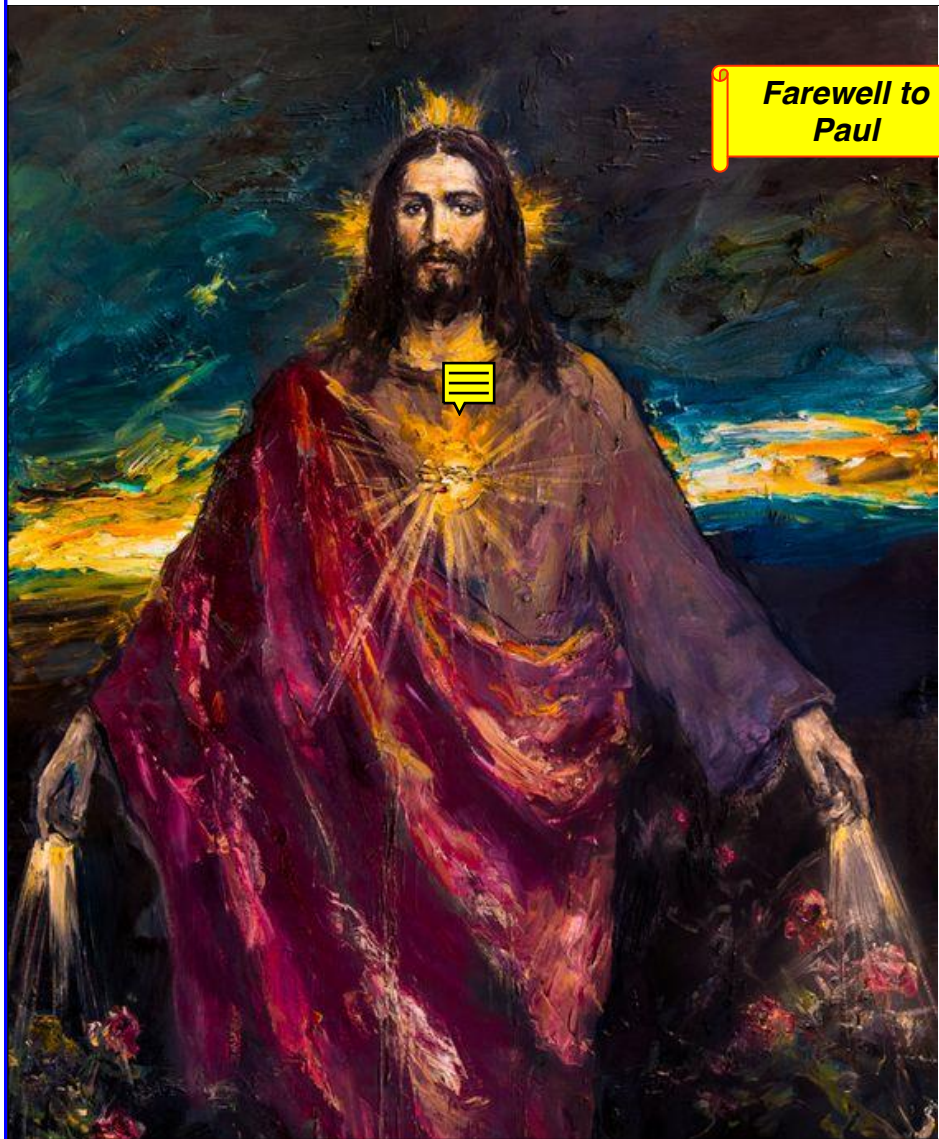


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**Farewell to
Paul**



April /May 2021

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Cover: Jesus as Light of the world, by Jose Luis Castrillo, self-taught Spanish artist born in 1959.

Picture above: Paul in front of St Johns, taken from a drone by a camera with panoramic lens.

From the Vicarage

I

Easter is almost here, and we go back to worshipping in our churches on Palm Sunday. This is the day we recall Jesus riding into Jerusalem, a joyful journey, a journey of hope and anticipation (like going back into church). The story however changes by the end of the week; Jesus has been tried and crucified. In a few days it has gone from joy and hope to catastrophe and all appearing to be lost.



Darkness and despair though only have its place for a few days then the resurrection happens and Christ rises gloriously from the grave. He is seen by those who followed and even Thomas has his doubts put to rest. There is breakfast on the beach and hope again rises within the Son of God's followers. Can you imagine it as the news spreads "Jesus Lives" or "He is alive", it would have been the most exciting thing they ever heard.

It was life changing, world changing even! I find myself wondering if the disciples 2,000 odd years ago could ever have imagined a world of 7.75 billion people of which approximately a third or about 2.5 billion are Christians. That's a very large number of people believing that Jesus came to the world with the purpose of making it possible for us to have a real relationship with God, to know him in prayer and in our everyday lives. To really know him, not just now but for eternity.

I know that getting through this last year would have been more difficult for so many of us had it not been for the knowledge that we are cared for by God and that he knows us. The Psalms say that he knew us "when we were being knit together in our mother's wombs", and I can think of nothing more intimate than that.

As you probably know by now, I am leaving St Johns and St Michaels at the end of April to become Minister in Pastoral Charge (a long name for Vicar) for Panshanger Church. This is an LEP (Local ecumenical partnership), which is to say that it has more than one denomination involved - in this case Methodists, Baptists, United Reformed Church and of course the Church of England. As the Diocese's Ecumenical Officer for Hertfordshire I enjoy working with other denominations.



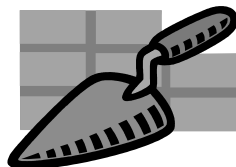
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I have loved being vicar of what must be the prettiest church I have ever seen, but a church is so much more than just a building. A church is really the people that worship God there. The congregation of this church are as welcoming as the church is pretty. Anyone walking into St Johns will know they are welcome - indeed it was once said to me that it felt like welcome was built into the building itself.

Then there is the most amazing school that is cared for by the church with weekly acts of worship, not to mention much love and prayer. It has been my deep pleasure to serve the school as Vice Chair of the governing board and Safeguarding Governor.

I have also loved worshipping with the choir beside me and Tim opposite me. I have worked with some wonderful wardens. Thank you all!

However, it does not stop there. This last year despite the lockdowns and stresses many of us have got to know each other better. Some people have really gone beyond the call with daily extra help, technical help, and many of you have shared the gift of a helpful or caring word. There are way too many people in the Church and school to mention names but I hope you know who you are.

St Johns sits in the Village of Lemsford, and I have really enjoyed meeting many people from this lovely community, I guess the highlight was the afternoon tea two years ago but it has been a privilege to serve this community for baptisms, weddings and funerals and the following care.

Of course I will never forget the joy and work of the Lemsford Fete - so busy, noisy and the smell of fast food – and very much hope it will resurrect even stronger next year.

This is an amazing parish and I pray that God continues to bless you and that a new Vicar is found soon

God Bless you

Paul.

LEMVEST 2021

A note from the Lemsford Fete Committee:

Whilst the 2021 Lemsford fete had to be cancelled, the organising team have been busy setting up a replacement event for the 10th July, which we've called **LemFest**. This will be your chance to attend a safe, organised music event of local bands/musicians in the grounds of St John's School for the afternoon, 1-7pm. The event will be limited in numbers and by pre-purchased tickets only, so book early to avoid disappointment. Food and drink will be on sale at the event and again can be pre-booked.

If you're interested in coming, see our advert inside the back cover. Grab your friends and make contact to book tickets. Tickets can be booked through lemfest-admin@lemsfordfete.co.uk Hope to see you there.

Electoral Roll

Lucy Earl writes: "It is time to review our Electoral Roll. It is important that we have an up to date Roll of all those who participate in St John's worship and support church life and we are required to update the Roll each year. This year we will undertake the review of the Roll between 3rd

and 17th April. If you are already on the Roll, and wish to remain on the Roll, you don't need to do anything. If you are a member of the church and have been so for at least 6 months, and would like to join the Roll (or if you wish to be removed from the roll), please email Lucy.earl@btinternet.com before the end of March.

If you're joining I will forward an application form for you to complete."

Details of Services

We are not yet able to confirm a calendar of Services for the months ahead but our website will be regularly updated and as usual **Frank Puranik** will email weekly to say what is going on. If you do not get these simply contact him at frank@puranik.org

Best wishes

From the Editor: I am sure I speak for the whole congregation in wishing Paul and Cate every success in their new Church.

Parish Magazine copy date for the next issue: **23rd May**

Time is passing by and it will soon be Easter, quickly followed by Paul leaving us to take up his new appointment. Whilst we have no idea how long St John's will be in an interregnum, we are planning ahead as far as possible.



For the immediate future, we need to take into account any Covid restrictions still in force, but, we look forward to a more “normal” time in, hopefully, the not too distant future. We plan to continue with our usual variety of services. However, some flexibility will be needed, particularly with Morning Prayer and Holy Communion, as the latter is dependent on the availability of clergy.

To date, services are planned up to the end of December and we'll be able to welcome back some familiar faces, as well as some new ones, to lead our worship. Several weddings are booked too, so there is a lot to look forward to!

Thank you to everyone who has offered to continue as Sidespeople, read, lead intercessions, arrange flowers, ring the bells and do all the other jobs that support our worship at St John's. There are so many roles that we will need to cover but at the moment we're going one step at a time. For the time being, whilst the choir are eager to return, the group has to be limited in number and the congregation will still not be able to sing.

Later in the year, we take the positive view that a full choir and congregation can join together in praise and worship. Gradually, we hope to see social activities return – such interaction has been greatly missed by so many people. The speed of this, and everything else, is dependent on government and diocesan advice.

Meanwhile, we will be asking for your support and help in getting St John's back on its feet again. By working together, the wounds of the pandemic will fade and our church will be strong and grow from all the experiences that lie ahead.

Nigel Johnson & Jenny Roden



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We can all recall sitting tests in our school days - not normally an enjoyable experience. Well testing just became even less pleasant but even more a part of school life. Testing for Covid-19 that is, a new and critical part of the recent return to school. Although it is great to be back in school it is still hardly a normal school experience. At Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School we have conducted some 2000 Lateral Flow tests on site in the last two weeks, turning the school hall into a medical test facility with staff and volunteers dressed in full PPE, welcoming the girls back to school ! Most children have had two Covid tests in their first few days back and many have had three tests. Staff similarly have been taking these Covid tests twice each week. And now the routine changes again to one in which each child will take twice weekly Covid tests at home and report their result to school. A positive test result will still mean ten days at home self-isolating.



Despite these extraordinary measures there actually is plenty of 'normal' school life up and running - lessons are back to normal timetables, lunch has resumed in the school canteen, and almost all staff have returned to school too. The girls seem generally content to be back but there remain obvious constraints - masks that need to be worn by the children in lessons as well as in corridors, a lack of any extra-curricular activities such as team sports or after-school clubs until after Easter, and a requirement to avoid mass gatherings such as assemblies.

In my article in the last issue I explained how Google Classroom was being used to provide online teaching. Whilst most girls are back in school we inevitably still have some at home working online, either because of medical reasons or because of a need temporarily to self-isolate. Therefore many lessons are now run both 'live' with children in school and 'virtually' via the online classroom, so all can access the lesson content.

It will take more time to ascertain how all the students have coped with the two long lockdown closures of the last year but it is clear that for some it has been difficult academically, socially and emotionally. This, in turn, will have created significant gaps in learning in what is normally a very demanding secondary school curriculum. Inevitably, we will be working through the effects of Covid in school communities for some years to come.

The Church after the pandemic

In March Bishop Alan gave a keynote address to the Diocesan Synod. This is an edited version. (Full version is on the Diocesan website)

Since we last met in October we have been through another five months of the Covid-19 pandemic, three months of which have been in lockdown. There is probably not a family in the country who does not know someone who has either died of Covid or has been debilitated by it. Here in the diocese a number of people have long Covid, including several clergy. For many - especially the extroverts among us - this latest lockdown has been the hardest; we are tired and weary. Nevertheless, there has been an extraordinary response to the crisis even in the darkest and coldest weeks of the winter. The vast majority of churches have sustained worship and prayer in some form or other; most are recording or streaming worship live. Numerous 'Parish Pantries' and food banks have been set up in places such as Lemsford, Flamstead, Hitchin and Stevenage.

At great personal cost our church schools and chaplaincies have soldiered on, often with insufficient resources or support and in the face of considerable challenges. They need our support and prayers as they work on the front line.

When I was a child, my church, All Saints, Westbury, had to be closed at short notice because it was discovered that it was in imminent danger of collapse. It felt like a terrible disaster and everyone vowed that they must do everything they could to save the building and start worshipping again as they had been doing for decades. For over two years we worshipped in the local Drill Hall. The building works necessitated the removal of the Victorian rood screen, some of the pews, and other furnishings from the church. When we eventually moved back into the church, it was decided, much to most people's surprise, that we did not want everything put back exactly as it was. We had nurtured new relationships, discovered different ways to worship and, above all, we had been on a journey of spiritual renewal where many of the familiar things had been taken away and we had had to focus on what really mattered: the worship of God and our outreach into the parish.

As we gradually come out of lockdown and return to our church buildings, our worship and mission will not be the same; indeed, they should not be the same. We have moved on and our communities have moved on.

We need to listen afresh to God and to those among whom we live and minister. We are faced with an opportunity and if we are going to grow and be a blessing to others then we will need to think about how we embrace the future



The pessimists may say “Many people have lost the habit of leaving their homes and going to church each week. It’s a disaster!” The optimists say “People have lost all sorts of habits. As we emerge, there is new opportunity, if we are open and welcoming”. The pessimists say “It’s always so difficult to make contact with people in our parish. They seem so apathetic”. The optimists say “We discovered a new sense of community during the lock down. We have to listen and discover what people are concerned and passionate about and work with them”. The pessimists say “I hope they are going to come and join us here in church”. The optimists say “Let’s go out with imagination and courage and ask how we can help. Let’s work in partnership with all people of goodwill and join in with what God is doing in the world.

As a Christian I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist. Rather, as St Paul put it to the Thessalonians: “Your strength to continue comes from your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 1.3). This is the irrepressible Easter hope, rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who conquered evil and overcame death. Things are not going to be same as they were in the past. But, as in my childhood experience where the faith and life of a congregation was renewed by a shared experience of exile, so it can be with us. This is the time to rediscover the roots of our faith and explore again the things that really matter: the worship of God and the service of our communities. Rooted in the treasure and riches of our faith in the God who has created us and redeemed us, this is the time to reach out to others with generosity and joy, imagination and courage.

Living God, draw us deeper into your love; Jesus our Lord, send us to care and serve; Holy Spirit, make us heralds of good news. Stir us, strengthen us, teach and inspire us to live your love with generosity and joy, imagination and courage; for the sake of your world and in the name of Jesus, Amen

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All the children staff and governors at St John's school would like to congratulate Reverend Paul on his recent appointment to Panshanger Church and wish him all the very best for this new role.

We would like to thank Reverend Paul for the service and commitment he has given to St John's school over the last five years, through his weekly services in St John's church over most of those years, and his recent weekly recorded services over the last year when we have been unable to meet together in church. This has been a great comfort and inspiration to both children and staff and we would like to express our appreciation for the work and dedication that has gone into these church and video services over the years.



As a governor of St John's School, Reverend Paul has always been enthusiastically involved and brought great experience and sound advice to meetings on many different committees as well as being Vice Chair of the Governing Body. He has also been our Safeguarding Governor more recently and we thank him for these extra roles he has offered to fulfil. Reverend Paul often calls in to school to 'touch base' and catch up with how we all are and offer any support if needed and we thank him for this. He will be missed by everyone in the school community as well as in the church congregation and we would like to send our love and prayers to Reverend Paul as he takes on his new role after Easter.

Mandy

Editor: may I wish Mandy and her husband a speedy recovery from covid19. This has kept her off work until after Easter and has made them both very poorly indeed. She had to spend two weeks in bed and I understand at time of writing is still very weak and exhausted. She told me that they have never experienced any illness like this in their whole lives.



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This Psalm has been described as one of the most excellent by King David. It contains memorable sayings but we often forget where they come from: *Before a word is on my tongue, you know it* (v4); *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me* (v6); *Your right hand will hold me fast* (v10); *I am fearfully and wonderfully made* (v14). Then, rather like book-ends, are two profound statements of recognition and reflection: *O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.* (vv1-4) and *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts* (vv23-24). Along with v14 (quoted above), these verses reflect three great qualities of God: his infinite knowledge; his omnipresence; and his mighty power.



At the end of the psalm, David asks God not only to search his heart but, as one translation puts it, *See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong - then guide me on the road to eternal life.* Isn't that what Easter is about?

Music is a great way to remember some scriptures. Think of Psalm 23, *The Lord's my shepherd*; or Psalm 137, *By the rivers of Babylon*. I remember singing v23 at Sunday School as a chorus; it was no 518 in the CSSM book and it was that which prompted these thoughts. In a quiet moment, do listen to vv1-4 and vv23-24 on YouTube with your Bible open. If reading this on the church website, the link is https://youtu.be/mEGc3_D19Vo. If you are on hardcopy, search for O God, You search Me and You Know Me by Bernadette Farrell.

For the vv23-24 song, the link is <https://youtu.be/3M8ZyJp3BsY> and on hardcopy search for Search me oh god and know my heart today lyrics. There are other wonderful versions on YouTube apart from these.

Finally, "searching" is a thought appearing often in this and other scriptures. Remember the parable of the lost coin. Had the woman not searched thoroughly for it, it would not have been recovered and she would not have recovered from her anguish at its loss. Such earnestness is spoken of by Jeremiah, *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart* (29:13).

Welwyn Garden City's Attimore Hall has just become the latest pub to offer its beer garden to the Food Rescue Hub. It is open to all on Tuesdays from 9.30am to 11am and aims to cut the amount of supermarket surplus stock that ends up in landfill.

People can buy food that would otherwise be thrown away on a pay-as-you-feel basis. No queuing before 9am and please if driving can you park at the Shamrock. Come rain or shine they will be there ready to set up for you to rescue the food. For more info visit foodrescuehub.uk

It's a mission inspired by founder Emma Ince Goulding's childhood in Barbados, where imported food is treated as a precious commodity, and her discovery of UK rubbish dumped in Ghana while she was on a charity trip there. She was determined to tackle the problem when she returned to North Herts and so the Hitchin Food Rescue started up in 2018.

Their team collect perfectly good food. They don't know in advance how much or what they will get but say that they always have enough to go round, even for those who turn up later towards the end of the session. They typically receive fresh fruit & veg, tins, packets and preserved items and never have any chilled produce such as meat, dairy or fish.

According to Defra in 2108, UK households produce around 7 million tonnes of food waste each year, of which 5 million tonnes is 'still edible'.

A glimmer of hope

by Ted Webb

**'Tis spring! And through the winter landscape
summer flowers start to grow.**

**And suddenly, despite the weather, new green shoots
begin to show.**

**After a year of lockdown when we've found it hard
to cope**

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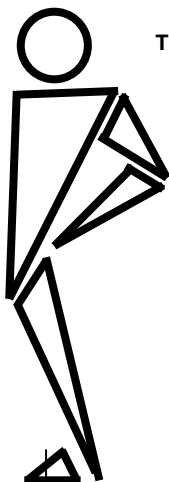
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We hope to have meetings in the later part of 2021 but until then we are running the group via our websites and answering many email enquiries. As a website developer, I have been amazed how the internet has been used over the last year; it has proven to be a lifeline that allows us to adapt and carry on. From church services to the acceleration of home shopping and home entertainment, the internet has progressed ten years in one year.

We are lucky at Lemsford Local History Group to have developed a website (www.lemsfordhistory.co.uk) from the early days in 2003, first built by the late and much missed Stan Borrie's son Richard, whom I replaced and started to develop various other sites. This enabled us to store our extensive archive, including many articles and images to share with the public. This new tool helps to develop ideas and share information. A good example is a recent email from a lady in France enquiring about her parents. She has given me permission to share our correspondence (edited to fit this article) and it shows how we use a network of contacts to find an answer.

"I am Kathleen Joan Cullen born on the 20th January 1947 to Doris May Flitney née Dye. When I was born Doris's husband Ernest Leslie Flitney had been dead for a few years. He died in Burma of Malaria leaving Doris with their son Robert Flitney. I would add that Doris May Flitney was also the name of Ernest Leslie Flitney's sister who was in the WRAF and died in 1946. Her name is on the war memorial. This often leads to confusion.

My mother Doris met a Richard Cullen who is named as my father on my birth certificate; their address was shown as Manor Road Camp, Hatfield. I recently discovered that a landing strip for Aircraft was being constructed at the time and my father may well have been employed there as a labourer.

Sadly my mother, who had lived in Cromer Hyde with the Flitney family following my birth, developed psychiatric problems and was committed to Fairfield Hospital in Bedfordshire - long since closed. On the 23rd March 1947 I was baptised in the name Kathleen Joan Flitney at St John's Lemsford. On the reverse of my Baptism certificate there are two names. Joyce Edith Hatty and Phyllis Clarry as Godparents. I do not know how my mother died but believe it was whilst in the psychiatric Hospital. Somehow I have never plucked up the courage to find out.

I was a baby when she died and was placed into care at Barnet Hospital, Wellhouse Lane. From there around the age of 3 I was fostered by a family in Waltham Cross leaving them at the age of 16 years and obtaining employment in London. I have managed to do some research on my mother's family who originated from Stockton on Tees but have been unable to find any information regarding my father".

I responded to Kate including a hand drawn map of Cromer Hyde from the 1940s showing the Flitney homes (near what is now the Crooked Chimney). Kate's response: *Thank you so much for your prompt reply. Your website is excellent, so informative and it was interesting for me to see pictures of my mother on it and get an insight into the history of Cromer Hyde and Lemsford.*

I actually visited the cottage in Cromer Hyde in my 20's when I was trying to find information about my mother. An elderly woman answered the door and when she saw me she immediately turned and walked inside away from me - as though she had seen a ghost. She told me that my half-brother Robert was not there and gave me an address - which turned out to be false - so I really gave up looking until a friend died when I was in my 50's and made me realise that life is too short

I sent Kate various images, the first of a Flitney christening: *She replied: I believe this is the christening of Robert Flitney ca 1940.*

My mother is the tall lady to the left of the picture arm in arm with (possibly) her father on the left; her husband is behind them. It looked rather a sad affair and I wonder if she was not well at that time as she is being supported on either side. Baby Robert is being held by an older person who may be the mother of Doris or Ernest.



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The second was of a couple at the door of St John's Church: Kate commented: *This picture of my mother and her husband Ernest Leslie Flitney seems to be taken outside the church following their wedding.*



I also contacted Chris Martindale former Chairman of Hatfield history group, a great resource for LLHG: he supplied information which I passed to Kate from Albert Jackson who grew up in Hatfield Garden Village. In 1947 there was a camp on the De Havilland Manor Road site. There were many men building the new concrete runway and additional parts of the Propeller Bay. Albert was still at school and had a paper Round with Jim Toms of Manor Parade. After his round he had to go to the "camp" and sell evening papers to the workers, many of whom had Irish accents. They all wanted the early racing results, and he gave much detail of their gambling interests.

Kate's replied: *It is amazing to think that Albert probably unwittingly had some contact with my father. It provides a vivid illustration of the situation at the camp. I can only guess that my father was one of the labour force brought over from Ireland. I cannot thank you enough and would ask that you kindly forward a copy of this email to thank him for sharing memories*

I also passed information to Kate from **Mary de Soyres** about her mother, Doris May Flitney née Dye. She was a sister at Brocket Hall when it was a maternity hospital during WW2. **Barbara Taylor** also provided details of the Flitney family who were prominent in Lemsford parish. Kate sent a photo of herself when a serving police officer (shown right) and her enquiry has added to our archives. More importantly they added to Kate's understanding of her mother, father and the Flitney family.



I would like to thank everyone involved in helping Kate to find out about her past. I will let Kate have the last word. *"I have had enormous pleasure in sharing the accounts and enquiries that have been made on my behalf. So a big thanks to everybody".*



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What are your views on magpies? A prominent member of the corvid family, they are everywhere. You can't miss them either because unlike their relative the jay they make a horrible loud noise and parade themselves in public. They are the only bird that has passed one test of intelligence—the so-called mirror test: when they look in a mirror they recognise themselves. Very few species have passed this test. Others that have include the great apes (including humans), dolphins, and orcas..

The Bible does not mention them although it does find room for ravens which feature in the story of Noah (look it up—quite interesting). They do feature prominently in fiction though. Their reputation for theft, completely undeserved, stems from the imagination of two French playwrights. In 1815 they penned a melodrama called *La Pie Voleuse*, in which a servant is sentenced to death for stealing silverware from her master, when the real thief is his pet magpie. Gioachino Rossini later set his opera *The Thieving Magpie* to this story, and so the myth grew.

Undoubtedly true is that they prey on the eggs and chicks of other birds, Apologists argue that this does not threaten populations of their prey but it is still a distressing trait.



So distressing that a while ago I was easily persuaded by a neighbour, Rupert, to take on one of his Larsen traps. Invented by a Danish gamekeeper they work because corvids are territorial and confront incomers. A Larsen trap has two or three compartments, one containing a lure bird and the others with trap doors which spring shut when another has entered. They contain food and water, and a captured bird has to be humanely despatched—which I of course left to my friend. He donned very thick rubber clubs, grabbed them, and twisted their necks.

The main problem is how to catch a lure bird. Once this has been achieved newly captured ones can be used as lures but I never did find out how he got his first one.

Observationally the trap worked. Several magpies were caught and the number in our garden seemed to go down. This could have been because the survivors used their brains to work out that this area was unfriendly. Sadly Rupert has died, but the magpies have thrived and nest in a nearby very tall tree. To my mind the number of small birds coming to our feeders has diminished since Rupert left us, but there is nothing I can do about it. Even had I a trap and lure there is no way I could wring their necks.

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