

St Mary's Northchurch Newsletter



Parish Room Bookings:
Emily Millar
Mobile: 07929934367

April 2020

Church enquiries to:
Revd Jonathan Gordon
01442 871547
revjagordon@googlemail.com

Responding to a Crisis

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted on every area of life and it has meant that churches will be suspending public worship. This does not mean that the church is closed. St Mary's will be open during the day and everyone is very welcome to come in if they are passing to pray and reflect. Ministers will still be in church on a Sunday morning and we are exploring if we can put live prayers and readings onto the church website and Facebook page. This is a time to be creative in regard to church life and we are all in this together. Prayers for the community will also be said every day in church. It will be different, but if the best way to support each other is by not coming together, then that is how it will be for the coming period.

There has been quite a bit of coverage about panic buying and if you have been in the supermarkets looking for toilet rolls, eggs or pasta there is a good chance that you have felt slightly perturbed. Photographs in the newspapers of emptied shelves or clips on social media of arguments over who has the right to the last item do not inspire faith in human nature. Obviously, you can make that choice to focus on yourself and those closest to you. Yet, what has been inspiring over the last few weeks is the number of community initiatives and local support groups that have been set up to make sure if anyone is sick or self-isolating, they are not going to be left on their own. Local people are contacting the isolated and whether it is by picking up shopping or a prescription, or maybe a telephone call and a wave, there is a sense that no-one is going to be left behind. Even

though we are encouraged to keep some distance and avoid physical contact, there is a deepened sense of community and belonging that will last beyond the coronavirus. I have also been really struck by the ongoing work of the care professions and teachers who day in and day out do such a great job.

Although the bells won't be ringing on Easter Day and we don't know when this crisis will pass, at some point in the future there will be services in the local churches to reflect on this crisis and what we have learnt together from it. Just before the guidelines changed, I went to a service in the local area and we sang a well-known hymn at the end. We can't sing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation," for the foreseeable future in church. When we do hold that special service, we will, as the lines from the last verse seemed very apt: "Let the Amen, sound from his people again; Gladly for aye we adore him."

Rev Jonathan Gordon

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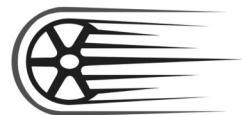
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## Slave or free?

I was in Paris for an interview and went to the opera. It was *Manon*, one of the great love stories. The book has been unread on the shelf since schooldays, but now I know.

Manon Lescaut is a beautiful young girl, born into a family that was not well off. In the manner of 18<sup>th</sup> century France, she is destined for a protected life in a convent. On the way, she discovers both the possibilities of wealth which her beauty opens before her and the power of love, when she encounters the Chevalier des Grieux. But she can never make up her mind which she wants more: money and its delights, or des Grieux. The lure of gold is a constant and, desperate hold on to her, des Grieux is dragged down from all his prospects. Only at the end, their other ambitions ruined, does Manon realise that their love was their true calling in life and that the rest has been but loss. She is the true *femme fatale*.

We have to see her choices in the light of her times. In a convent, she would be fed and safe, which is not nothing in a hostile world. But what then of love, of the possibilities beyond the convent wall? For a poor woman of her time, they were very slight unless she opted for the compromises that make for the story. She wanted to be free. But was she?

During Lent we have been reading *Galatians*. One of its themes is that Christ sets us free, not to simply do as we like, but to choose. Paul urges us to choose, in our freedom, to be slaves to love. There is the paradox. Not just erotic love. Free to see the value of others, to enable them to find fulfilment, as well as ourselves.

Let's enjoy the freedom that Christ has bought for us. But let's make sure that we are using it well, or like Manon we may discover, when all else is coming to an end, that we missed the great opportunity of our lives.

David White

## A Lady who loved Northchurch

### Maureen Rosina Batchelor (nee Shalders)

Maureen was born 20th February 1926 at 3 River Terrace, beside the River Bulbourne and a stone's throw from St Mary's church. It was a tiny cottage with an outside toilet shared with the neighbours.

Her earliest memory, a story she often told, is of being floated by her brother Peter in her Mum's wicker washing basket, down the River Bulbourne and under New Road bridge. It was her eldest sister Mag that saved her. Peter was in big trouble! She also recalled fond memories of helping her dad on his allotment and calling in for a pint afterwards at the Compasses pub, New Road.

She started her schooling at St Mary's C. of E. School and was a good scholar throughout her education and during her time she won a prize for her poetry. Poetry was a passion she enjoyed throughout her life with some of her work being featured in publications.

Maureen was wife of the late Lionel Batchelor whom she married at St Marys Church on 12th November 1946. She lived all of her early life in the village that she loved but later moved to Berkhamsted. She was dearly loved by her 5 children, 8 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren and all other family members and friends. She will be greatly missed by them all.

Maureen peacefully passed away on 21st January 2020, aged 93 years. The funeral and celebration of her life

took place at St Mary's Church on 28th February 2020 followed by a burial at New Road Cemetery. The service was beautifully conducted by Reverend Jonathan Gordon with over 120 people in attendance, all wore bright colours as requested by Maureen. A collection was held for Maureen's favourite club 'Happy Wanderers Club for the Disabled (Berkhamsted)' that raised £810, to which her family are thankful for everyone's generous donations.



### Northchurch

*By Maureen Rosina Batchelor*

In a little village where the proud church stands,  
The shops, school, post office and pubs all at hand.  
The river and canal are ours to enjoy,  
Where we spent many happy hours, our youth to employ.  
The village folk were happy, you could not wish for more.  
In times of trouble, a knock at a door.  
But time goes by, and times have changed,  
And nothing in our village can ever be rearranged.  
*It is my home, your home,*  
As we look back and say,  
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## The Pleasures of Commuting

In recent months there has been considerable comment in the local press and social media about the appalling train service to and from London, with commuters having to stand for long periods of time in all weathers on overcrowded platforms waiting for a delayed train to arrive.

Back in the early nineteenth century, before the building of the railways, Royal Mail horse-drawn stagecoaches ran a regular service between London and Birmingham via Watford, passing through Berkhamsted, Northchurch, Tring, Aylesbury, Banbury and Warwick. One frequent Northchurch 'commuter' of the time came up with a novel solution which avoided his waiting outside in bad weather for the stagecoach to arrive. He was Thomas Smart, the owner of the Norcott Court Estate, situated on the hills north of Dudswell. To make his journey less stressful, Smart built two cottages on land he owned on the south side of Akeman Street (now the A4251). One was for an estate worker and his wife, the other, consisting of an upstairs and a downstairs room, acted as a waiting room

where he and his guests could wait in comfort, having travelled by carriage down the hill from Norcott Court. The cottage became known as Dropshort Cottage, and the wife of the workman who lived at the adjacent cottage was tasked to keep it warm and clean at all times. After the building of the railway a few years later, the need for a dedicated waiting room ended and the cottage was converted to residential use.

Richard North

Photo from  
Berkhamsted  
Local History  
and Museum  
Society



## St Mary's Fete: Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July

This year's summer fete will be a joint venture with St Mary's School and thus will be even more of a community event. It will also feature the biannual **PUZZLEFEST** in church and there will be lots of exciting activities on the school field organised by the school association.

All the old favourites will be there including the BBQ, Pimms and beer stalls, various raffles, a tombola, plants, bottles, books, gifts and toiletries, cakes and teas, Good as New and lots, lots more. And this year we will definitely have enough water in the river to run the duck race!

Smaller children will be catered for in the rectory garden with face painting, a craft tent, bouncy castle, toy tombola, a tin can alley and ice creams.

The Hemel Hempstead Brass Band, St Mary's School and Madalina Tudorian will provide entertainment for all tastes.

The fete will run from 12.00 noon to 3.30pm and will raise money for **Phakamisa, a South African charity supporting Aids victims, and both St Mary's School and Church**. Please make a note of the date in your diaries now and encourage your family and friends to come along for a great family day out.

If you are having a spring clear out, please start collecting items for the fete, including:

- **Bottles** (all kinds – but in date and full please)
- Good quality **puzzles** for children and adults, complete and if possible boxed
- **Books**

### Gifts and toiletries

**Children's toys** – we are looking for good quality and clean unused or second-hand children's toys, books and games.

Empty **mugs**, can be used but not chipped or broken for the Brownies stall.

**Plants** and garden items. Maybe you can plant a plant or two for the fete when you start gardening.

Please keep collecting your **Woods vouchers** and putting them in the box at the back of church – we get a £25 gift voucher for every £100 of receipts.

More information about getting donations to us nearer the time. Thank you for your help – we can make this a great fete with your help. If you want to talk about anything to do with the fete, email [margit@gameplaneurope.com](mailto:margit@gameplaneurope.com)

*Margit, Evelyn, Rachel, Alison, Sue, Margaret, Nick, David, Penny, Jonathan, and Linda S and Linda L (also known as the Fete Committee).*

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## 2020 Choral workshop:

A Festival of Psalms.

Saturday July 25<sup>th</sup>

St Mary's Church, Northchurch.

Time: 1pm-5pm workshop.

Informal performance 6pm-7.15pm.

Contact Jenny Hoare on 07957498947  
for booking and for more information:

[music@stmarysnorthchurch.org.uk](mailto:music@stmarysnorthchurch.org.uk)



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Introducing Missy! A very sweet-natured Staffy aged nine years. She may have a few miles on the clock but she is a healthy happy girl who enjoys her walks and is excellent on the lead. She is a little on the chubby side at the moment, so will need a home where she will get the exercise she needs to get in shape! Missy has suffered from separation anxiety, so does need plenty of company. We can give support and advice on how to help her overcome this. Missy would prefer to be an only pet and we believe she will be a rewarding and loyal companion.

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# Hello from

**everyone at St Mary's Northchurch and we do hope that everyone is safe and well.**



A few notes from us regarding how we are adapting to the current situation that we are all facing.

- As you are probably all now aware, sadly there will not be any church services until further notice.
- Please rest assured that the church doors will be open daily for anyone who wishes to come in and pray.
- For now we will be postponing the Wednesday puzzlers meetings. We will let you know when we are able to re-start this in due course.

In case you have not seen the test broadcasts that have been going out this week courtesy of the wonderful David White and Jonathan Gordon, we will now be live streaming our normal Sunday services so that we can all be together at this time as usual, albeit virtually! Please do check the St Mary's Facebook page at the normal time on Sunday morning and join us.

Please do remember that we are here to help and support our community. If you or anyone you know is isolating or experiencing difficulties during this time, please do get in touch.



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