

St Mary's Info: March 2009

	9.00	10.30	6.00
March 1	Holy Communion	Family Parade	Holy Communion
	Exodus 4:10-13; Matthew 28:16-20		
March 8	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Evening Service
	Acts 4:32-35; Jn 13:34,35; 15:9-17		
March 15	Holy Communion	Family Baptism	Evening Service
	James 1:29-27; Matthew 12:34-47		
March 22 Mothering Sunday	Holy Communion	Svce of the Word	Evening Service
March 29	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Evening Service
	Acts 16:11-15; Luke 7:1-10		

LITTLE ACORNS – LENT 2009

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday 25th February. There will be a service for the whole parish at St Andrew's at 7.30pm. This Lent at St Mary's we are to have a series of four sermons with linked house group notes, produced by Elizabeth Plant.

- March 1st** Gossiping the gospel
- March 8th** Caring for one another
- March 15th** Listening to one another
- March 22nd** Mothering Sunday (not part of the series)
- March 29th** Working for God 24/7
- April 5th** Palm Sunday (not part of the series)
- April 9th** Maundy Thursday, Agape at 7.30pm and
- April 10th** Good Friday, a contemplative service at 10.30am.

The Rector Writes

And along comes Lent



I suppose for many people Lent is all about giving things up. Has anybody asked you, "What are you giving up for Lent?" It happened to me on Sunday. I nearly always give the same reply - chocolate. You see I really like chocolate and I do find it a good spiritual discipline to give up something I like at Lent just to see if I have got the discipline to endure to the end. And anyway, chocolate tastes all that much nicer come Easter. But you know I don't think the most important thing about Lent is what one gives up, I think it's more about spiritually re-evaluating one's life; it's about taking a spiritual health check. To do this I nearly always re-read one of my favourite books in Lent, Richard Fosters "Celebration of Discipline". For me this book should be on every Christian's bookshelf.

It sometimes seems to me that there are millions of Christians who have grown older without ever having spiritually grown up; maybe it's because they thought that spiritual growth was automatic. They may have a plan for retirement, they may have a plan with regards to the things they want to do and see in life, and yet they do not have a plan for enriching their souls. Instead they leave the single most important facet of their human existence to chance!

But a soul does not grow automatically to maturity anymore than a baby grows automatically to physical maturity. If a child is to grow up healthy, strong, and mature its parents need to plan its feeding, exercise and education. A baby left on its own will not grow, it will wither and die. And the same is true of the soul.

Spiritual growth is not automatic, even for people who have opened their hearts to Christ. The truth is that spiritual growth requires a commitment to grow. A person must want to grow, decide to

grow, and make an effort to grow.

Spiritual growth begins with a decision. It doesn't have to be a complex decision, but it does have to be a sincere decision. When Jesus' followers decided to choose his way they didn't understand all the implications of their decision. They simply expressed a desire to follow him. And that was the beginning of an exciting journey of the soul. Jesus took that simple but sincere decision and built on it.

In Philippians 2:12-13 Paul offers insight into spiritual growth while speaking to people who already believe, "...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose." Notice that Paul says "work out" - not "work on" - your salvation. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves spiritually - Christ took care of that by his life, death, and resurrection. The important thing to note here is that God has a part in our growth - but so do we. We must make an intentional effort to grow.

But it's not just about me. In Hebrews 10:24-25 we read these words, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching." You see spiritual growth requires accountability to others. Often Christians think that it is up to each person to develop in his or her own way and at his or her own rate. But this is far from the truth. We have as a society become very individualistic and this has influenced the way that many Christians think about spiritual growth. The truth is that Christians need relationships in order to grow spiritually. We don't grow in isolation from others; we grow in the context of fellowship.

During Lent our church runs a number of different house groups. As well as examining your spiritual life over this Lenten period - your prayer life, your reading of the Bible etc, think about joining one of these Lent groups so that you can grow spiritually, alongside others, and at the same time help others in their own spiritual growth.

SAMS and Charles Darwin

One of the facts not widely reported in this year of celebration for the bicentenary of Charles Darwin's birth is that, from 1867 until his death in 1882, he paid an annual subscription to SAMS, the South American Mission Society, to assist their mission work among the indigenous people of Tierra del Fuego in the far south of South America. When Darwin had first encountered the Tierra del Fuegians he had been shocked by their apparent backwardness and had described them as being 'in a lower state of improvement than in any other part of the world.' He later was to say that he thought it useless to send missionaries to 'such a set of savages'.

However through his life long friendship and correspondence with Admiral Sir James Sullivan, who had been second lieutenant on the Beagle, Darwin came to change his mind. Darwin was gradually persuaded that he had been wrong in his estimation of the Tierra del Fuegians. Eventually in 1867 he wrote to Sullivan admitting that his first impressions of them had been incorrect and he enclosed a cheque for £5. This may seem a small sum today, but £5 in the 1860s was more than most people earned in a month!

This was the first of Darwin's subscriptions to SAMS. In 1870 he wrote to the society saying that the success of the mission to the Tierra del Fuegians was 'most wonderful' and he added that he would feel proud if the committee were to elect him an honorary member of the society. On Darwin's death, there was an obituary in the society journal.

The work of SAMS has now spread way beyond the far south of South America to practically every Latin American country, and to Spain and Portugal.

St Mary's has its own SAMS link mission partners, David and Gina Hucker, working in Arica in the far north of Chile.

Books4U

Are you one of those who thinks that everything we were told in science lessons, and now by the media, about evolution is absolutely true; that Darwin's theory of the origin of species is proved beyond doubt; that the sun is just one of millions of similar stars in the universe and that there are many planets out there like Earth which are able to support life? If you are one of those and, as a consequence are troubled by claims that all this seems to rule out the need for a creator God, then this book is for you.

Lee Strobel, the author of **The Case for a Creator** (ISBN 0-310-24209-6) is an American journalist. As a schoolboy he became an atheist because all he learnt at school in science seemed to tell him that God did not exist. But he married a Christian and through her influence began to look into the case for a creator.

In his book Lee Strobel records meetings he has had with some of the top academic scientists in the world. From his discussions with them he learns that the theories that many think are accepted and proved beyond doubt are now questioned by some top scientists. He gives the example of the drawings known as Haeckel's embryos which still feature in many text books. Because the embryos of many different species look so alike in the drawings, they apparently proved Darwin's theory that all creatures have a common ancestor. But it is now known that these drawings were doctored in order to make the embryos look far more alike than they are.

There is also a problem with the fossil record. Strobel learns that the fossil record does not show a gradual development of life from the simplest forms to what we have today. Instead around 540 million years ago there was a sudden appearance of many animal species. This is known as the Cambrian explosion.

Lee Strobel also finds evidence from astronomy. The sun is unlike most stars in that it has just the properties, right mass, age, heat, location, galaxy and light to support life; and Earth is exactly the right distance from it. Not only that but the moon, being unusu-

ally big compared to Earth, keeps the tilt of the Earth stable. In addition to all this Earth is in an ideal position in the galaxy for those on earth to study the universe. For example, because the sun is 400 times bigger than the moon and 400 times further away, we on Earth can observe a perfect solar eclipse and therefore learn more about the sun than would be possible from any other point in the solar system. Can this be attributed to luck, or is it a sign of the hand of a creator behind it all?

These are just a few of the discoveries which Lee Strobel makes as he looks into the case for a creator.

The Case for a Creator (published by Zondervan) is about £7.99 RRP, but I purchased my copy on Amazon Marketplace at 1p plus postage.

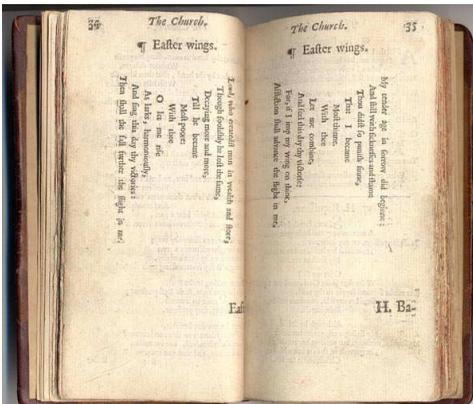
This is a book well worth reading in this year when we are hearing so much about Charles Darwin.

PS For some hot debate in the secular press about Darwinism look at www.dailytelegraph.co.uk and type Darwin in the search box. Look at 'Why do people think Darwinism is a perfect Creation?' In a previous article the author had pointed out that Darwinists rely on no more than an unscientific leap of faith to believe that an infinite series of minute variations could bring about all those extraordinary leaps in the evolutionary story, such as the emergence of the eye and countless others. For this he was derided as "stupid", "idiotic" and "scientifically illiterate", unaware that 'all these riddles had been solved by genetics and the decoding of the human genome.' He continues, 'the unravelling of the genome has done nothing of the kind. When mice, men and chimpanzees all turn out to be made of almost identical genetic material, the unknown factor which determines why the same building blocks should give rise to such an astonishing variety of different life-forms leaves the Darwinian thesis as full of holes as ever. To believe that genetics have solved the riddle relies on as much of a leap of faith as that Biblical 'Creationism' which causes the more fanatical Darwinians to foam at the mouth.'

from *The Temple (1633)*, by George Herbert:

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poore:
With thee
Oh let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did beginne:
And still with sicknesses and shame
Thou didst so punish sinne,
That I became
Most thinne.
With thee
Let me combine
And feel this day thy victorie:
For, if I imp my wing on thine
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.



The poem is usually printed in modern anthologies as seen above. In the 1633 edition the poem is printed as seen in the scanned copy below, making it look more like its title

There's probably no God. But then again....?

Most people have heard about the new atheist bus campaign, recently launched in Central London. Many bendy-buses now carry the slogan : 'There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life' all over London. The campaign was the idea of the British Humanist Association and has been supported by prominent atheist Professor Richard Dawkins.

Christian response to the bus campaign has been mixed, and includes: A Church of England spokesman said: "We would defend the right of any group representing a religious or philosophical position to be able to promote that view through appropriate channels. However, Christian belief is not about worrying or not enjoying life. Quite the opposite: our faith liberates us to put this life into a proper perspective. Seven in ten people in this country describe themselves as Christian and know the joy that faith can bring."

The Roman Catholic newspaper *The Universe* quotes Fr Stephen Wang, of Allen Hall Seminary, as providing the official RC response: 'He said he believed the campaign had started as a "bit of fun" and was not sure how seriously atheists were really taking the idea. "But I think it is great to get people thinking. I love the idea of this bus winding its way through the streets of London, and someone stopping to think, 'Mmm ... Maybe there is no God ... But maybe there is' "My only sadness is that these posters betray such a negative view of religion - as if religious believers are walking around oppressed by worry all the time...Hard-line atheism doesn't make sense. It's simply not rational to say, for example, that there is no ultimate cause behind the whole universe, or that there is no deeper meaning to our lives. I like this advert because it is so hesitant, and in its own casual way it opens you up to very serious religious questions."

For the Methodists, the Rev Jenny Ellis, the Methodist Church's Spirituality and Discipleship Officer, is quoted as saying: "We welcome the atheist bus campaign as an opportunity to talk about the deepest questions of life. The God many atheists have rejected is not the God we recognise and this campaign has opened up a dialogue between Christians and atheists which allows these types of misconceptions to be challenged."

'..and I will give you rest.'

This year Pontins has reported a rise in holiday inquiries and reservations. Naturally families are considering cheaper ways of enjoying themselves during the summer break. Fifty years ago, 1959, I spent most of the season working for Pontins' competitors at a Butlin's Camp in Clacton-on-Sea. My work was largely in catering and waiting and it has left me with undying respect for people who earn their living in this way. In serving large numbers the emphasis was on speed, efficiency and good links between kitchen and waiters. Tensions and accidents were inevitable but disguised from the campers who very evidently enjoyed their holiday.

Health and safety, improvements in equipment and organisation have no doubt changed things. The machines which made tea and coffee were a major frustration, always running out of hot water. Operators were not allowed to make tea in advance because it stewed and the handles of the metal teapots became too hot for the waitresses to hold. Tea was always late in arriving, narrowing the gap between sittings, consuming the campers' time and putting undue pressure on the cleaning and re-laying of tables. The whole sequence was rather like old-fashioned school dinners except that people sat at small tables. They were even divided into houses with cheer-leaders but I cannot remember what competitions they had to take part in.

The changing population of the camp, both workers and holiday-makers, was mixed. Amongst the work-force were people who moved seasonally from one casual job to another, others, highly-skilled people, who were simply looking for temporary change and others for whom earning a wage was an unusual experience. Amongst the campers generations mixed easily. Families, couples, older and younger people shared amusements and facilities as well as having activities which were particularly their own. The day began early and there were always people in the open air pool at about 7 a.m. when workers came in from their hostels. Others struggled to respond to the daily reveille and music relayed by public address.

It was a holiday for which many had carefully saved and they welcomed the commercially calculated opportunities which the week provided. Knowledge of their work, their hopes and their backgrounds was important to the chaplain, who weekly conducted a service in a hall otherwise used for a variety of entertainments. The chaplaincy was a rota of local ministers and I remember one of them in particular. In fact I think of him every Sunday at 9 a.m. when we hear the "comfortable words our Saviour Jesus Christ spoke" - "Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden and I will refresh you." As his text, the minister quoted not Cranmer's translation but the slightly longer phrase from the Revised Version of the Bible, "I will give you rest". Here, in St Matthew chapter eleven, Jesus promises rest to those who listen and believe in him. The minister certainly appreciated the need for rest and change the holiday-makers were there for; he gave greater emphasis to the rest and change that following Jesus and belief in his words could effect in their daily working lives. The congregation was bigger perhaps than it would be now and listened. Perhaps that verse is often used as a text for sermons in similar circumstances. On that occasion the promise seemed new. It was an outstanding event in a memorable season as we prepared to go forward into the allegedly more colourful and vibrant 'sixties.

Charles Winder

Gwynllyw and Gwladys

Remembered on the 29th, Gwynllyw and Gwladys should be the patron saints of all parents who embarrass their children with their behaviour in public. Gwynllyw was a chieftain of SE Wales in the 6th century, and he was definitely 'one of the lads' - spending his days binge drinking and trying to kick the brains out of anyone who crossed his path. This was a trial for Cadoc, his Christian son, who did not care to bring any friends home - in case his father attacked them on the spot. His mother was not exactly Mrs Beeton, either. Gwladys came from a family of 24 children, where she'd learnt survival but not any refined manners. Violence was her preferred form of hospitality, as well.

(continued inside back cover)

Youth Work Update

Voltage

Last term we saw a big increase in the membership of Voltage. We now have 70 young people registered as members of Voltage, and generally have 40-50 young people in the hall on a Friday night. This has been very exciting, but has also brought its challenges.

It had been planned to work through the Youth Alpha material in the teaching time with Voltage, but the young people we've got aren't ready for this yet. Instead we are having our "talk-time" in small groups., getting to know the young people, finding out what they believe and sharing with them what the bible teaches us about God and everyday issues.

Thanks to everyone who has been involved in leading this group through what has been quite a challenging term at times. Four people responded to our appeal for more leaders last term to volunteer to help out on an occasional basis. We look forward to them being involved once all the necessary paperwork has been completed.

Please pray for safety at Voltage, for positive relationships between the young people and the leaders and for more leaders to come forward.

The Element

The Element continues to be quite a small group of 14-18 year olds. There have been a lot of very exciting conversations this term following many of this group either making their first commitment to follow Jesus, or listening more intently to His call on their life at Soul Survivor in the summer. A number of year 10s have successfully made the transition from Voltage to The Element, although there are a quite a few who are not able to make it to our Thursday night meetings for various reasons.

Our teaching time in The Element has followed the Youth Alpha material allowing us to think though what it means to be a Christian. Some of the exciting developments in The Element this term have been the willingness of each of the young people to pray out loud

within the group.

Please pray that this group of young people will continue to grow in their faith, and that the group will grow in numbers as they invite their friends.

Pathfinders

Pathfinders now meet on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays of the month. The leaders have found that this is helping them to build stronger and more continuous relationships with the young people they are working with. This group spent the autumn term getting a good overview of the bible and filling in the gaps in their understanding of how it all fits together. They are now basing their teaching on the Scripture Union "Grid" resource.

Please pray that this group of young people will grow in their understanding of the Christian faith and feel a valued part of the church family. Also pray for God's guidance as we think about how this group will continue once Angela Howard has moved on.

CYFA

CYFA is a group of 14-18 year olds from both St Mary's and St Andrew's churches who meet at Dan and Angela's house on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month. There are currently around 14 members of this group. They spent the autumn term studying the story of Joseph and how this relates to our lives. They've also eaten some nice cake, played some daft games, and had some times of prayer and sung worship. This term CYFA are studying "Sin" and "Salvation".

Please pray that this group will grow in their openness about their faith and for honest helpful conversations. Also pray for plans for this group when Dan and Angela move on: for leaders and for a place to meet.

CHAIRO

We held a Christmas worship event on the last Friday of the term attended by members of our youth groups and their friends. This was a lively event led by the two Seans, with music from our youth worship band and a talk from Karen.

Continued overleaf

M4

A number of our young people have been invited to take part in the Pais M4 academy - a series of monthly events at which young people meet together for worship, teaching and prayer, and then go out on social action and evangelism projects. A few of our young people are also attending the M4 conference over half term. Please pray that the M4 academy events will be a time for our young people to grow in their faith by putting it into action and a time when we can show God's love to our communities in meaningful ways.

Soul Survivor

We are taking 14-18 year olds from The Element, CYFA, and the Youth Worship Band to the Soul Survivor Festival in Somerset this year. This will be 17th - 22nd August. This has always been a good time of deepening our relationships with each other and with God. Please pray for the planning and preparation for this event. If you would like to make a donation towards a young person's place at Soul Survivor please speak to Karen or leave your donation in the vestry in an envelope marked "Soul Survivor".

EXTRACT FROM `DUCKS` F.W. Harvey 1888-1957

PART III

When God had finished the stars and whirl of coloured suns
He turned His mind from big things to fashion little ones;
Beautiful tiny things (like daisies) He made, and then
He made the comical ones in case the minds of men
Should stiffen and become
Dull, humourless and glum,
And so forgetful of their Maker be
As to take even themselves-quite seriously.

Caterpillars and cats are lively and excellent puns:
All God's jokes are good-even the practical ones!
And as for the duck, I think God must have smiled a bit
Seeing those bright eyes blink on the day He fashioned it.
And he's probably laughing still at the sound that came out of its bill!

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General meeting will take place on Thursday 23rd April at 7:30pm in the Memorial Hall. Everybody is encouraged to come along and take part in the meeting as we look back over the past year and think forward to the next. At this meeting the Wardens, members of the PCC and Deanery Synod are appointed. Obviously the AGM this year will be a particularly significant event for us as we both say goodbye to Ian and Jean just a few days before their last Sunday with us, and think ahead to the coming year and hopefully the appointment of a new Rector.

As we approach the AGM there are many things that we need to consider carefully and prayerfully :

As Wardens we are prayerfully considering whether we feel able to commit to a further year in that role. But remember that doesn't stop other people from putting themselves forward!

If you already serve on the PCC are you willing and able to commit to serve in that capacity for another year?

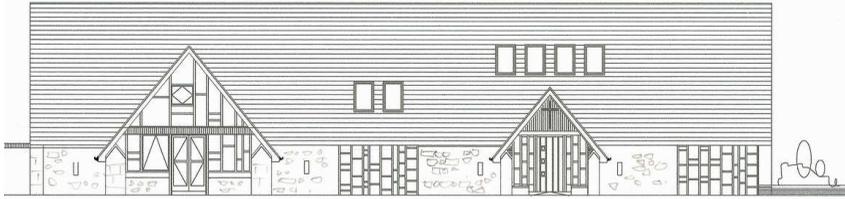
If you are a member of Deanery Synod is that something that you want to continue doing?

If you are not a Warden or a member of the PCC is it something which you think God is calling you to do?

At the AGM we also appoint our Sidespeople, i.e. we ask people to think about whether they would like to serve by welcoming people into church and making sure that they have everything they need to take part in the service (books, notice sheets etc). Again please consider whether that is something you could get involved in.

Please think about these questions and whether you want to get involved in any way. If you're not sure what any of it really means then please ask a Warden or a current member of the PCC.

Appointing Wardens and PCC members is important - they are there to represent the views of the Church, and to take responsibility for decisions that need to be made with regard to how the Church is run.



FUND RAISING FOR THE NEW CHURCH HALL AN UPDATE

As you all know, our fund raising for building the new church hall began in earnest with Pledge Sunday on 30 November last year, and as a result of the encouraging response from church members, the PCC subsequently agreed to close the Memorial Hall at the end of this year, with a view to beginning work on the new building early in 2010.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH REGARD TO PLANNING FOR THE NEW BUILD, AND RAISING THE FUNDS REQUIRED?

The PCC has instructed our architect to begin work on drawing up detailed plans for the hall. This work will take several months, but at the end of this process we shall be in a position to submit an application to Bolton Council for building regulations approval, prior to going out to tender for the building contract.

Detailed costings will not be available until after the above plans are completed, but it is now estimated that the total cost will be approximately £550,000, including £50,000 fees. Funds are being raised through donations from church members, profits from the Deane Church Shop, general fund-raising events and activities, and a contribution from income generated by the new hall itself during the first three years. Any shortfall between these funds raised and the total required will have to be met through grants from various charitable bodies.

The latest financial position is as follows:

TOTAL REQUIRED	£550,000
FUNDS PREVIOUSLY SET ASIDE	£46,000
FEES ALREADY PAID	£15,000
LUMP SUM DONATIONS FROM CHURCH MEMBERS	£51,000
MONTHLY GIVING FROM CHURCH MEMBERS (3 YRS)	£41,000
ESTIMATED INCOME DEANE CHURCH SHOP (3 YRS)	£60,000
CONTRIBUTION FROM NEW HALL INCOME (3 YRS)	£50,000
GENERAL FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES (3 YRS)	£10,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED TO DATE	£273,000

FUNDS STILL REQUIRED

£277,000

Three months into fund raising, we have had a very encouraging start, with almost half the required funds either donated, pledged or forecast. There is still a lot of work to be done, however, and the next task is to apply to external grant-awarding bodies. Work has started on identifying those charitable organisations which may be prepared to help us. All the evidence suggests that we shall have to make a large number of applications to bodies who may award any amount between, say, £5,000 and £50,000. It will NOT be possible to find one benefactor who will donate £250,000!

As we have said previously, we are still stepping out in faith as we continue this project, and we can only succeed in the end by putting all our trust in the Lord and relying on His guidance.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP MAKE OUR PLANS A REALITY?

If you have not already done so, it is not too late to make a pledge to donate funds for the project. There are pledge packs available at the back of church. So far 70 church members have made a pledge - please consider carefully and prayerfully whether you too can do this.

Monthly donations over three years can be made through your bank with a standing order, or a set of monthly giving envelopes is available - please see Les Kilsby for more information.

One-off donations will be welcome at any time - if you are a tax-payer please use one of the white gift-aid envelopes which you will find at the back of church.

Raise funds for the new hall when you shop on-line! Use a website called www.easyfundraising.org.uk to go to sites such as Amazon, Comet, John Lewis and many, many others. Register on easyfundraising, nominate Deane Parish Church Bolton as your charity, and a percentage of the cost of what you buy will be donated to us by the retailer.

We need help writing grant applications to awarding bodies. We anticipate that many applications will have to be written over the next few months. Guidance will be provided, so if you would be willing to help in this way, please speak to a member of the PCC.

PLEASE INCLUDE THE HALL AND CHARITY SHOP IN YOUR REGULAR PRAYERS, TO ASK OUR LORD TO GUIDE US, BOTH INDIVIDUALLY, AND AS A CHURCH FAMILY.

This month's profile

Elizabeth Tidmarsh

I suppose most people will know me through Pathfinders and Voltage, and I occasionally lead the evening service. I attend one (or 2!) of the Sunday services each week and I've been to Ladies' Guild once or twice (and had a very warm welcome there). I got to know a lot of you really well on the Weekend away (go to this year's - they're great fun!)



Ken and I returned to Bolton 6½ years ago. Having lived in the 'flat lands' of South Cambridgeshire for 20 years we wanted a view of the hills, and no garden - so chose a house with a view of Winter Hill and a gate to Haslam Park by our front door (all the benefits if an 'Estate' and none of the work!) Our daughter (26) remains in 'the South' a southerner by upbringing and a doctor by trade, but with northern common sense and an eye for a good bargain. Our son (30) lives in Liverpool and is a Water Engineer. His early life in Leeds marked him for a Northerner and he went to Sheffield Uni. My sister lives in Chorlton and runs the Broughton Trust.

I was brought up off Manchester Rd and went to Holy Trinity Church and Schools and Smithills Grammar before leaving for Uni in Leeds where I did Economics and Geography. I taught in Ossett, then Leeds, then took a 10 year break for my children. Then Hertfordshire and Saffron Walden. After moving here I did 3 years in Connexions in Chorley then a final year of teaching. Then I looked

after Mum and Dad and my aunt and haven't bothered to return to work!!

I've recently become a Governor at St Mary's - which is a steep learning curve and really hope I can be of use there.

I helped with swimming teaching at 11, took a Sunday school class at 14 and from 21 have always either run a CU at school, taken a Sunday school class or helped with a youth club - or all three! I miss the day to day energy of being with young people and the positive stimulation of questioning enquiring minds and personalities... and the order of a daily and weekly pattern. But I am learning new things and meeting new groups of people ...and *trying* to organise myself!

I love being involved with the Pathfinders and Voltage and 'one off's' like Holiday club and Hope. It would be wonderful if the energy of these young people, the love and caring of the Ladies' Guild, and the fire for our Lord could be 'caught' by the Sunday congregations. I would love it if everyone knew everyone else in the congregation enough to share their joys and fears each Sunday without fear of disapproval or embarrassment in complete trust of each other.

So I have returned home and I suppose I have my parents and grandparents to thank for a love of parties, walking in remote hills, swimming, sewing, reading, playing the piano, singing and most of all my faith, which they lived practically and confidently in all they did. I realise that my husband, and children not only have had a lot to put up with but have taught me so much too about me and God and a deeper spiritual daily walk that involves discussing everything with God on a daily basis in the light of His Word in the Bible..

It is but right that our hearts should be on God when the heart of God is so much on us. - Richard Baxter

God wants us to be victors, not victims; to grow, not grovel; to soar, not sink; to overcome, not to be overwhelmed. - William A Ward

GETTING STARTED IN FAMILY HISTORY: MIs and GRAVE DEEDS

MIs or Memorial Inscriptions are another useful area of family history research. Like wills, you may have believed your ancestors were too poor to have them, but many families found the money to record the death of a loved one, although sometimes some years after their demise. In the case of one of my OSBISTON ancestors, four of his friends put up the money for a memorial stone, although why his wife was not involved has always puzzled me. So as a researcher, your first task is to find where your ancestor was buried, and remember that not all churches had available graveyards. If you are looking for the grave of an ancestor before the 19th century and in a rural area, the chances are they will be buried in a local churchyard. As the 19th century progressed our ancestors began to use multi-denominational graveyards and municipal cemeteries. The two obvious ones in Bolton are at Heaton and Tonge. Furthermore if graveyards were moved or disused, your ancestors sometimes found themselves re-buried in municipal graveyards.

If in doubt, it is worth checking the National Burial Index, available in many libraries, which details more than 13 million England and Wales burials from the early 19th century onwards. Make a careful note of any burial number and date on the entry as you will need them to follow up the record. In Bolton the municipal cemetery records and grave deeds are kept in the office at the side of the New Overdale Cematorium, which you can visit in office hours. They also have plans of the layout of the two municipal cemeteries, which include division according to the branch of religious faith of your ancestors. However it is never easy to find the exact place of a grave without a headstone; slippage occurs, markers are lost.

If you are looking in smaller church graveyards they will vary tremendously in their upkeep and helpfulness to the casual visitor. One Derbyshire one had a useful alphabetical booklet showing the stones and their layout. Some graveyards have been taken over by

brambles and ivy, some have been vandalised, and many stones are unreadable or have sunk without trace. Do not despair because in the last 50 years many helpers from local family history societies have been busy noting the inscriptions on graves in old churchyards and publishing them. Most town libraries contain copies of their efforts; Bolton has several including an alphabetical list of Deane's memorials and the gravestones from the Parish Church and Trinity Church, once stored alongside a wall.

If you are lucky enough to find a gravestone you can read, I strongly suggest you use a digital camera with a zoom facility to record it. This not only saves you time, but allows you to look even more closely at the inscription later. I also suggest taking a picture of any stone in that cemetery with your family name since you may later discover a new connection. Many stones record far more than a name and date of death. There are often references to other family members, perhaps giving their occupations or places of residence if not local. If your ancestors could not afford a headstone, a record may still exist of their burial and who else is buried with them. These are usually known as grave deeds. I still recall the family's surprise to discover that great grandfather John was buried with not one but two wives, since before that they had assumed the faded pictures were of the children's mother and not step-mother.

Some families kept copies of these deeds, since they often indicate a grave is not full and there is room for other burials. Such deeds indicate the cemetery, number of the plot and who is buried in the grave, usually with date of death and age. Some 19th century graves were deeply cut, allowing for the burial of up to 12 people, although nowadays the maximum number is usually 3. Overdale holds these records for the municipal cemeteries and will allow you to have a photocopy of a specific one for a small fee.

Nowadays there is a growing tendency to cremation burials. Even here you may be able to look up details of your ancestors.

Next month I hope to consider Poor Law records and the use of workhouses.

Thank you

from Angela Howard and Julian Tomlinson

Many thanks to everyone who has bought one of my recipe books. Julian Tomlinson has raised over £400 through selling these books which is a healthy sum to add to the £800 he had already raised himself through doing jobs (such as re-stringing racquets, a paper round, babysitting). He is now well on his way to getting the £1400 he needs to go to Morocco in the summer, with Canon Slade, to work on a community project alongside an opportunity to see something of the north African Country.

Julian comes along to the parish CYFA group that meets fortnightly in our home. Teenagers from school year 10 are welcome to come along and study the Bible with young people of their own age, in a relaxed environment. It is a wonderful opportunity to grow to know God better through His Word, get to know other Christians and support one another. Last term we looked at Joseph, and we learnt that God used Joseph to prosper his plans for the Israelite nation. This term we are studying sin and salvation, and how we can respond to all that God has done for us through the Lord Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection. CYFA Bible Studies always involve eating cake as well as chatting and enjoying a game or quiz. Please ring Dan Howard (01204 855112) if you would like to know more about CYFA.

Ladies' Guild

Ladies' Guild in March

As usual we shall be following the Lent course in our weekly Tuesday evening meetings during March. The studies will be lead by Pat Sewell and Pat Boydell.

New Leader

The new leader of Ladies' Guild is Josie Crompton and we wish to express our sincere thanks to Brenda Dixon who has done a wonderful job over many years and has now stepped down.

Agape Supper

{ ah - gah - pay } Agape is a Greek word translated in the New Testament of the Bible as "love" or "charity." Agape is ranked by Christian moral theologians with faith and hope as a basic virtue, and Saint Paul called it the greatest of the virtues.

The name agape was given, also, to an early Christian love feast, an evening communal meal held in connection with the Lord's Supper. Its origin is found in the chaburah, a fellowship meal of late Judaism. If, as is probable, the chaburah was observed by Jesus and his disciples, its adoption by the young Christian church was entirely natural. At the agape, food brought by the people was solemnly blessed in advance of the repast. The Eucharist (consecration of bread and wine) either preceded or followed the agape. About the beginning of the 2nd century the Eucharist was detached from the communal meal and transferred to the early morning. The agape lingered in some Christian communities until the 3rd century.

The practice in recent years of holding an agape supper on Maundy Thursday is a way of reviving the custom of the early church. We shall be having an agape supper on Maundy Thursday in the Memorial Hall at 7.30. All are welcome.

(Continued) Even when Cadoc somehow managed to convert them both to Christianity, Gwynllyw and Gwladys did not become the sort of couple you'd want in your home group at church. After they moved to Stow Hill, near Newport in Gwent, they got it into their heads that the Lord wanted them clean - and cold. So each day they would strip stark naked and walk for a mile up to the river Usk - both winter and summer alike - and back again - in the nude.

Poor Cadoc. Some parents are simply eccentric - and embarrass their children.

Moses Gate stroll to Nob End

Take the road to Moses Gate Country Park which is set a little to the south of the town centre, just off St Peter's Way. Drive through the entrance gates overlooking a series of lakes with wadding birds and swans (bring bread), and find somewhere to park at the bottom of the hill. Leave your car and walk to your right with the Croal River on your left, past the visitors' information centre and a huge impressive new children's play area. There are several possible paths but all lead to a bridge crossing the stream, which you must take.

Bear right again with the river on your right, and climb a flight of steps to a path by the river with good views through woodland. At several points the path is crossed by little streams but keep the main river on your right. Several metres further on you'll see a gate ahead on your right, just as the path bears left; go through the gate. The views open out and the path becomes less distinct as you cross scrub land. You should soon be able to see the spire of Ringley church and the ruins of a mill chimney ahead. At a T-junction with a broader path, turn left and carry on till you go through a gate seeing a canal and tow path below you on your right. The path now starts to climb through what used to be a flight of locks, now disused; ahead and below is the Irwell valley, but you are climbing with a red brick wall on your left until you reach the brow of the hill.

Ahead is a small bridge and the outskirts of Little Lever. At this point turn sharp left along the remains of a canal and a few old cottages. Once the canals were joined up and working but in the 1930s a disastrous breach occurred on the Irwell branch and several boats careered down the hillside. On the hill above perches a detached house known as Nob End. Walk alongside the canal (on your right) until you reach the end of it or you fancy taking one of the three paths to your left down the hill. But before you do so, enjoy the excellent views of Bolton and the moors beyond on a clear day. The paths (provided you bear right once you reach the valley floor) will take you through the woods and back to your crossing point of the Croal and the start of your journey.