

**The Parish Magazine of
Whitchurch-on-Thames
and Whitchurch Hill**



October 2001

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A letter from the Reverend Father Peter Jefford

Dear People of the Parish,

“We plough the fields and scatter
The good seed on the land.”

When you are young, not only are grown ups very big in size but grown ups also do big things! Also, if you are small with a twin brother then your elder brother is not only a great deal taller but in his life “big things also happen”. He was as well for both of us our ‘Big Hero’.

There came a time when he made friends with someone of his own age with the same christian name who lived on a farm at Coombe Hill in Gloucestershire, right by the great big River Severn. This family had four sons on the farm. We were only three. The time came when he went away to the farm for short breaks to help on the farm and at the age of about sixteen he even learned to drive a Ford Model T on the farm lanes. For us little twins this really was the big time, this was the life. Here on the farm was the real world, as we thought then.

And it so happened that in those years just before the war that our turn came as well. We were allowed to go and stay on the farm with their family at the special times of Whitsun, hay-making and harvest time in the summer. Here was a whole world of activities that we had never known before: harnessing up the horses, working in the rickyard with the great bales of hay. A world of rough cider in a great orange jug that was on the table at meal times- and you were allowed to help yourself! (My twin once got totally inebriated in the rickyard and the horse he was supposed to lead did not move for a whole hour, twin lying prone, fast asleep).

But there were other things as well: riding back on the horses holding on to their great collars, milking

cows by hand, stooking great sheaves of wheat in the harvest, chasing rabbits, and going on Sundays to church with the farmer's wife to the Parish Communion in the pony cart. Here was a world so different to ours but full of excitement. But we children were not privy to the economics of the day, to the real struggle that farmer was going through at the time. What I was to learn later from my father was that the milk from the cows had to be poured down the drain, that the wheat he had grown in the end found no market. For these were the years of the slump on the land. The time of the last great depression on the land.

In the end what saved him and the other farmers and the market gardeners were the German submarines and human need. For on September 3rd onward in the year 1939 these islands were ringed by the German U boats and from then on every gallon of milk, every bushel of wheat, every ton of hay became truly precious commodities. Suddenly overnight the forgotten farmers became the Nation's Heroes from then on as the nation sought to survive against a back-ground of both bombing and area starvation. Even their farm was bombed in the war.

What I did not realise then, having come from the background of a large town, would be that most of my life would be set in the country, or next to it and always by a river, for the next forty years and that most of my work would be with the people of both the land and the sea.

This year has seen not only the weather of disaster in terms of both flood and storm but it has also been a year with a disease of plague-like proportions in the animal world, in the most horrid occurrence of the Foot and Mouth disease. Over four million animals have had to be destroyed. Great areas of land have become 'no-go' areas. And

what is as bad as the animal loss has been losses by so many which are truly unsustainable. Not just the farmers but others as well. What has been lost is not the stock and the sheds, the animals and the investments. We are losing as well a whole way of life, an ageless industry of the islands where disease is followed by despair and where ruin is no longer the farmer's joke but the farmer's reality.

Let us not forget also that this farm industry helped to keep us all alive in the Second World War. When will it end, and how will it all end? I wish I knew the answers, but I don't. Wherever they have looked for help little enough help has been found. But if they are to go on, and we are to go on, then a way forward must be found that is true, honest and equitable.

If I look back now to all those people on the land that I have served over many years, then I remember them all with gratitude and pride. We need now to pray for their needs and for the need now of real care, concern and wisdom, for the best way in farming on the land.

“We thank thee then, O Father,
For all things bright and good,
The seed time and the Harvest,
Our life, our health, our food.”

We need before very long a clear sign that says ALL THINGS ARE NOW WELL. For us as His people at the present time our harvest should be a harvest of gratitude to all those who have met our needs yet again, for their labour and skill. And a harvest of gratitude to God for our own lovely world where he has placed us.

He only is the maker of all things near and far.

With my best wishes to you all.
Peter Jefford

Mothers' Union

Our October meeting will be back at Abbots Lodge on Thursday October 25th. at 2.15 p.m. when the Rev. William Cleeve is coming to speak to us on 'Race Relations and Interfaith Issues'. Anyone is welcome to join us .

We have changed the day of our monthly prayer group and in future it will be on the third Thursday in the month not the second so the next one will be on Oct. 18th. at Rox-

Both our churches were visited by the Reading Civic Society on their annual Church Tour on Sunday, 30th September. They were much impressed by the beauty and history of both St John's and St Mary's.

Rosemary Pearce is eager to organise prayer meetings during both Advent this year and Lent next year. See details on page 14

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Looking Ahead

From Father Peter Jefford

At the end of next month I hope to be away on a short holiday. It is now over a year since I had a free Sunday, which is quite a while. I shall be away from you all from Sunday 4th November and back on Saturday November 17th.

On Sunday November 4th we are to have a visitor to the Parish for the Celebrant and Preacher at the 10 a.m. Parish Communion at St Mary's: the Venerable John Morrison, the Archdeacon of Oxford. This was arranged some while ago and he is looking forward to coming to Whitchurch, being with you and meeting you. I do know that you will give him your best support.

Also Looking Ahead

A member of the Clergy Chapter of the Henley Deanery has become the recipient of a new appointment—he is to become a Bishop. So in February the Rev'd Father Peter Fox, Priest in Charge of the parish of Harpsden Cum Bolney St Margaret and the General Secretary of the Melanesian Mission, is to be the new Bishop of Port Moresby in the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea. We must pray for him with his new great task in the Pacific.

P.E.J.

ASSISTANT TREASURER

After several years of loyal and efficient service Fred Phillipson has decided to retire from the post of Assistant Treasurer for the PCC.

I am sure all parishioners will join me in thanking Fred for his devotion to his duties and all his hard work.

I am pleased to announce that Tony Voysey has taken up the mantle and we all wish him well in his new post.

Alan Matthews
Church Warden

FRIENDS OF ST JOHN'S

This year we have had over four years growth of grass cut at the bottom eastern side of the churchyard, the matted clumps raked and the cut grass removed. It is intended to develop two cutting regimes in this area: the first to the south east encouraging spring flowers by cutting in the autumn, and the second in the south west area to encourage autumn flowers by cutting in the spring.

Unfortunately, the more we get the churchyard into shape the more maintenance is required. Together with an annual donation from the Goring Heath Parish Council, and the PCC having kindly increased the funds, this has enabled us to get some professional help. But we still rely on The Friends of St Johns fundraising and volunteers.

We are always looking for people to join our monthly working parties which are on the **SECOND SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH**. If you can spare a few hours on these Saturdays just turn up at 10am.

Harvey Adams



NOTICES FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Burial of Ashes

On September 26th at St Mary's, John Edward Kerswill, aged 85 years, of 18 Manor Road. His cremation took place on January 16th.

Cremation

On September 21st at Reading Crematorium, Arthur James Warner, aged 81 years, of 12 Hill Bottom Close. He died on September 10th at The Duchess of Kent House.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord. May light perpetual shine upon them.

Children's Page

The Woodland Summer Club On The Hardwick Estate

The woodland summer club ran on the estate from the 6th to the 10th of August and was open to local children aged 8 to 13. It was underpublicised as there were only limited places and it was intended to be a pilot scheme, so we did not want to overreach ourselves. The success of this venture has encouraged us to run further educational activities and we are arranging a full program. I apologise for the length of this article but it was hard to describe such an action packed week in concise terms.
Adam Dawson

Monday morning, individuals gathering behind the Old Dairy Farm Shop. Nervously scanning each other, none of us quite sure what we were letting ourselves in for. We all took hold of a brightly coloured parachute and started to have some fun. Smiles appeared, introductions were made, boundaries were checked and a group spirit was born, that would become a source of power for creation, learning and experiencing the elements.

We introduced sculpture as an arrangement of objects that you like, and by lunch time the woods had become a gallery of natural art. An afternoon of carving malleable chalk blocks with butter knives brought a unique experience. "Listen," Dave said to me, so I did, and all I could hear in the quiet of the woods was the chance rhythm of clinking knives and the silence of fifteen totally absorbed minds.

The second day brought different sounds as each person stood by a tree, raised their face to the branches and shouted, screamed and bellowed as loud as they could. On a signal they all stopped, quietly thanked the tree for putting up with them and stepped away. Later, we all put

on a cloak of silence and sat down separately around a clearing to see how loud the woods can be, when you just listen. The afternoon had us beating out rhythms with stout sticks, hollow logs and a xylophone of assorted lengths of wood suspended from rope between the trees.

Day three and the mystery of who stole Badger's food. Our friend Badger had met us the previous evening at the pub for his usual pint of Guinness, and had been lamenting the loss of his food. Armed with magnifying glasses 15 intrepid Inspector Forests went in search of clues; looking for all signs of life, and evidence of anyone eating anything. By lunch time the mystery was solved. In the afternoon, the group split into two and laid their own meandering treasure trails through the woods for each other.

Fourth day, **survival!** Having crash landed on a densely forested tropical island, the group had to attend to their immediate needs: water, food, fire and shelter. Water was no problem as the heavens opened in an authentic tropical monsoon. Fire was aided by some corrugated cardboard and a lighter found in the wreckage of the plane (mitigating circumstances permitted the use of these materials over thistle down, birch bark or dry grass tinder and two sticks rubbed together.) Twisters made from self raising flour (also found in the wreckage) and water, coiled round the ends of sticks, spit roasted and dipped in honey proved, "more delicious than normal bread." As for shelter, I have never seen a team of people work with more determination, co-operation and cheerfulness to achieve a common aim. And how they achieved it, despite the relentless pouring rain. By the end of the afternoon they had created a beautiful bower complete with bracken thatch, a window decorated with flowers, carpet and a door mat! The whole group piled in and the sight of all those beaming, steaming children is a memory that I will treasure for the rest of my life. WE SURVIVED!

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*Notes on the Church
Calendar*

October

October is a little thin as far as Christian festivals are concerned (though there are, of course, plenty of saints' days in the Roman Catholic calendar), and the best known comes at the very end of the month on 31 October: *All Hallow's Eve* – widely known as Hallowe'en.

Its origin lies in Samhain, the festival which marked the end of the Celtic year and the beginning of the next. Like many other Celtic traditions, it was hi-jacked when Christianity arrived.

Traditionally, it is the night when all the witches and warlocks are abroad – but that is a hangover from the Celts. The Christian take on it is as the night before All Hallows, the day on which we celebrate all those saints and redeemed sinners who have been restored to Heaven now and at the Day of Judgement by the redeeming powers of Christ.

PRAYING FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR CHURCH
Saturday 1st December 2001

Bishop Richard, the Bishop of Oxford, and Bishop Colin, the Bishop of Dorchester, have asked that we use Advent as a special time of prayer and reflection. Excellent packs have been prepared for use by families and individuals, youth and school groups and in our Sunday worship.

The P.C.C. have agreed that we will start Advent with a special time of prayer for the future of our church – both in Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill. It is a very important time as we are thinking of joining the Langtree team and are preparing for a new House for Duty priest to join us.

On Saturday 1st December St Mary's in Whitchurch will be open for a special time of prayer from 10.00a.m. to 12.00 a.m. and St John's in Whitchurch Hill from 2.00 – 4.00 p.m.

There will be a short time at the start of those sessions when people can pray together – otherwise please pop in, for as long as you wish, when you are free to do so.

If you want further information about the Advent packs please contact Rosemary Pearce on 984 3106 or Wendy Ferguson on 984 1262.



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Sunday 14th October**

A PRAYER FOR SHARING LIFE

Gracious God,
for the gift of life
with all its struggle
and great opportunity
we give you thanks.

For Jesus the Life-Giver
in whom we have life with You,
now and for ever
we give you thanks.

For the Holy Spirit
Making us alive
with His Life
we give you thanks.

Open me to that Spirit
and renew your Church
that we may share your life with others.
Draw them into your love
And transform the world.

(This prayer is being used throughout the Diocese and
particularly during Advent)

Rosemary Pearce



Advance Notice

The St John's Christmas Mini Market will be held at
Goring Heath Parish Hall on Saturday 8th December.

The Christmas Market held annually in the Whitchurch
Village Hall has yet to be finalised and I am very anxious
to get together an organising committee as soon as
possible.

Volunteers please phone Wendy Ferguson on 984 1262

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Choir Robe Fund

With my complete blessing our organist, Anne Bolam, has opened a fund for the purchasing of new choir robes.

At present we intend to keep the colour red but of course any colour or style will be presented to the PCC for their opinions and final choice.

The account has been opened at the HSBC Bank in Pangbourne so if you would like to make a donation either pay it straight into the bank or contact either Anne, Alan or myself and we will bank amounts on a regular basis.

Jo Adams

Church Warden

Advance Notice

I have, in a moment of weakness, volunteered to organise a **Quiz Night** on Saturday 23rd February. We are hoping to attract teams from other parishes in the Deanery as well as local teams—details to follow.

Alan Matthews

Please submit all copy for the next month's magazine by the 20th. I look forward to receiving your news, views, letters, etc. This magazine appears in the Church section on the village web site, see: www.whitchurchonthames.com.



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Harry, Barry and Carrie

Twelve years ago we first met Harry, Barry and Carrie, three formidable members of the Limeuil Congregation in the Chaplaincy of Aquitaine. The Chaplaincy, supported by the Intercontinental Church Society and the members, is part of the Diocese in Europe, and wears out successive Chaplains as they drive out from Bordeaux through the vineyards to their flocks in the far corners of the region.

Harry was Large by name and nature—moustachioed, exuding good will, always in sandals ready for petanque or collecting tins for the down and outs at the Resto du Coeur; Harry lit the candles, served the wine at Communion, and knew everybody. Barry taught at the Conservatoire in Sarlat—a wonderful organist, brilliantly partnered by his wife, Olivia, soprano soloist and oboist—professional and maiden name Lybbe Powys. And Carrie—ah, Carrie! She was our Head Girl, distributing congregation address lists, the right books for the service, dashing off afterwards in a cassock with the portable communion set and running the services when the Chaplain wasn't there.

How could we do without any one of them? Harry left for Spain after many more years than the eight he normally stayed anywhere. Barry, alas, died of leukaemia three years ago, but the organ Olivia gave him will always speak to us of him. And Carrie—bereft of her novelist husband, who dramatically eloped with a pillar of the congregation last year, starts her ordination course at St John's Durham this term, at the age of sixty-one.

The congregation goes forward without Harry, Barry and Carrie, as vitally as ever, served by numbers of devoted ex-pats, its spirit and motivation more powerful than the individuals of the moment. There's always good singing, crowd of communicants, wonderful fellowship. We migrate back to the UK for the winter, but Ste Catherine at Limeuil is our other church. We love them all and think of them often, with pride and gratitude.

Kate Giles

Officers of the Parish

Officiating Priest:

Reverend Father Peter Jefford
27 Ashlong Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 0NH
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Churchwardens:

Alan Matthews, Ashdown, Duchess Close
0118 984 4489
Jo Adams, Windings, Whitchurch Hill
0118 984 3362

Honorary Secretary:

Wendy Ferguson, 21 Swanston Field.
0118 984 1262

Organist and Choirmaster:

Anne Bolam, 6 Hillview Close, Long Lane
0118 942 1020

Honorary Treasurer:

Robert Plumb, Uplands Cottage.
0118 984 4838

Assistant Treasurer:

Fred Phillipson, 2 Duchess Close.
0118 984 3181

Captain of the Bellringers:

Stephanie May, 0118 957 2596

Editor, Parish Magazine

Sue Matthews, Ashdown, Duchess Close
0118 984 4489 or email suematt@waitrose.com

Services for

October

7th October, 17th Sunday after Trinity

St John's 8 a.m. The Holy Communion

St Mary's 10 a.m. Harvest Festival

14th October, 18th Sunday after Trinity

St Mary's 8 a.m. The Holy Communion

St Johns 10 a.m. Parish Communion

St Mary's 6 p.m. Evensong

21st October, 19th Sunday after Trinity

St John's 8 a.m. The Holy Communion

St Mary's 10 a.m. Parish Communion

28th October, 20th Sunday after Trinity

St Mary's 8 a.m. The Holy communion

St John's 10 a.m. Parish Communion

St Mary's 6 p.m. Evensong

4th November, 21st Sunday after Trinity

St John's 8 a.m. The Holy Communion

St Mary's 10 a.m. Parish Communion

St Mary's 6 p.m. Evensong