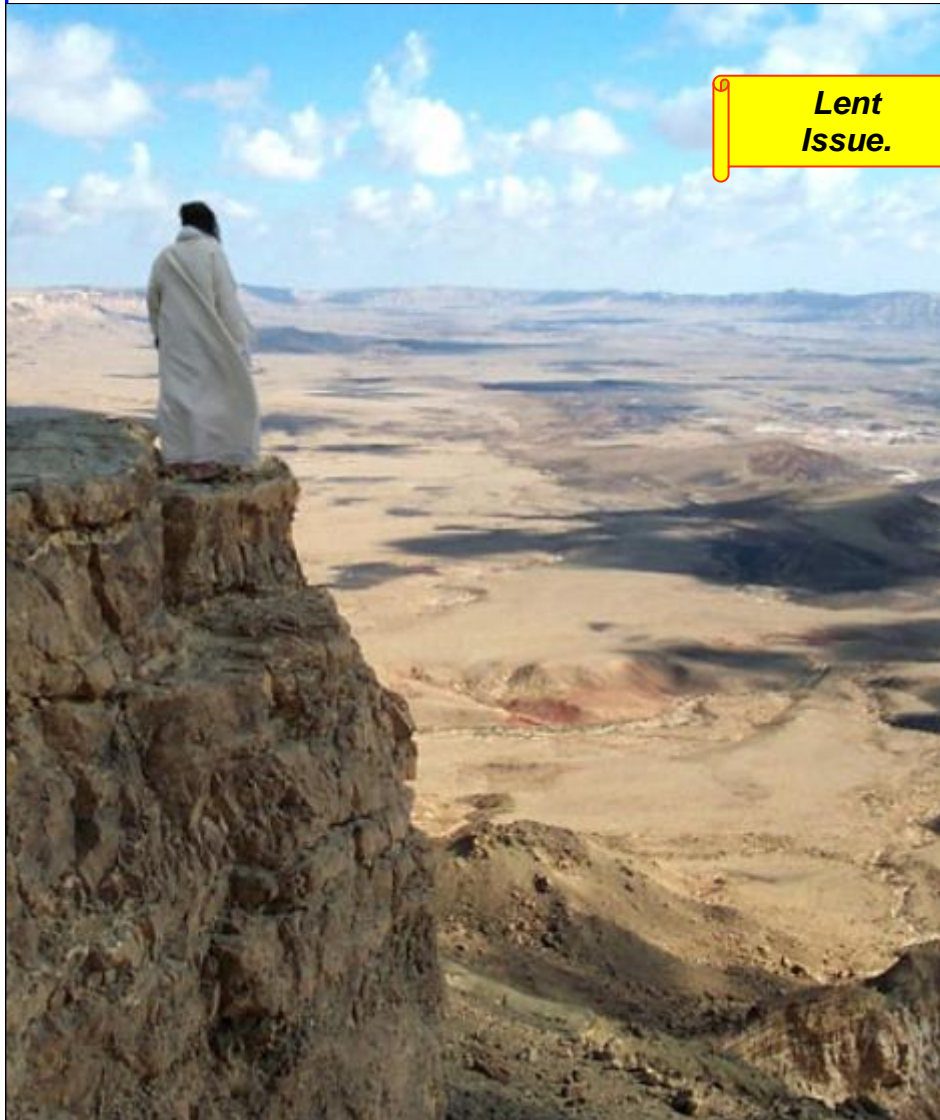


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***Lent
Issue.***



February /March 2021

£1



**Cover: Jesus in the wilderness. Top see Garden Report page 14
Bottom see page 21— litter frustratingly out of reach behind a wire fence!**



From the Vicarage

We live in unusual times, so this month I would like to start with a prayer, from the Christian Aid website:

Loving God,
strengthen our innermost being
with your love that bears all things,
even the weight of this global pandemic,
even the long haul of watching for symptoms,
of patiently waiting for this to pass,
watching and waiting,
keeping our gaze fixed on you,
and looking out for our neighbours
near and far.

Instil in our shaken souls
the belief and hope that all things
are possible with your creative love:
for strangers to become friends,
for science to source solutions,
for resources to be generously shared,
so everyone, everywhere, may have what they need,
for your perfect love that knows no borders
may cast out any fear and selfishness that divides.

May your love that never ends
be our comfort, strength and guide
for the wellbeing of all and for your glory.

Amen

It seems to me that hope must be founded on something real and at last we have tangible reasons to hope. Some of you have had your jabs but the rest of us know they are coming. We eagerly anticipate the days when freedom is restored and simple things like a meal in the pub or a coffee shared with a friend can be experienced without fear. In my last two letters I have drawn out the difference between the eternal hope of love in Christ and the sort of hope that can be shattered by a change in our situation.



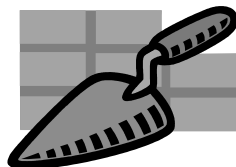
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Which brings me to the Christian Aid Prayer. This global pandemic has been and continues to be soul sapping, emotion draining and mind numbing in its effects on everyday life. Nearly everyone I meet says they are tired and just want it to all go away.

Yet looking at the Christian Aid website I am reminded that this is a global pandemic and no one really knows the casualty or infection rate in Africa, as its just one killer out of a number of dreadful diseases. I'm also reminded that a child that loses a parent or a parent a child, a brother a sister or grandchild a beloved grandparent, suffers in the same way here as in Africa, China or any other country so we as a global community linked together in our pain, loss and suffering. Yet we are also linked in our hope in God and science, the joy that an end may be in sight. Mostly in our love for our missed friends and family, so yes, let us pray in unity with the rest of the world.

Looking ahead, you know that our church is closed for public worship at present **but will open as soon as possible**. Please keep an eye on the notice board or our website for further details.

LENT

Lent Reflections will run weekly on Thursdays from February 25th to March 25th over Zoom at 2pm. The subject will vary each week. Images will be used to look at Christ's last journey and to aid looking at the scriptures and reflecting on them. It is anticipated that the meetings will be about an hour but no more than 90 minutes. Links will be sent out as usual in Frank Puranik's news email.

EASTER

It's always a battle in my mind for which is the most holy date of the year. Is it Christmas, the Death of Christ, the Resurrection of Christ or even the Ascension of Christ? Well for most of us it is Easter Sunday that is most important; at present though we cannot predict with any certainty that our church will be open then but it is beginning to look a bit more hopeful. Please do watch the church website and notice board for details.

Paul.

LEMFEST 2021

A note from the Lemsford Fete Committee

With the present Covid restrictions and expanded 2021 plan we have unfortunately been forced to cancel the 2021 fete. We believe it is just too early to hold the event and keep everyone safe.

Do not fret though, we are planning a socially distanced music based event on the St John's school playing field on **Saturday 10th July**. It will be our first Lemfest!

Hold the date, keep an eye on the Fete website and we hope to see you there.

VILLAGE NEWS

Janet Maisey writes:

"The annual river clean up took place in November so many thanks to everyone who turned up to help. The recent tradition of inviting the village children to help decorate the Christmas tree had to be curtailed this year. instead a box of decorations was left by the tree so that as the children passed by they could hang a bauble or two of their choice.

The planned Christmas festivities had to be cancelled as we entered Tier 3 however a Christmas quiz via Zoom was organised for Adults together with a special handout

quiz for children. The children were then each presented with a selection box as Father Christmas was not available this year.

The Meet & Greet sessions are currently via Zoom and will be next held on Thursday 25th February and Thursday 25th March".

MAGAZINE COPIES

There is a digital version of the magazine on our website but if you would like a paper copy in the post it can be yours for only £9 for six issues. Post your address with cheque payable to "PCC of St Johns Lemsford" to Jackie Spry 57 The Crescent Welwyn Herts AL6 9JG. Or ask Gina Butler our Treasurer for our bank account details, letting Jackie know too. Or—and how whizzy is this –pay via the QR code.



Parish Magazine copy date for the next issue: **22nd March**

We are very sorry to report that Liz passed away on the 9th December 2020 at the Isobel Hospice. Her funeral was at Harwood Park on the 8th January 2021. Gus is planning a Memorial Service at St John's followed by a celebration of her life at Townsend tennis club in St Albans, when the situation allows. He and she compiled a record of her life : extracts below.

Liz was born February 11th 1946 in St Albans and lived in Beechwood Avenue there until she was in her twenties. She went to Lyndale School, Hillside Road for 2 years and then to St Albans High School for Girls from 1953-63. She played most sports at school including lacrosse and hockey, where she was the first team goalkeeper, but loved cricket and won awards for her bowling.



In 1959 Liz joined Townsend Tennis club in St Albans, which had a large junior section with discos, darts and table tennis. The bar/pavilion suffered from two fires, but they were nothing to do with Liz as she liked to frequent them both. She spent as much time as possible at the club, playing on the grass courts mainly, but also on the shale courts in winter. She won the junior mixed tournament twice with Richard Baker and entered the Herts Junior Championship, reaching the semi finals both years. She later won the Ladies Doubles three times and the mixed Doubles on the 5th time of trying. This was not with Gus who was playing cricket as opposed to tennis. Liz also played the oboe in the Herts Junior Orchestra for a couple of years.

She started her working life as a librarian at the St Albans City Library. She also worked in various libraries, loved the mobile library and had a couple of years with a PR agency in London, organising exhibitions. She then worked at the QEII teaching school library and Hatfield Polytechnic library, where she also played cricket, mainly against other colleges and the Vagabonds Ladies team and often ended up in the Poly cricket school bar for drinks etc. She drove home in her Hillman Imp, pretending to her mother that she had not been drinking.

Liz and Gus had been aware of each other through football and cricket sporting links for several years. When they were both studying for a Sports Diploma in 1973, they were asked to make up a double date with another couple of friends. This went well and they married in 1974 at the URC Church in Homewood Road, where she had been a Brownie, Guide and Guide leader, although if her mother had her way it would have been in the Lady Chapel in St Albans Cathedral. They lived in Cheshunt for several years, firstly in a flat and then a house, during which time Rachel was born in QEII in 1978 and then Samantha in 1981. The family moved to Welwyn Garden City in 1984, where Liz was on the PTA of both Applecroft JMI and Stanborough School and organised their very popular Craft Market events.





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As the children grew up, Liz took a part time job at Notcutts, which was in line with her love of gardening and then got her final job as a librarian at Oaklans College. Originally this was based at Smallford Campus, which she loved and later at the Welwyn Garden City Campus till she retired.

As the girls grew up there were many enjoyable family holidays at a family friendly hotel in Swanage. Liz loved the area around Swanage and we always had to visit Monkey World to see our adopted chimpanzees Eddi and Seamus and visit the many local attractions. After this it was Tenerife for many years with and without family, sometimes twice a year. Also there were some enjoyable holidays at the Manor House in Devon with tennis friends from Gosling. Eventually the two girls moved out and found partners, who became husbands. Samantha married Grant and grandchildren Eli and Isaac followed. Rachel married Gary and they have Bobby the dog. Liz loved her time looking after the grandchildren and also when taking Bobby for long walks.

After retiring Liz carried on with her sports, playing even more. There were regular tennis sessions on Monday and Friday with the mid week group at Townsend, which Samantha joined as well. Liz also took up bowls, firstly at Welwyn & District and then at Shire Park Tewin and was a much better player than she thought she was. She regularly played in friendly, competition and league matches against other clubs. She won several trophies and in 2018 was Ladies Champion at Shire Park. This meant she played in the Champion of Champions competition the next year, but unfortunately she played a young England player and although leading for most of the match, just lost in the end..

For the past 12 years or so Liz regularly attended St John's Church Lemsford. She organised the Annexe bookings, helped out at Social events and looked after part of the Church garden.

Most of you know that Liz enjoyed the bar and all social life at Townsend and the bowls clubs. She, very competitive, was a stickler for the rules and correct etiquette and fought hard when she was playing. This continued with her year long illness, fighting hard to make the most of her time, accepting the inevitability, making all preparations and wishes known and not complaining, but with just a few tears occasionally. In the end the year long illness became too much and she passed away in the Hospice with her family around her.

Her family came first throughout her life, with Townsend and sport in general second and gardening third. She was also very appreciative of all the friends she made throughout her life particularly if they loved sport or Manchester United. Liz even accepted a Spurs fan as her husband for 46 years.

Teaching in a pandemic

For many years I worked in banking in the City but left, exhausted and deflated, about ten years ago. After some years at home with my two daughters, and many years volunteering at the local primary school that my girls attended, I took the plunge into working at a secondary school. For the last few years I have worked in a hybrid teaching role at Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School, a local comprehensive school.



You may wonder what a hybrid role is. Well, I teach maths to small groups of girls in years 7, 8 and 9 (ages 11-14), helping them to improve their skills and fill gaps that they may have developed along the way. At the same time my role also includes supporting maths lessons for years 7 – 11 (up to GCSE exams), working alongside a class teacher so that some of the weakest girls have additional teaching support in the classroom. Lastly I am a cover teacher, teaching lessons for absent staff, normally in maths but occasionally in a range of other subjects.

It was going well until last March. Rather suddenly schools were closed, and learning shifted online. This created a number of issues – children suddenly separated from their friends, some without computers at home, some without broadband, some unable to even retrieve all their books in time before the lockdown began. And there were many staff who were unfamiliar with teaching online. I was one of them, unfamiliar with the Google Classroom system and how to set work, how to mark work and how to return it to students. What I quickly discovered was that Google has done rather a good job developing a platform that enables students to see a separate page for each subject, a place online for them to go for each period of the school day where they will find work set by the subject teacher, perhaps a Powerpoint or a video clip to watch. They can communicate instantly with their teacher who is 'live' in the lesson to help.

Students can complete written tasks directly into a Google document that allows the teacher to see every key stroke as they type, and a chance for the teacher to comment, advise or encourage them. Over time more and more lessons have also started to include live video content, utilising the Google equivalent of Zoom, allowing for live chat between teacher and students to create an experience a little more like real lessons.

As a result of this technology it is possible to educate without actually being at school, but it has taken a huge effort. For example, girls without computers at home have been supplied with a loaned school laptop and wifi access. Marking work online takes much longer than it would with exercise books, and setting work is also harder.

Right, enthusiastic girls seem able to thrive with any format but others can find it more difficult to engage. There is a constant worry about girls who can't cope with learning in such an isolated way. School is such a social experience for children (and staff) that every day away adds to the anxiety that some students are experiencing. With a demanding curriculum there is the constant additional pressure for teachers to maintain progress as if they were in a real classroom.

Despite this I still find my role incredibly satisfying but, like many, I can't wait to be back in "real school" again.

(Kevin is our Finance Lead—Read him on our finances on page 19)

From Ted Webb:

We go to church on Sunday, to pray and worship God.

Not all our neighbours do this; some think it's rather odd.

But knowing God is there for you, to help you through the day,

is more than just a good reward for the time you take to pray.

And the mental lift that we get from this, at a time of Covid stress, makes belief in God more focussed, and the cares of life are less.



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December and January saw the country back into lockdown! In mid-December, after a careful review of the Covid situation, Paul and we decided to suspend Public Worship at St John's for the immediate future. The PCC supported the decision and will review the situation again towards the end of February.



During this time, **Paul** will continue with his online daily prayers and Sunday services. We are very grateful to him for doing this and for the regular coffee get-togethers.

In time for Carols by Candlelight, the Christmas tree and the crib were put up – thank you to **Brian** and **Jackie** for helping us with this. Flowers were also in church – thank you to **Jean** and Janet for arranging those. The cold church meant that the flowers lasted for several weeks - it was sad that no-one was able to appreciate them!

During December, a variety of services were made available online. Rev Kathryn Alford, from our Hatfield Team, produced an online “Living Advent Calendar” in preparation for Christmas that was well received. The **Puranik** bubble, supported by Paul and **Cate**, gave us a treat with their presentation of lessons and carols and **Jo Brooks** organised an action packed Christingle. It was lovely to see so many children taking part and many adults too! In addition, our church bells rang out on Christmas morning accompanied by drone photography of the church and its surroundings. A big thank you to the **Titmus family** for that and to everyone, who helped to make Christmas special during these challenging times.

Many people will remember **Rev Ron Ingamells**. He and his wife sent written best wishes to everyone at St John's for Christmas and the New Year. His message was put up in the porch.

We have been fortunate to hear recorded sermons delivered by **Bishop Richard** of Bedford, **Bishop Michael** of Hertford, and Archdeacons **Dave** and **Jane**. A live Zoom service of Morning Prayer from St John's was led by Bishop Michael on 10th January. The following week he led a similar service of Holy Communion from St Michael's. Bishop Michael joined the PCC on 13th January for Bible study where we were encouraged to consider our vision for St John's before moving on to the business meeting.

Our churchyard continues to look neat and cared for. Thank you to **Mary Douglas** and her group for tending every aspect of our churchyard. The spring bulbs are already visible in the flower borders so we look forward to a cheerful splash of colour in the weeks to come (*see Mary's report overleaf*).



We both attended a Zoom meeting of the Hatfield Team Council met on 12th January. It was interesting to hear news from each parish about Christmas services and activities, before we analysed the events of the past 10 months and considered what we had learned from this period. A request was made for the Team clergy to preach at each other's churches – this was agreed and arrangements will be made post-Covid. Next steps are to work together towards Easter, and beyond!

We are monitoring the church building during lockdown to ensure that all is well. The heating is off but the vicar's vestry has become very damp. A dehumidifier has been put in there and is proving to be very effective. The mice are no longer in evidence since the rodent repellents were plugged in! We have some issues with the annexe floor but steps have been taken to deal with these. We're keeping up to date with information received and, hopefully, sharing what's happening at St John's with everyone through the website, Frank's emails and messaging and also the website – many thanks to our publicists. We look forward to better times ahead when we can all meet together for worship once more.

Nigel Johnson & Jenny Roden

This year for your lockdown exercise do walk around the **church gardens** to see snowdrops and other flowers generously donated by friends. Our band of volunteer gardeners have worked on the gardens through the winter, as have relatives of the folk in the graves. If you start in the Garden of Remembrance, you will see the little clumps we have planted between the memorial stones. Towards the boundary with the school are many more indigenous little snowdrops seeing the light of day because we have cleared the dead wood and ivy from this section of the hedge. We have planted saplings found around the gardens to renovate the hedge, so there are small holly and yew trees joining the hawthorn and blackthorn there. Continue towards the Annexe and you will notice some double snowdrops, called "*flore pleno*" in the North border. These have been naturalising for years, and we have planted a sack of daffodils that will emerge later in Spring. Go round behind the Annexe and you will see we are starting to recover the bank, removing ivy and planting donated snowdrops and marigolds. On the south side of the church towards the boundary wall are interesting snowdrops with larger green markings on the inner petals. Finally, I will have some named snowdrop varieties to sell *in the green* in aid of the church if anyone would like to get in touch with me.

Mary Douglas

see picture inside front cover





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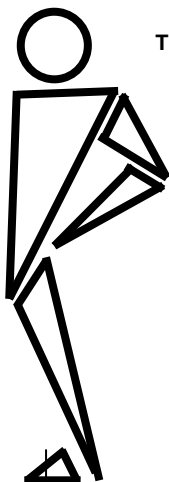
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The Lemsford Local History Group has no immediate plans for meeting or talks but we are still providing information to enquiries from around the world. An interesting email was received from Cyprus: *'My name is **John W. Lawton**. As I approach my 80th year I have been increasingly interested in my family history. On my mother's side, the May's I have already found out a lot. My father's side, the Lawton's very little. From his old army service book I found out he was born in Hatfield, Hertfordshire on 28th January 1907.'* We were able to provide information to John and in return he sent us material on his family and photos of sunny Cyprus.

We also had a request from **St John's School:** *Class 3 at St John's Lemsford will be studying our local history after Christmas. We would like to spend some time finding out about Lemsford, and then we will look at WGC and Hatfield. We will be going for walks through the village to see how it has changed. I wondered if you had any resources that I could borrow, to really bring the topic to life! I was hoping that I could tap into the fabulous knowledge that you have of our village, to really excite and engage the children. Thanks in advance, Gemma* LLHG are very happy to pass on our resources to the children, and look forward to guiding them round the village when we are free to do so.

Bury Cottages on Great North Road, sometimes known as Crescent Cottages due to their layout, are 100 years old this year. The four pairs of cottages are on the triangle of land between Brocket Road (B653) to Wheathampstead and Great North Road (B197) to Welwyn.

Their story starts in 1919 at an auction on 21st December when The Right Honourable William Henry Baron Desborough sold off several plots of land. The one destined for the cottages was bought by the Rural District Council of Hatfield. (The auction is well known because it was there that Ebenezer Howard bought five lots for a New Town he called **Welwyn Garden City**). They were built in 1921 to house soldiers returning from service in the Great War - 'Homes fit for heroes'! Originally they were called 1 to 8 Bury Crescent but are now known as 1 to 8 Great North Road, except for the people at No 3 who prefer to use the original name.

When first built, the cottages had a sitting room, dining room and a small kitchen downstairs and three bedrooms upstairs. Water came from a hand pump near the path between Nos. 4 & 5. Initially there were no mains services but later a single story brick and wood extension was built for a bathroom and toilet. The unusual pinkish floor in the dining room was laid by an Italian firm whose methods were a closely guarded secret. *Picture dates from 1925; cottages arrowed.*



The first Tenants

#1 Thomas William Coleman, wife, Grace Sarah and daughter Elsie Grace, born November 3rd 1921

2 William Lyon (1884 - 1st October 1971) and wife Rhoda Adelaide

3 Walter J Welch (1884 – February 8th 1959), wife Emma Rosina (1903—October 20th 1993) 1901 Census: House Boy, Domestic Later: Carpenter.

4 Samuel John Skeggs (1876 – 1969) and wife Mary Louise 1901 Census: Railway worker, Fireman

5 Arthur Ernest Freeman (1895 – January 3rd 1996), wife Margaret Elizabeth 1899 - June 14th 1981 1901 Census: Gardener

6 Augustus Cecil Wren (1895 -) wife Evelyn

7 James Walby (1877 – June 4th 1932) and wife Rose

8 Bury Cottages Frank Lines (1883 – September 1st 1959) and wife Margaret Edith (1882 - September 14th 1961) 1901 Census: Gardener, 1916: Carpenter

See inside back cover for more pictures

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Regular readers will know that we have had a series of annual deficits over the last seven or eight years. A year ago we were looking ahead to 2020 and expected another deficit of perhaps £8000 for the year. But then Covid arrived, the church was closed, Sunday plate collections ended, the fete was cancelled, weddings postponed, and social events and other fundraisers scrapped. After a degree of panic and some head scratching the finance team did several things, including asking our regular givers who give by cash payments to switch to electronic payments. This was successful and we are very grateful to those that made this change. We also cut expenditures where we could, and temporarily cut our monthly Parish Share payment by half. We even introduced new ways to give, via text message and via the Give a Little card payment system – please see our website for more information about those.

So where did we end up? Our £8000 deficit forecast at the start of 2020 turned into an underlying year end deficit of £11,776 once we had made up the accumulated arrears in our Parish share payments which had developed over the spring and summer months. Whilst our biggest deficit yet there was a feeling that it could have been even worse. The story doesn't end there, however, as something else happened in 2020. We received a wonderful, generous legacy from the estate of **Lesley Elliston** of £20,000. This gift eliminated the annual deficit referred to above. Indeed, legacies have been a vital contributor to stabilising our overall accounts in recent years, and to allowing us to retain some reserves for the years ahead. Legacy gifts now make up almost £39,000 of our remaining reserves of £53,700. Without legacy gifts of almost £36,000 in the last five years our reserves would now be down to not much more than £20,000.

As we now look ahead there is a mixed picture for our finances. We again expect another large deficit for 2021, in the region of £18,000. The loss of income from the 2021 fete cancellation will again present problems, and there are some capital works we have to do within the tower this year which will contribute to the expected deficit. However, we are hopeful of a successful re-negotiation of our annual Parish Share payment this year (currently £44,665), a cost which has become disproportionate relative to our income and church membership in recent years. Perhaps most importantly we also hope that we will soon be able to resume normal services and church life, and come together again as a community.



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Several years ago one of my sons gave me for Christmas a litter picker, as I had indicated an interest in such things. For a week or two I was out on the local streets searching for bottles and cans that had been tossed aside, eager to add them to my blue recycling bin. As usual when the novelty had worn off the picker ended up on a shelf, gathering not litter but dust.

Anyway, a few weeks ago, when yet another lockdown had begun, I was stimulated to dig it out and take it on our new regime of daily walks. My wife and I try to walk for at least half an hour, but we have found it a challenge to find much variety in our perambulations. The litter picker has given us a fresh impetus. Now we both keep eyes peeled for litter, she taking one side of the path and I the



other. What joy when a bottle is espied buried deep in a hedge, or a can lurking under a bush! Now I know how the widow felt when she found her mite.

Frustrations abound though. Litter louts seem to enjoy tossing their debris over fences, so that they land just too far away for the picker to reach. The picture inside the front cover shows a fenced off section by the River Lea, at Mill Green.

And this harmless activity is not without incident. Today we were walking in a quiet area when we passed a truck at rest while its driver was having his lunch. As I approached wielding my picker he suddenly threw open his door and advanced towards me at speed. "Have these" he said, thrusting some grey plastic bags into my hand. He was from the Council charged with collecting litter and these bags were his stock in trade. My wife was appalled because I had not recoiled quickly enough from this stranger who although well-intentioned had forgotten to put on a mask. She spent the whole way home chiding me.

So what has this to do with Nature? Well, what had got me to revive the picker was an appeal on Radio 4 from Chris Packham for *Keep Britain Tidy*. According to him discarded bottles and cans are a death trap for small mammals (shrews and mice) who get in to them but cannot get out. 4 million of these creatures die every year in this way he said. (I am not sure how he worked out this figure but he sounded convincing). How long I keep this up is anyone's guess but now I have more reason to keep going.

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As Jesus resisted temptation in the wilderness,
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May I hold these thoughts in my heart
throughout Lent and beyond. Amen

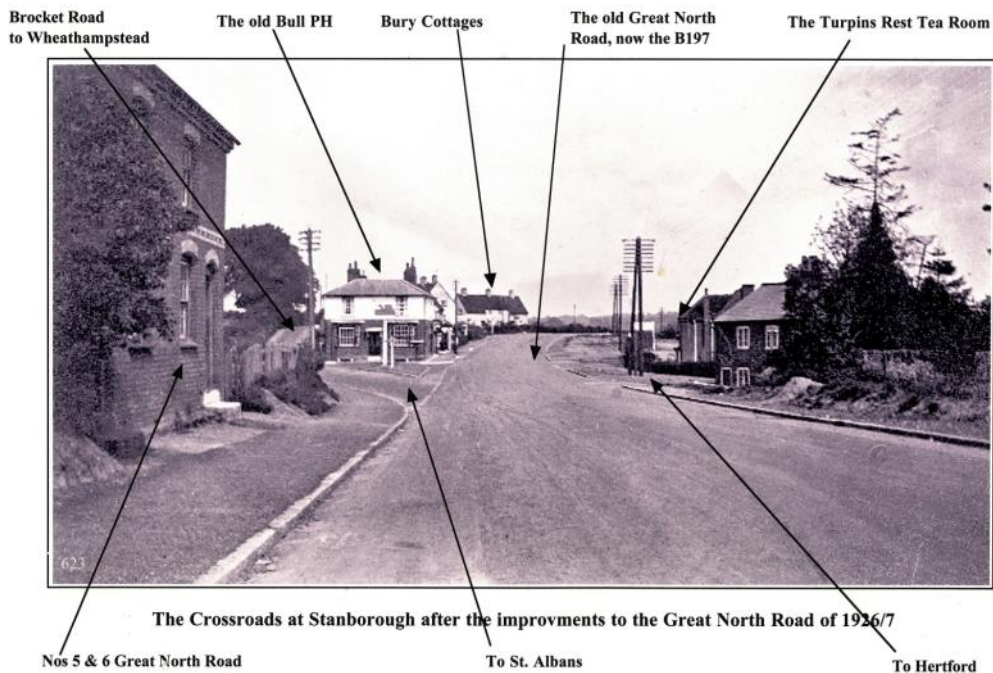
The Methodist Church

And Finally:



THE PRIEST CARVES OUT SACRED SPACE AT HOME
IN ORDER TO RECORD LITURGY FOR SUNDAY.

Courtesy of Rev Jay Sidebotham



See article on pages 16/17. Picture dates from 1927.
 Maps show growth in housing LHS 1923 RHS 1938





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