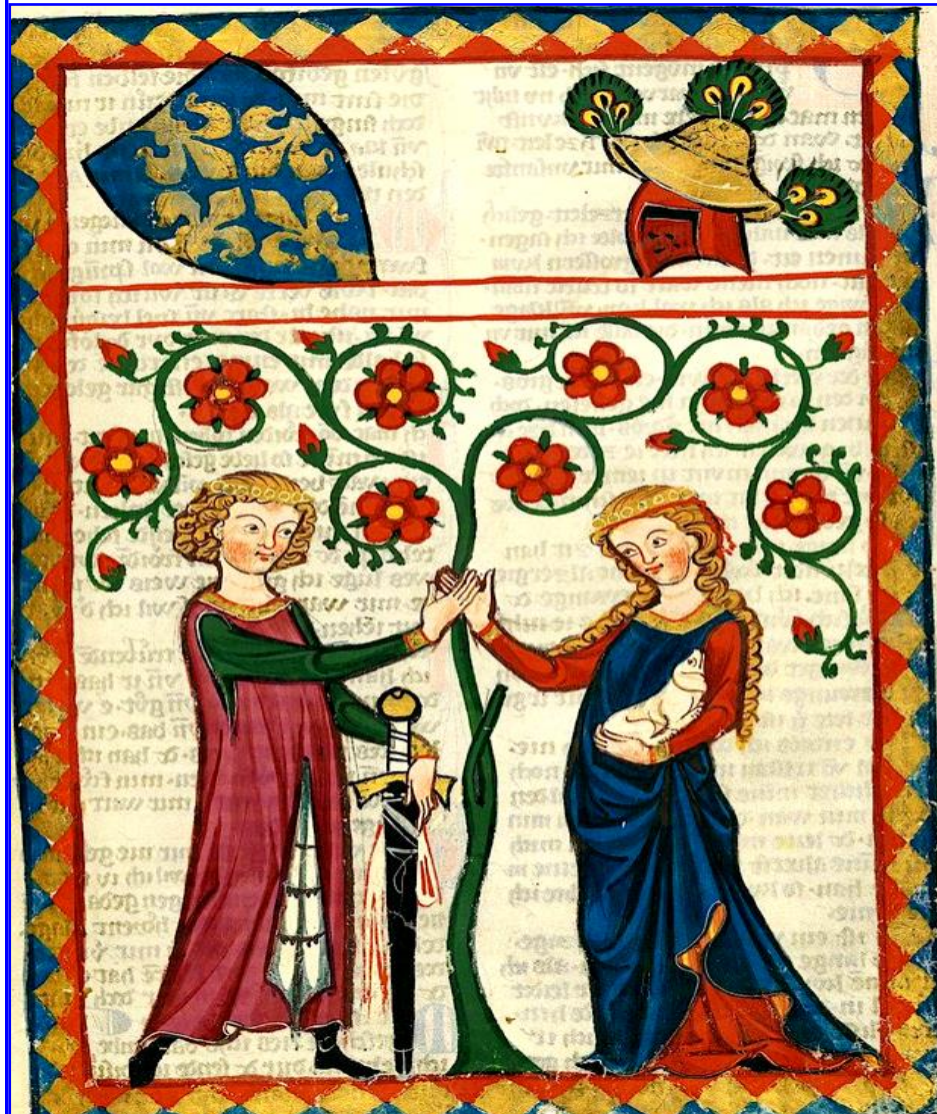


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Front cover—see page 14.  
Christingle, page 11, and Baptism of Chester McLachlan, December 19th.





February is an important month for St John's. The Bishop of Hertford has identified a strong candidate to fill the vacant post of Vicar and a high-powered selection panel is planned for the end of the month. (See the News section). It will include our Wardens, Jenny and Nigel, as well as the Marquess of Salisbury and Lord Brocket our Patron. Let us pray that it turns out well.



Earlier, on Sunday 20th, our 11 am Service is being led by Bishop Alan of St Albans. To have the Diocesan Bishop officiate is a very rare event and I look forward to hearing him. He has a wide portfolio. As a senior Bishop he is one of 26 Lords Spiritual in the House of Lords. There he takes the lead on action against gambling which causes harm.

At the other end of the spectrum he has to deal with irate parishioners writing to complain about some local grievance. Once I had occasion to join that group having been upset by a high-handed Church official who had bullied our PCC. Needless to say I got an anodyne response from Bishop Alan but it made me feel better, and happily the official retired about a year later.

Bishops like him have a lot to wrestle with at the moment. While their role in Parliament must be fulfilling and interesting, back home things are not going swimmingly. Parishes have been hard hit by a drop in attendances accelerated by covid-19. Many are in financial difficulties and finding it increasingly difficult to pay contributions to their Diocese, the so-called Parish Share. St John's is no exception—see Kevin Earl's report from our finance committee on page 7.

The Church of England is aware that they have to adapt to changed circumstances. There has been talk of developing alternatives to traditional Parishes, with new outlets possibly led by lay people. This may be the right path but it has not gone down well in parishes, who see it as a threat to their existence.

My own view is that the Church needs to slim down its superstructure to cut costs. Does our Diocese really need three Bishops, three Archdeacons, and a Dean of the Abbey? Any comments gratefully received, particularly those disagreeing with me, which I would love to publish. A gentleman rang me after the last issue complaining about the un-Christmassy cover (of sinking refugees). His strong opinion was that the Church should stay out of controversial areas. He rather caught me by surprise and I forgot to ask him to write a letter for publication. If he is reading this it is not too late!

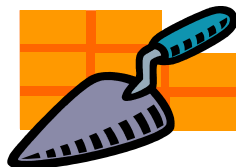
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## February

6th. 8 am HC/MP — tbc

11 am All Age Worship - tbc

*1 Corinthians 15. 1-11 and Luke 5. 1-11*

13th. 8 am HC BCP - Rev Susan Marsh

11 am HC - Rev Fiona Souter

*1 Corinthians 15. 12-20 and Luke 6. 17-26*

20th 8 am HC/MP - tbc

11 am HC—**Bishop of St Albans**

*Revelation 4 and Luke 8. 22-25*



27th. 8 am HC BCP - Rev Susan Marsh

11 am MP — tbc

*2 Corinthians 3. 12-42 and Luke 9. 28-43a*

## March

6th 8 am HC BCP - Rev Edward Cardale

11 am All Age Worship - tbc

*Romans 10. 8b-13 and Luke 4. 1-13*

13th 8 am HC BCP - Rev Susan Marsh

11 am HC - tbc

*Philippians 3. 17-21 & 4.1 and Luke 13. 31-end*

20th 8 am MP BCP - lay led

11 am Morning Prayer - tbc

*1 Corinthians 10. 1-13 and Luke 13. 1-9*

27th 8 am HC BCP - Rev Susan Marsh

11 am **Mothering Sunday**—tbc

*2 Corinthians 5. 16-end and Luke 15. 1-3 & 11b-end*

**HC BCP: Holy Communion, Book of Common Prayer MP: Morning Prayer**

***Please check website for updates.  
Readings subject to change on the day.***

**Mary Douglas writes:**

I am very sorry but if we cannot have coffee after Church or Friendship Teas once a month, it would be inappropriate to have a Snowdrop tea this month.

However, there are now four varieties in the Churchyard so please go for a short walk around the Church to see them. There are many little 'drops' coming up behind the Garden of

Remembrance abutting the fence between church and school; there are double varieties in the North Border; there are some interesting bulbs with more green on their inner sepals near where we are creating a shrubbery on the boundary by the main road and I am also going to put a pot of 'Trump' snowdrops on the border approaching the front door.

It has been suggested that we should plant seven trees for the Platinum Jubilee. There used to be a high hedge around the whole Church but it wasn't very welcoming. Flowering Cherries and Rowans, spaced out within the perimeter wall would give lovely colour throughout the year with bright berries, foliage and flowers. Please text your views on this idea to 07850527050 and then walk around the Church -snowdrops are as beautiful as Lilies- and remember what Jesus said about them (Matthew 6 v28-30.)

**New Vicar**

Bishop Michael of Hertford has written to us and St Michael's about a change to the planned path towards a new Vicar. See his letter opposite.

**Baptisms**

Congratulations to the family of Chester McLachlan who was baptised here on Sunday 19th December by Sue Stilwell. See the fine photograph of them inside the front cover.

**Gill Bottoms RIP**

Gill's funeral is at Church on Monday 1st February at 11am. A tribute will be in our next issue.

**School News**

There is no report in this issue because the School is under siege from covid-19. At the time of writing four teachers are off and 17 children. It would seem that the omicron variant is finding new ways to attack us, so let us pray for the School that it will soon recover.

**New advertisers**

We welcome three new advertisers this year. Barry Ayers is a furnisher restorer, Richard Allison will sort your garden out, while Welwyn Garden Campus Club, the very first Probus Club, welcomes retired gentlemen to their monthly lunches. Thank you to them and all our advertisers for their support.

**Parish Magazine** copy date for the next issue: **17th March**

I am writing to let you know about an extremely positive possibility for filling the post of team vicar of St Michael's, Birchwood and St John's, Lemsford which arose at the end of last year. I have proposed to your parish representatives, your patrons, your team rector and Archdeacon Janet that a particular candidate should be considered for the position. We are all agreed that the candidate I have proposed is an exceptional person and that it would make sense to interview them directly for the role.



This would by no means tie the hands of the interviewing group. Should we discern that the candidate I have proposed were not the right person for the post, we would still have the option to advertise for and interview others. But having spotted someone whom we think would be a first class fit, it wouldn't seem sensible to us to let the opportunity of seeing that person go by.

Given that this is the case, the process during the next few weeks will look as follows:

- As we now have a preferred candidate, we will not now advertise or shortlist for the role
- By the beginning of February, the candidate will submit an application for the post against the profile that the PCCs have developed and signed off.
- The candidate will be interviewed by the parish representatives, patrons, rural dean, team clergy, archdeacon and bishop as planned. This will take place at the end of February.
- As would always be the case, confidentiality will be maintained until a discernment is made by the interviewing group as to whether the candidate should be appointed. At that time, a public announcement of the decision will be made to all the churches of the Bishop's Hatfield team.

Please do continue to pray for our discernment as we seek to make the best possible appointment for your churches.

Many thanks,

+Michael



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**J**anuary can be a difficult month. The Christmas joy has ended, the weather is still cold, the waistline slightly expanded. The Finance Committee has had the task of completing and reviewing the accounts for the previous year, and preparing a budget for the year ahead. As I write I can sit back a little and feel that we have made much progress with these financial tasks. But unfortunately the results of that work will not lift our January spirits.



The pandemic has torn through the finances of many churches and charities and we are no exception. We have had two years with heavy deficits, each of approximately £13,000. Thankfully a wonderful legacy of £20,000 in late 2020 has done much to lessen the impact of the pandemic but, even with this gift, we have still recorded a loss of £6,000 over the last two years. Our reserves have been hit hard and we now only have £35,000 remaining—much less than our annual running costs of £55,000.

Looking ahead we have made some optimistic assumptions about 2022: that our wonderful fete returns in May, that there will be no further lockdowns and a gradual removal of restrictions, and that a new vicar will be in post by late summer. Setting a budget for 2022 requires a view about these things, and many others besides. It is a tricky business at the best of times, but Covid 19 has made it far harder. This year too we will have to carry out electrical work in the Tower, costing over £4,000. So we estimate that there will again be a sizeable deficit in 2022, in the order of £13,000. If correct we will once more have to bite into reserves to cover the shortfall. If the Fete is compromised then our deficit will be even larger.

**I** wasn't intending to write this update about the church finances in an attempt to appeal to readers for more financial support for the church. We do greatly appreciate the generous and ongoing support we already receive from our church community. However, the trend of recent years has not been helpful to us, and there are very real worries that we must find additional funds to stem our annual deficits. Covid has been bad but even before it arrived we were struggling to cover costs year by year with deficits normally the result, albeit smaller than those we are now experiencing. So, of course, it would be extremely helpful if anyone who values St John's church could find a way to make some additional financial gifts in order to help us weather these difficult times.

## Lent

**L**ent is the period of 40 days which comes before Easter. This year it runs from **2nd March to 16th April**. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Lent is a season of reflection and preparation before the celebrations of Easter. By observing the 40 days of Lent, Christians replicate Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days. Lent is marked by fasting, both from food and festivities.

**Why "Lent"?** Lent is an old English word meaning 'lengthen'. Lent is observed in spring, when the days begin to get longer.

**Why 40 days?** 40 is a significant number in Jewish-Christian scripture: In Genesis, the flood which destroyed the earth was brought about by 40 days and nights of rain. The Hebrews spent 40 years in the wilderness before reaching the land promised to them by God. Moses fasted for 40 days before receiving the ten commandments on Mount Sinai. Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry.

**Why is purple used for church drapes during Lent?** Purple is used for two reasons: firstly because it is associated with mourning and so anticipates the pain and suffering of the crucifixion, and secondly because purple is the colour associated with royalty, and celebrates Christ's resurrection and sovereignty.

**Shrove Tuesday** is the day before Lent starts:. It's a day of penitence, to clean the soul, and a day of celebration as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. Shrove Tuesday is sometimes called Pancake Day after the fried batter recipe traditionally eaten on this day. It gets its name from the ritual of shriving that Christians used to undergo in the past. In shriving, a person confesses their sins and receives absolution for them. When a person receives absolution for their sins, they are forgiven for them and released from the guilt and pain that they have caused them.

**Ash Wednesday**, the beginning of Lent, is a day of penitence to clean the soul before the Lent fast. In Ash Wednesday services churchgoers are marked on the forehead with a cross of ashes as a sign of penitence and mortality. The use of ashes, made by burning palm crosses from the previous Palm Sunday, (the Sunday preceding Easter) is very symbolic. ***Remember, that thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return.***

Although I left Lemsford many years ago I still appreciate receiving the St. John's magazine. It keeps me in touch with many friends and of course the church, the school and the History Group which started when I was Vicar. I was especially interested in Geoffrey Hollis's 'From the Editor' in the December/ January issue. I totally agree that there is a close connection between the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt and the current asylum seekers.



Some people think that the Christian faith has nothing to do with pressing events in our world. But the teaching of Jesus and the Prophets are very clear that our Faith has to be related to the real world. The Church of England has emphasised that we cannot separate belief and politics.

God has a bias to the poor and the outcast, the needy and the unloved.

Hear the Prophet Amos:

'away with the noise of your songs!

I will not listen to the music of your harps.

But **let justice** roll on like a river,  
righteousness like a never-failing stream!'

Christians have an obligation to care for God's world and for all people in desperate need. Christian Aid has been a shining example of our work for many years and their manifesto states :-

*'At Christian Aid, we know that poverty is inherently political. It is the result of inequities in power and voice that are rooted in a long history of oppression and exploitation - especially of women. Poverty robs people of dignity. When people are poor at a time when there has never been more wealth globally, we must ask ourselves why.'*

With best wishes to all my friends at St Johns

Ron

*Editor's note: If you look hard at the colour picture inside the back cover you can see Ron—looking very smart—standing beside the pupils and teachers at the School some years ago.*

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This spring term can feel long and dark can't it. Christmas is well and truly over (although with our Christingle on the 9th January this year for Epiphany, we kept it going as long as we could...

**check out the photo on the inside cover!)** We have the cold and grey winter months to get through now, but then days start to lighten and warm up, green shoots and early flowers appear, and we enter the quiet and reflective season of Lent to prepare for the joy of Easter. Psalm 4 reminds us *'Lord...let the light of your face shine on us.'* Wherever we are we can rely on our God for warmth and light and a bright future. So we've some great events and services for families in the next few months to learn more about and enjoy God's always-and-forever love and goodness.



**All-age worship** is back on the **first Sunday of each month** – at 11am we have a shortened service with songs and Bible teaching – everyone is very welcome.

Then to mark **Shrove Tuesday** (or Pancake Day as most of us know it) which signals the arrival of Lent, there will be **pancakes at church on Sunday 27th February at 4pm** and things to do and make for Lent, for all ages.

We'll be celebrating **Mothering Sunday** at an all-age communion service on **Sunday 27th March** at 11am. Mothering Sunday is a very traditional day in the church calendar. Centuries ago it was about returning home, to the church where you were baptised and first welcomed into God's family. Nowadays we celebrate our mothers especially but also all who love and care for us, in our church family, at home or school. Our service will have room for all ages to worship together.

And that brings us to the Easter season and we'll be inviting you join us on **Palm Sunday 10th April at 4pm** for stories and games and music as we explore what happened that first Easter week in Jerusalem. There'll be more on that in the next issue of the magazine.

I should add that all activities are subject to the Covid situation and government and church regulations and may need to change – please do check our website for changes, join our e-mailing list **or get in touch.**



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*We mourn the loss of two wonderful ladies who for many years were active members of our fellowship.*

**Sheila Morgan 3rd May 1944—8th December 2021**

Sheila and Jim worshipped at St Johns and he was confirmed as an adult here. Eventually Jim's eye problems became acute and they changed to St Francis in Welwyn Garden, which was within walking distance of their house just off Parkway. Jim died aged 90 in 2018. They had been married since 1969.



Sheila's funeral like Jim's was in St Francis on Monday 10th January. St Francis have made good use of technology and you can see a full recording of her funeral by going to the church's website and looking at Services.

**Jean Fitzhugh 17th November 1930 - 30th December 2021**



Jean and Derek worshipped at St John's for a large number of years, both being confirmed here. They eventually only stopped attending because of ill health. They were married in 1955, having met at a cricket match when Derek was on leave from the RAF. Derek died last March, aged 91. Both he and Jean had their funerals at Harwood Park Crematorium, with Edward Cardale officiating each time. Jean's was on Wednesday 26th January. The great love of their lives were their daughter Sarah, son Robert, grandchildren Amy, James, Gemma, William, Becky, and great grandchild Louie.

**D**id Geoffrey Chaucer invent Valentine's Day? Yes and no.

St Valentine's Day, February 14th, has been marked in liturgical calendars for centuries. As a Christian feast day, Valentine's Day actually commemorates a Christian martyr (or possibly two both called Valentine) who were killed for their faith by the Romans.



But Valentine's Day only became associated with romantic love during the late fourteenth century, when Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400), author of *The Canterbury Tales*, made the association in his poem '*The Parlement of Foules*', written some time in the 1380s, possibly in 1382. The poem features a parliament, or assembly, of birds, which have gathered together in order to choose their mates. As Chaucer's narrator remarks, 'For this was on seynt Volantynys day / Whan euery bryd comyth there to chese his make.'

**B**ut when *was* Valentine's Day in Chaucer's poem? The modern reader is likely to assume Chaucer is referring to 14 February, but mid-February is an unlikely time of year for birds to mate, at least in England. Artistic licence is obviously a factor here, and 14 February was already established as the Christian feast day of Saint Valentine. And yet some scholars have proposed that Chaucer was actually referring to 3 May, a date on which Valentine of Genoa, a bishop who died around AD 307, was commemorated. Chaucer wrote a poem about the coming of summer which contains the lines, 'Saint Valentine, that art full high aloft, / Thus singen smalle fowles for thy sake'. Given that this poem is about the arrival of summer, early May seems a more likely date for *this* St. Valentine's Day than mid-February.

Another fact adds credence to the 3 May theory: it was on this date in 1381 that the engagement of Richard II (Chaucer's patron) to Anne of Bohemia was announced. Chaucer possibly wrote his poem the following year to mark the one-year anniversary of the betrothal. ***The picture on the front cover relates to that union.***





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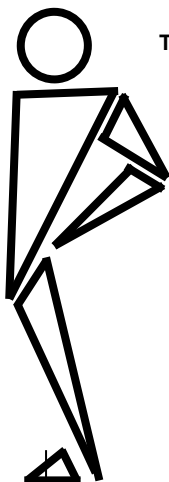


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**A**s we enter the new year, Lemsford Local History Group would like to join with Mandy, her staff and the children of St John's School in celebrating 150 years as our local village school 1872-2022. In the last Parish Magazine, we proposed ideas to celebrate this major milestone. Mandy, our head teacher, has contacted the group and we will meet soon to plan events to mark this special year. We have also had a boost from Richard Cuthbert, Chair of Governors: 'You have the full support of the school staff and governors in marking the 150th anniversary of St John's School and we've also had a Fete meeting this evening and everyone is looking forward to a display for the fete in May.'

The History Group has a comprehensive archive for the school including images of the first class with the first head teacher, Mrs Mary Seaman. All our images, articles, memories, class photos, information about eighteen head teachers and other facts about the school will be loaded on our Hub website [www.lemsfordvillage.co.uk](http://www.lemsfordvillage.co.uk).

You can reach the new school home page by typing [www.lemsfordvillage.co.uk/index\\_SJS.html](http://www.lemsfordvillage.co.uk/index_SJS.html)

Once you are on this page, you will be able to see galleries, memories, articles, and a list of the head teachers. This site will evolve during 2022 and, hopefully, at the end of the year we will have a comprehensive record of the first 150 years of St John's School to share with the Lemsford community and former staff and pupils wherever they are in the world. Please be patient over the next few weeks as the site is under construction and a few links might not work.

The other major project will be a display at the May Fete with, where possible, contributions from the children of St John's School with the help of the History Group. We look forward to working with Mandy, her staff, and the children during this important year.

### **How can you be part of this anniversary year?**

In the last edition we asked for memories. The response was a trickle that I hope turns into a flood by the end of the year. Our first contribution was from Zoe: 'Upon hearing there is to be a special anniversary celebration at Lemsfords Fête in 2022 I contacted St John's school Lemsford and now on my way to writing an article of my time there as a pupil in the 80's for the school.' Zoe has kindly built a St John's Reunion Facebook page for old students of St Johns school <https://www.facebook.com/groups/530197044695348/?ref=share>.

**T**o many, the thought of writing an article to encapsulate their memories is rather daunting. **Our next memory was from Meera and is a great example of how you can just list your memories instead of composing a whole article.**

'I attended the school from 1990 - 1996. I absolutely loved my time at St. John's. I had the best teachers, friends, lovely classrooms, and grounds. It was such a fun time!

I have so many wonderful memories, the ones that particularly stick out: Our first school trip away to Pembrokeshire, Wales. We had never been on any school trips at all, until Mrs. Reader became our headteacher. We camped out in tents and played in the sea at Tenby Bay - we even found a jellyfish!

Being allowed to build dens in the spinney when we got to year 6 - what a privilege!

Country and Maypole dancing at the May Fete. The hours of practising in the assembly hall!

Mrs. Pugh the dinner lady shouting at us to eat our vegetables, "swede!! Carrots!! Peas!!" They did make the best sponge pudding and chocolate custard though.

Mrs. Mitchell shouting, "My hat dear child!"

Mrs. Carter pulling our wobbly baby teeth out for us or patching our knees up when we'd fall over in the concrete playground - it was a regular occurrence!

Performing end of term productions in the church, they were always so much fun. Mrs. Carter would stand right at the back of the church and make us project our voices until we could be heard.

Ringling the big bell at the end of break time! Sadly, no longer there.

Doing our cycling proficiency with Mr. Beswarwick. Having birthday parties in the church annex.'

**W**hat I love about this technique is how simple but effective it is in painting a picture of those times. It conjures up happy times at St John's with the bonus of providing so much information including school trips and names of teachers. I hope it inspires others to list their memories.

*Inside the back cover are two from our collection of School photographs. The top one shows Zoe enjoying pond dipping (blond girl, bottom right). The one in colour is the latest one we hold, dating from 2001. We need your help to get our image archive up to date.*



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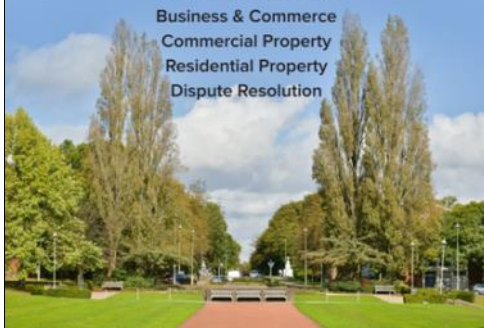
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Acacia Mews Care Home in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, is rated as 'Good in All Categories' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The CQC grades the services delivered in care homes in five categories (Safe, Effective, Caring, Responsive and Well-led) and adjudged that Acacia Mews and its staff scored consistently highly throughout.

- Beautifully decorated rooms all have en-suite showers, with some rooms opening on to the gardens
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**O**n the 4th of May 1872, the first entry in the Head Teacher's Log Book was made by Mrs Mary Seaman, first Head Teacher. On that day, seventy-seven children, ranging in age from three to thirteen, were enrolled. They were divided into two classes'.

**Who were the 77 children on that first day?** The History Group have pupil registration records from May 1888 but not from day one March 1872 so our first thought was we would never know who the first children were. We then had the idea of processing the 1871 census and list all the children of school age on the census (added a year to their age). This produced 77 children with details of their parents' occupations. We have produced a complete list on our website to inspire you to be part of this special year. To view list, go to [www.lemsfordvillage.co.uk/Articles.html](http://www.lemsfordvillage.co.uk/Articles.html) and click on 'Class of 1872'



*Image from 1890*

**S**t John's School has been special to hundreds of children in the last 150 years. If you are one of them, **why not be part of recording the history of St John's School in its anniversary year.** Please send images, memories and articles to [info@lemsfordhistory.co.uk](mailto:info@lemsfordhistory.co.uk). Thank you in advance.



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Journalist can be very unfair. Recently Matthew Parris (ex-MP) wrote a critical piece about our Prime Minister in the Times, saying "There's a moral toad crouching at the heart of the British establishment,...". His choice of the toad as an exemplar of rottenness is widespread but completely undeserved.

Common toads are amphibians, breeding in ponds during the spring and spending much of the rest of the year feeding in woodland, gardens, hedgerows and tussocky grassland. They hibernate over winter, often under log piles, stones or even in old flower pots. Toads are famous for their mass migrations back to their breeding ponds on the first warm, damp evenings of the year, often around St. Valentine's Day (NB). They mainly feed on slugs and snails and so are very valuable to gardeners.



The Bible though is not a great fan of cold blooded amphibians. First there was the plague of frogs sent to harass the Pharaoh who kept the Israelites enslaved. Later we read in Revelations, chapter 16: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

In medieval times toads were thought to be useful to witches. Shakespeare mentions them often, for instance in *Macbeth*: *Round about the cauldron go; In the poisonous entrails throw; Toad, that under cold stone; Days and nights has thirty-one; Sweated venom sleeping got; Boil thou first in the charmed pot. Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble.*

The toad has two attributes that humans do not like. Firstly, they have glands just behind their eyes that when pressed will secrete a milky-white substance that can severely harm someone if ingested. This is probably why they got associated with evil.

Secondly, they look ugly because of warts on their skin, which can also contain an irritant. There is a belief that touching a toad causes warts, but this is a myth. In the case of toads, beauty is indeed more than skin deep.

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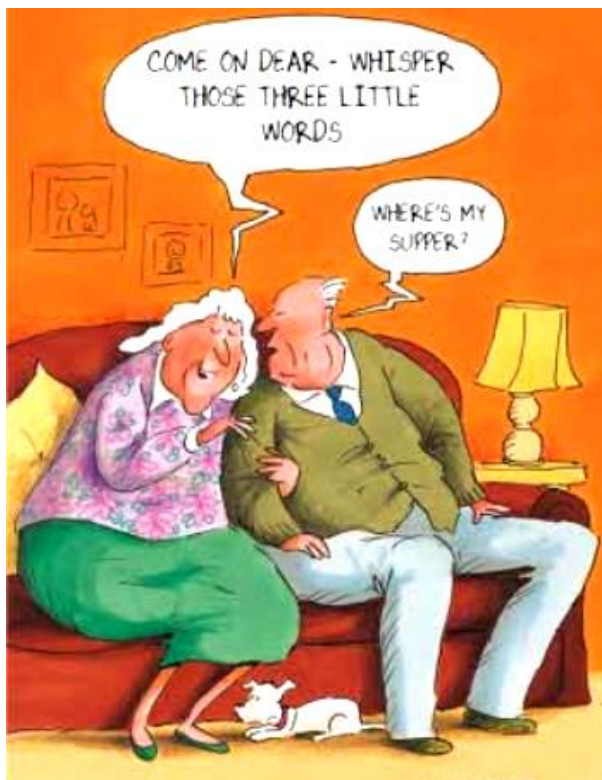
Lord God, heavenly Father, you know that we are set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: Grant us such strength and protection, to support us in all danger, and carry us through all temptations; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

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***And finally ....***

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