

NEWS & VIEWS

The Free Church Hampstead Garden Suburb



JULY 2022

PLEASE TAKE ONE

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB FREE CHURCH

(United Reformed and Baptist)
Central Square, London, NW11 7AG
www.hgsfreechurch.org.uk

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| Sunday Services: | <i>11 a.m. (and 6.30 p.m. when announced) Holy Communion is celebrated at Morning Worship on the first Sunday of every month. The Junior Church meets at 11am every Sunday</i> |
| Minister: | Vacancy Minister@hgsfreechurch.org.uk (which will be re-directed to the secretariat) |
| Pastoral Emergencies Contact | Derek Lindfield 07803 953483 or Penny Trafford 030 8959 3405 |
| Correspondence Secretary | Penny Trafford 020 8959 3405 Secretary@hgsfreechurch.org.uk |
| Pulpit Secretary | Carole Lindfield derekandcarole.lindfield@earlblue.com |
| Treasurer | Joe Fryer 07814 532049 Treasurer@hgsfreechurch.org.uk |
| Lettings & Finance Officer | Claudia Millhoff finance@hgsfreechurch.org.uk 030 8455 9677 |
| Director of Music | Mark Underwood mark.underwood119@gmail.com |

Safeguarding Statement

Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church believes that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all those who are vulnerable (children, young people and vulnerable adults). We expect all of our leaders, volunteers and those who use our premises to share this commitment and value the support of those who worship here in achieving this.

***The Elders (Trustees), Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church
January 2016***

NEWS & VIEWS

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB
FREE CHURCH
Central Square,
London NW11 7AG



NO 779

JULY 2022

Dear Friends

Addressing those of you who are going to receive this month's News and Views brings to mind just how many of you there are. Of course we regular church goers will pick up our copy but in addition to ourselves there are those who once had some tie to the church who like to keep in touch. Very occasionally we hear from them – such news is always welcome.

How eventful the last few years have been. There has been almost a seasonal touch about it. Having been supported by Ian for 16 years of development in a time of regular ministry, we have been lulled out of any threat of complacency by the advent of lockdown, the fallow time of winter succeeding the brilliance of spring summer and autumn. In many ways, as Ian has often pointed out, the shock of the sudden breakdown of the normal rhythm of our lives led to fundamental reconsideration of many areas, not least the value of church life – not only the weekly opportunity to come together for worship, prayer and the challenge often offered in Ian's wide range of sermons, but also for the coffee at the back of the church and other church sponsored recreational activities. All were swept away in a matter of days. Gradually some forms of normal service have been renewed, and with the reinstallation of each has come opportunities to revalue the way we do things.

While this process was underway we had to face up to the long advertised date of Ian's retirement – a sad moment of loss. And yet again we were forced to consider who we were and what were our objectives to produce the literature required when a vacancy is announced. We pray that in time this vacancy will be filled which will no doubt lead to more development and change.

I return to my first remarks which concerned the number of those who received News and Views who for a variety of reasons were unable to join us in our worship and social activities. The web today is even wider, thanks to the technological revolution in forms of communication that is rapidly taking place. We have to thank the technologically adept members of our congregation for enabling us to take advantage of the opportunities now offered to share our weekly service with our existing dispersed congregation. Challenging times are with us!

Sally Abbott

TWO THOUGHTS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY

Patience serves as a protection against wrong as clothes do against the cold. For if you put on more clothes as the cold increases it will have no power to hurt you. So, in like manner, when you meet with great wrongs they will then be powerless to vex your mind.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452—1519) painter, engineer, sculptor, and architect.

Patience is not the ability to wait but the ability to keep a good attitude whilst waiting.

Anonymous

Sourced by Rosemary Birch



CHURCH ROUNDUP

Community Audit - a joint venture with St Jude's

Some of the Elders have been representing the Free Church at meetings to think of ways to collaborate and work with St Jude's.

As part of their diocese process to appoint a new Vicar, they are undertaking a church and community audit. We have agreed to do the community audit with them, and hope that St Edwards RC Church and the Society of Friends might also come on board. The purpose of the audit is to canvass the neighbourhood about their hopes for the Suburb, their needs, and their thoughts about religion. It is also an opportunity to let the community know what we are doing as churches.

The questions for the audit are still being finalised but over the summer we hope that you may see the outworking of this. Leaflets will be dropped through doors which people can either complete by hand or on line..

So look out for the leaflets!

Strawberries and Cream for Dennis Scott Unit

We continue, as a church, to support our local adult acute mental health in-patient unit, The Dennis Scott Unit, Edgware.

Strawberries and cream will be taken to the three wards on Saturday July 2nd, the middle weekend of Wimbledon.

Garden Party on Saturday

On July 9th from 3-5pm there will be a Garden Party at Lorna and Chris Page's house, 32 Wordsworth Walk.

This is a good time for a social occasion for the church family before the rush of August holidays. A light tea will be served.

Please let Lorna know if you can bring something to help with the refreshments.

We are hoping for sunshine so if you have a foldable garden chair to bring it would ensure that you have a seat to sit on!

Do come and join us!

Finance Officer and Lettings Officer

We are glad to report that we have appointed Fola Awosiki, a member of Brentford Free Church (URC/Baptist) as our new Finance Officer, and Eddie Hayden as our new Lettings Officer. We warmly welcome them.

NEWS OF THE FAMILY

Sadly, we are saying 'goodbye' to the Millhoff family. They are re-locating to Lubeck in Germany. Amélie will be the first to depart, on 27th June to start her university course. The rest of the family will follow in July. We have been so grateful that they have been part of our family and we will miss them greatly. Thorsten has done so much to help us with IT and our website and Claudia has been a superb Finance and Lettings Officer. We wish them all well in Germany. A big 'thank you' to them for being part of our family and for all the contributions they have made to our life together. *The Team.*



Summer fun for children and Mum!

EenyMeeny Music will continue to run through the Summer holidays, each Friday morning at the Free Church. Eddie Hayden runs a weekly music class for all pre-school age children, from Babies up to four year olds, but older siblings are also very welcome to join in the fun. The sessions are Pay-as-you-go (no pre-booking or minimum block payments) and include live acoustic guitar, props, shakers and bubbles. A mix of old style nursery rhymes, folk songs and modern family music with actions and sing-along participation have delighted children and their parents over many years.

Sessions take place in a well ventilated venue with free parking at 9.15am, 10.15am and 11. 15am each Friday, including most school holidays, at the Free Church, North Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb, NW11 7AG.

As well as being a highlight of the child's week for those who come regularly the sessions give an opportunity to families visiting the area during the Summer to bring their children to an enjoyable local activity.

For more information contact Eddie at eddie@eenymeenymusic or just come to a class. www.eenymeenymusic.co.uk

Also on Facebook and Instagram.

The team

A MORAL CONUNDRUM FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Verity Smith raises a 'moral conundrum' about our church and the money it has received from the state. It raises the larger question of how some offers of money from dubious sources (as occasionally happens) should be treated by the church, ie let it do some good at least? Or refuse to accept it outright? Views would be welcome.

At our recent church AGM, a long-standing member of our community indicated his unease over the following financial question: both our previous minister, Ian Tutton, and our caretaker, Gary Blackman, were furloughed – at Ian's request – for a period during the second lockdown when Ian said that the circumstances made it impossible for him earn his living. As a result we have received – in round terms – a sum of £7700 to cover the furloughs of the two employees.

Our church member argued that because our financial position is buoyant we should return the sum to the Treasury. However, the decision was taken that we should keep the money and I found myself in agreement with it. This was an almost instinctive response on my part and so I paused later to review and question it. In the process I realized that for me, at least, there is – or can be – a difference between decisions that you take just on your own account and those that are taken on behalf of a group or community. For example, if I choose to give away my winter fuel allowance because I am reasonably well off, I am entitled to do so and my conscience is then clear. However, matters change considerably when you are taking a decision of this kind for a group which has direct responsibility for both a Grade 1 and a Grade 2 listed building. If I consider the totality of our church members, not a single one, I think, owns a Luytens church or another building of a similar standing, so the moral code that may guide us as individuals may need some modifications or “tweaking” in the case of our church affairs.

It is true that our present financial position is sound; however, David Morris reminds us that because of the lockdowns there is a backlog of maintenance for our church buildings. The most important items are the Manse, now in the process of much needed refurbishment, and the second is the fabric of our church with particular reference to the roof. Granted that we are talking about listed buildings, there are no corners to be cut when it comes to repairs; it simply is an expensive business. It seems to

me that as a community responsible for such an architecturally significant building as our church, it would be irresponsible not to have a large sum of money set aside for the proverbial rainy day.

It would be nice, wouldn't it, if moral questions were all cut and dried but, alas, this is seldom so in the complicated and sometimes frankly corrupt sort of society we have to navigate.

When all is said and done, I have to ask myself: would Jesus have viewed my argument as mere casuistry and flung it out together with the temple moneylenders?

Verity Smith

COMMITMENT FOR LIFE

As you know, the Free Church is part of the URC Commitment for Life Programme. Following the withdrawal of Christian Aid from some countries in Central America, Commitment for Life - through its consultation and feedback with URC Mission Committee, decided to limit its support to three regions – Bangladesh, Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territory (IOPT), and Zimbabwe. Accordingly, the Elders have recently decided that we will support Zimbabwe. The following piece is an extract from their regular update leaflet for May/June 2022.

Resurrection in Zimbabwe

Agnes Machona is a leader and thriving as part of her community garden project. Working with other women, she is bringing in extra income to raise her three sons and supplement the income her husband makes

working in construction away from home. Agnes's community have seen great success through the BRAC project which is helping communities to adapt to climate change and start diverse businesses to provide

extra income. The solar water pump at the community garden has made a



huge difference to the foods the women are able to grow. Before, in times of drought, women from the village had to dig and scoop water from sand and carry it long distances. Now Agnes grows a variety of vegetables and the community garden group have received training in finances, looking after livestock, nutrition and how to harvest wild fruits and berries sustainably. One of the wild plants Agnes collects is the resurrection bush which can be sold to make herbal tea. After harvesting, this herb can “play dead” for weeks only to resurrect into a green shoot when placed in water. Agnes says, ‘When I look at the resurrection bush, I liken it to our lives. Sometimes life is difficult, and the other time it is okay. But the time during which it is difficult do not lose hope saying it will not become okay anymore. Anytime life can be good again.’ With this renewed hope through the community garden and the income, Agnes pays school fees for her sons and has hope for the future. ‘I am so happy to see myself as a person who is able to do something meaningful in life. And we are people whose voices can now be considered in the family.’ Thank you for your support through Commitment for Life which is improving income for women on the front line of climate change.

The team



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"After Ted closes with prayer, there will be a brief meeting in the parking lot to determine what, if anything, was actually decided in this meeting."

Bible Study: John's Gospel

The Marriage in Cana

In John 2:1- 11, we learn how Jesus' ministry started a week after his baptism when he travelled 60 miles from Bethany beyond Jordan to the village of Cana in Galilee. Here the Fourth Gospel writer recorded the first of seven signs of the Gospel.

The miracle

During the seven-day wedding feast at which Mary is an honoured guest and Jesus and his disciples attend, the wine runs out. After asserting his freedom to act as he feels right, Jesus orders the six great water pots used, according to Jewish custom, for ritual washings, to be filled with water and then taken round as wine – which, indeed it has become! There is admiration for the mysterious new supply.

The miracle is not a healing miracle, nor a nature miracle but reveals the “glory” of Jesus! It also consolidates his disciples’ faith just after their calling. Moreover, in this story, the gospel writer, in his usual way, also picks up allusions from the Old Testament, Rabbinic thought, and the Hellenistic background of Philo, to convey deep truths about Jesus.

Religious points made in the story

- a. “The Bridegroom” (a title for the Messiah) attends a marriage ceremony among the people of God and the situation is transformed. Wonderful things happen.
- b. The Old Testament had often seen God and Israel as husband and wife, but that relationship has been broken. Now, however, God in Christ comes to make a better covenant with the Bride, his people.
- c. In Jewish imagery, wine stood for the Torah ((the Law). This had had its time. This ‘wine’ had run out. Now it was to be replaced by the wonderful sparkling wine of the Christian Gospel with its invigorating power. It could give a better life than any known before. The way to communion with God was not through the Torah but through faith in Jesus.
- d. There were vast quantities of water present (180 gallons) for all

imaginable Jewish rites of washing and purification to take place, but all this was insufficient and imperfect. (Note there were six not seven water pots, the perfect number). Jesus alone gives a clean start with God.

e. Mary, the mother of Jesus, may stand for the Old Israel from which Jesus and the new faith had sprung. In the crisis, Mary (the Old Israel), cannot bind Jesus. (The gospel writer always stresses that Jesus acts according to his own pre-determined programme. Nothing is forced on him by anyone else. He is always master of the situation). Jesus' answer to his mother sounds at first to be cold and aloof. He says, "Woman, what have I to do with you?" but this conveys, "I have a purpose you know nothing of," meaning, "I am free of your authority now and submit only to the will of my Heavenly Father." The Old Israel cannot bind Jesus.

f. We meet the phrase "My hour has not yet come" for the first time. This is related to the point made above, but it also means that he chooses the moment to fully reveal his power and glory, but this will not be done fully until the moment of crucifixion and resurrection.

g. In the "mystery" legends, Dionysius, the god of wine, on at least two occasions made a mysterious supply of wine appear. This was a story. But Jesus, a true historical figure from the one true God gives the true wine of life.

h. The Jewish writer Philo, in his allegories of the Old Testament, spoke of Melchizedek, the strange figure in Genesis 14:18 as a foreshadowing of the Word, who would bring wine instead of water so that all thirsty souls could drink.

i. The gospel writer sees reflections of the life of the early church in the events he records. Christian readers will always think of the wonderful help given by the wine of the communion service. It may remain a mystery to the careless and indifferent, but the faithful know this as a source of their life and peace. Jesus offers the transforming wine and then it is passed on to those present as the sustaining wine.

Verse 11 sums up the point of the story. "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

Derek Lindfield

Still untangling with great patience !

The last word of the title is going to be used several times in this article, or I could use a whole list of other words meaning the same thing such as forbearance, tolerance, restraint, resignation, suffering, serenity, perseverance, stoicism, calmness, composure, equilibrium, tenacity, staying-power, doggedness, resolution, even-temperedness, inexcitability, undefeatability, singleness of purpose, but whatever word I use I have not got much of it! The dictionary definition defines patience as “the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, problems or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious!” I still haven’t got much of that either. With certain situations one would need to be a —



saint or someone with no sight, no hearing, no feelings at all to show no reaction. One of those situations at the moment is the tortoise on its third escapade (see John’s diary for the first two!) and which has not returned at time of writing. What more are we to do? It had a large pen made as escape-proof as possible, plenty of food and water and an older female for company - but a very large stone has been pushed away and it has escaped! The pen is in a very large paddock where, at this time of year, the grass and numerous vetches and clovers are several inches high, encouraging the bees, etc. We tried to follow tracks through the grass - but the one I followed this morning was obviously a neighbour’s cat’s tracks as it ended at the high fence!

Patience runs thin in the kitchen too as we have an old, but still effective, washing machine. Although the rev counter for the spinning process is down at half power, the machine still insists on doing a little dance across the floor at full spin unless one puts one’s weight on it. I know the saying ‘a watched pot never boils’ so I don’t and do numerous jobs around the kitchen waiting for ‘my partner to join me in the dance’ - but I still find the waiting irksome when I think of other jobs needing to be done around the cottage. No, my patience level is not very high.

When it comes to gardening in this over-grown garden it’s faring a bit better. I can now begin to see a difference. There are large areas of bare soil but now at least plants will have a chance instead of being strangled by the marram grass. I came to the conclusion that big clumps of iris had to dug up altogether, separated to actually identify the grass roots and then replanted on its own.

On listening to a Daily Morning service (9.6.22) the Rev. Michaela Youngson touched on this theme of patience when mentioning her lack of

patience whilst waiting for yet another moving-day date after several cancelled ones; living out of boxes was becoming intolerable until she realized the comparative plight of refugees having to leave everything behind, running for their lives with no idea of any planned future life. She accepted how small her problem was compared with theirs! She continued: "through all these unsettled times God is our 'constant'- and our impatience is often the driving force to work for a better, a fairer world. We need space in our spiritual lives to allow God to renew us and strengthen us and uplift us".

She also talked about how sometimes God seems very close and how sometimes He seems far away when we don't receive the answers to our prayers; that's when it can be tempting to walk or turn away from the path of faith - when it's so important to keep on trusting, keep on hoping for those things unseen.

Patience is a vital part of our trust in God as our life circumstances are not always what we'd prefer. Having patience can be hard but it's in our weaker moments that God reveals His strength.

As a family we have very much tried to do things together as a unit and one of our traditions when we get together is play a card game called Scrambled Patience or Racing Demons. (My maternal grand-parents taught it to my Mum and we have taught it to the family and it's great to see our children playing it with their youngsters.) Imagine the tabletop with six people playing, a deck of cards for each player and the challenges and competitiveness! It's played with real intensity; waiting to get your own card on a particular pile only to be beaten by someone else's quickness; very worrying when everyone else seems to be getting their cards out and you are stuck. You can hear the annoyance when someone gets to the pile of cards first after you've been waiting for ages. There can be the occasional scratch but you get all your feelings out in the open; it's a game of patience, waiting and speedy reaction.

I'm beginning to realize that these moments of patiently waiting can be times of reflection, meditation and quietness; in fact, we can use these moments to our advantage, to our sanity, when we can draw aside and just 'be'. Perhaps that's why I like gardening so much when I let my mind go completely blank or find, when working out a problem in my mind, that I've actually used more physical force than I meant to and pulled up the wrong plant! But the garden is also a place where I can feel very close to His peace, His presence and can learn to wait patiently.

This is best summed up in Roland Fudge's hymn

'Be still and know that I am God'

Rosemary Birch

The Church Archives

Our extensive Church Archives date from 1909, ie from the very beginning of forming a Free Church with some of Edwin Lutyens plans for the building along with letters in Henrietta Barnet's handwriting and also by Rev Rushbrooke, our first Minister.



The Archive contains original account books, the Church Covenant, early photographs, orders of service, plays, pantos, pageants, Scouts, Girl Guides, Brownies, Sunday School postcards,

newspaper cuttings, building works, war memorials, concerts, Cradle Roll, Ministers, outings, holiday clubs, bazaars, Montrouge, Free Church Halls, photographic club, Missionaries, Church Manuals (from 1912), Work and Worship, News Letter and News and Views (from 1948), etc. The large collection of early photographic slides is soon to be digitally copied and put on line.

Over the years, the Archives have been able to help with enquiries of all sorts from the Suffragettes' attempt to burn the church down in 1913 to much more recent police investigations. More recently, we have been involved in a project in the Chilterns, the 'Woodlanders' Lives Project' which is an ongoing project in which volunteers investigate the history of villages in the Chilterns – their cottage industries and, in particular, their tradition of wooden furniture-making. A volunteer exploring the Stokenchurch records recently contacted me about the chairs in the Free Church – which we are still



using. They were made by Thomas Harding of Stokenchurch (who specialised in ecclesiastical furniture) and several hundred were delivered to us in 1911. We have offered a chair to be shown in Aylesbury Museum if they wish. (Poor Stokenchurch village is now Junction 5 on the busy A40 complete with red kites circling for road kill).

Since July 2021, we have also held the digitised records of Marriages and Baptisms which go back to the earliest times. More recently, John and



Rosemary Birch have given us a collection of Sunday School photographs. We have also acquired a set of postcards showing the devastating fire damage to the Free Church Hall in April 1978. (*See illustrations*)

Finally, we need to mention the donation of a copy of Michael Eleftheriades' magnificent book of photographs which had been specially compiled for Ian Tutton on his retirement – please ask me if you wish to see it.

And remember – All church-related items that are offered are gratefully received – they could always be the missing piece we are looking for!

From the Archive JULY 1942

This extract from the Free Church Newsletter of July 1942 shows the continuing involvement of the church in aiding the war effort. Sir J Abraham – mentioned in the last sentence – was sadly lost over the Atlantic at the end of the war; a record of this loss is on the World War Two display board in the church. The lectern which we still use for Bible readings is also dedicated to his memory and his name is inscribed round the edge of it.

I am grieved to have to announce that Edward Kauffmann is reported “missing in the Middle East.” I will not attempt to say how much we feel for his mother in her anxiety and suspense. I have not ventured to say anything about our boys out in Egypt and their friends at home, but they are all continually in our thoughts. Never a day passes but we think of them. I hear that Gordon Down is now a lieutenant, and it is believed that he left Tobruk shortly before it fell. Michael Robbins in Persia, is now a staff captain. Donald Heather, who was believed to be on his way to America, has turned up in the Transvaal. Amongst the younger evacuees, Derek Swynnerton has been very ill in Scotland for some 14 weeks. A letter now before me from his mother sounds most alarming, but as it was written on June 20th and no more news has reached me, I hope his condition is better by now. His father, by the way, has been promoted and given a staff appointment.

Congratulations to Sir Frank Tribe, who has been appointed to the New Ministry of Fuel and Power. Also to Sir J Abraham, who has completed a most important visit to America and safely returned to this country.

Ever yours sincerely, Frank J Ballard

Anne Lowe

JOHN BIRCH'S DIARY FOR JULY - Moving on!

In September 1960, the Birch household in Shrewsbury was reduced from four to two; the remainers were my Mother and my Grandma, the leavers were myself and my Dad, who by then was in his mid 50's. I was off to London to work for the LCC (the local authority) and my Dad to Litchfield to start training as a Church of England Minister.

Many years previously, he had commenced studies to become a Congregational Minister. The various exams included one on Shakespeare (no idea why). He failed that exam and the procedure was to take all the exams again. Over the years he'd become a Lay Reader. He gave up his job at the local Rolls Royce factory (oil engines not cars!) to commence his studies. Three years of hard work led to qualification. Initially, he was curate at a church near Wellington Shropshire and then took the position of Rector at Trefonen, just outside Oswestry and right on the Welsh border. In previous centuries, the border, from the practical viewpoint, had been quite fluid and most of the parishioners when Trefonen church was established in the 1840's, spoke Welsh, which was the language used for its early days. The patron then was the Earl of Powis - and his successor is the patron today. My Dad was "their" Rector for almost 15 years.

Powis was not the only noble connected with Trefonen. Lord Harlech, who had been Ambassador to the United States during the Kennedy Presidency, had become a family friend, which led to a visit to Trefonen by Mrs Kennedy. Thus, a tiny village was put on the world map for a few days! I strongly believe that all of us are given a role to play, which must be identified and embraced. If not, you are missing out on one of the essential points of life!



One of the pleasures of my teenage years was to cycle out to the countryside around Shrewsbury. In the Spring and Summer, on virtually every trip, I would hear the haunting and unmistakable sounds of the curlew (now on the endangered red-list of birds). Intensive farming has dramatically reduced their habitats and made the bird a rarity. Most of those remaining nest on airfields and other sites without public access, to the extent that there are enough eggs for a government funded project to allow relocation to suitable secluded sites, as far apart as Gloucestershire and Norfolk. Often Nature has been damaged by human activities: any



chance to “pay back” must be taken now.

“Going green” is about to take a new meaning through the efforts of a company called Ecotricity (good name, read on). A “green grass mill” is being built at a cost of £11 million with the object of providing gas to 4,000 houses by early next year. The mill will

be fed grass and herbs. Hopefully, the enthusiasm of the company founder, Dale Vince, will be vindicated: “It’s our new North Sea and its right under our feet.”

I’m feeling somewhat ambivalent writing this next item about the Frenchman who has just broken the **World bungee jumping record** - 765 times in 24 hours - off a Scottish bridge (previous world record 431 times). Why? Well, the answer may well be in the photo with the news item. A happy man and doing something so out of the ordinary that there are going to be very few who will emulate him.



(Weed on) A new claimant to be **the World’s largest plant** (growth coming from a single source). A seagrass meadow (off the Australian coast) has been put forward as the world’s largest plant. Researchers from the University of Western Australia have verified that the growth, covering 69 square miles, has come from just one plant. Samples collected over a large area have proven that all comes from a common source. A patch of weed as large as London!

Sailing through it. A Japanese octogenarian (this long word I know how to spell) has just sailed non-stop across the Pacific - and not for the first time (which was when he was 23.) It took him more than two months sailing before he reached the Kit Peninsula, Western Japan. His 19 foot long aluminum boat was customised for him. (Kenich is just 5 foot tall). **A crewless robotic boat** (three words paint a picture!) was rather less accurate, having been programmed to cross the Atlantic and emulate the “Mayflower” to reach what is now the United States. Its voyage ended up

in Halifax, Nova Scotia not in Massachusetts!

Borth's High Street was garlanded with bunting for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the lifeboat station becoming centre piece with the lighting of the beacon and the presenting of awards to several deserving citizens. Our lighted beacon stood in the sea but at least it was lit. The RNLI is a charitable organisation with no government involvement (in the USA for example their sea rescue service is entirely state funded and run).

A Lincolnshire village's plans to light another beacon were put on hold after a nesting bird, a collared dove sitting on three eggs, set up home inside the torch!

1953, 2002 and 2022 are all years in which a special event, centred on the Queen, placed the Royal Family "front stage" giving everyone an opportunity to reflect on the way the monarchy has affected the life of our nation. There is a subtlety to this, no massive exhortation to promote the role that royalty plays in our country- just the opportunity to be reached and entertained by celebrations, which are royal but essentially show a family little different from any family with good and difficult times, worries, pleasure and successes but also matters to move on from.

It wasn't just our country celebrating but more or less across the world: expats on the Costa del Sol organized parties; there were concerts abroad the QE2 in Dubai and get-togethers in the Falkland Isles. The Empire is history but connections and affections are still very much alive.

Personally, this jubilee made me think back to the one celebrated in 2002. Firstly, myself (and one son) sat on the road in the Mall for several hours absorbing the atmosphere and listening (we couldn't see much) to the various performances, and secondly because yet another grand-child had arrived - our daughter Sally had a third daughter, aptly named Beth. As with the Platinum, there was a fly-past, no more than 200 feet above the treetops (enough to clear the Palace). The noise was terrific but the sensation of being able to look up and - with the bombers - see crew members in their bomb-aiming turrets was amazing.

There was one chunk of the TV celebration which Rosemary, myself and many, many others will remember for a very long time - Her Majesty and



Paddington Bear having tea together in the Palace. Perfectly pitched to appeal from youngsters up to Great Grandparents. Any reason for it? Not really, but it was fun, with the Queen and Paddington both enjoying what they were doing - and through turning the ridiculous into the extraordinary - giving a few moments of unadulterated joy to millions of UK citizens, who would recognize it as one of those happenings which give Brits their unique identity. (And, after a few shrugs or a bit of head-scratching, millions around the world would have relaxed, smiled and enjoyed it.)

You may be under the impression that Rosemary and I are relaxing on the beach here in Wales with nothing to do! Far from it - the latest excitement was searching for our younger (ie 40+ year-old) tortoise who is determined to see the wider world. The first time he was found making it across the road heading to the beach (perhaps wanting to try being a terrapin) and the second time causing a neighbour's very tall greyhound to be completely mesmerized by watching a moving stone with legs!

John Birch

In praise of holy fools

July is the month for holy fools. The feast of St Simeon the Holy Fool, who is the patron saint of fools, falls on 21 July. In celebration of that, Simon Jenkins muses on the holy fools of past and recent times, in a chapter from his book, 'Jumble Sales of the Apocalypse' published by the SPCK. The piece is taken from the Christian website 'Ship of Fools.' - and the patron saint of their website is St Simeon.

Western Christianity boasts some eccentric forms of religion, perhaps most famously the Pentecostal snake-handling churches of the Appalachian Mountains. Their favourite Bible verse isn't John 3:16, but the one where Jesus says in passing that his future followers would 'take up serpents' without harm. Unfortunately, the rattlesnakes they take to church don't hold the same interpretation of this proof text, with the result that quite a few believers have perished.

Snake-handlers aside, most of Western Christianity is an utter bore compared with the wild eccentricities of the Eastern church. Orthodox monks and nuns have lived up trees, in barrels, in bricked-up chapels or out in the fields grazing like sheep. St Simeon the Stylite started a craze among Syrian monks by balancing on top of a 50-foot pillar, drawing huge



Appalachian snake handlers

crowds and practising a kind of divine vertigo. He was so revered that even his blessed number twos, as they plopped off the pillar, were piously collected and turned into medallions for the faithful. Which only goes to show that you can polish a turd.

You'd think such extreme saints had reached the far end of austerity. But there was one final feat of mortification, and even the toughest

men and women of the desert were in awe of it. It was the calling to be a fool for Christ. The first of these mavericks was another Syrian saint, Simeon the Holy Fool, who lived quietly as a monk in a Dead Sea cave for 29 years. But then one day he set out for the city of Emesa. He had decided to mock the idiocy of the world and convert sinners by becoming a public fool.

During church services, he pelted the clergy with nuts. In the circus, he wrapped his arms around the dancing girls and went skipping across the arena. In the streets, he tripped people up and dragged himself around on his buttocks. In the bath-house, he ran naked into the crowded women's section. On solemn fasting days he feasted riotously on beans, with predictable results. The locals saw him as a madman and beat him when his antics proved too much.

The tradition of fools for Christ really took off when it arrived in Russia. The



Russian fools endured not only destitution and beatings, but also went naked in the cruel Russian winters. For them, being seen with a hot water bottle would have been as scandalous as the Archbishop of Canterbury being found in the bosom of a stripper.

Russia's most famous holy fool, St Basil, found his vocation in shoplifting, giving stolen goods to the poor and rebuking Tsar Ivan the Terrible for being a bit too terrible. In a sense, his mission of foolishness failed, because he ended up being buried honourably under the crazily colourful onion domes of St Basil's Cathedral in Red Square. In contrast, Rasputin, who is sometimes claimed as a holy fool (although he was actually an

unholy scandal), ended up full of bullet holes and floating face down in a river, which would be a holy fool's dream ending. Rasputin had a reputation for healing and generosity to the poor, but also for heavy drinking and visiting brothels, and I only mention him because his story highlights the dangerous game genuine

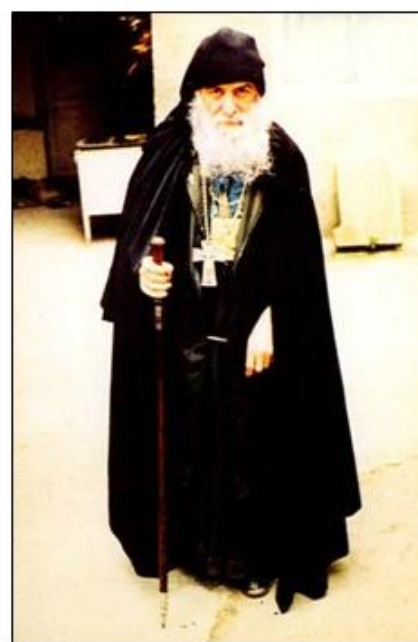


Rasputin with fan club

holy fools played with hypocrisy, masochism and actual madness.

Fools for Christ are rare in our time. At the height of the Cold War, St Gabriel the Holy Fool, a priest-monk from Tbilisi, Georgia, burned a giant portrait of Lenin during a Communist May Day parade. He was beaten by the crowd, tortured, sentenced to death and finally declared to be a psychopath. His response was to become a full-blown holy fool, masquerading as a drunkard and preaching loudly in the streets. Icons of St Gabriel, who died in 1995, show him smiling sweetly, which is a rare sight in the severe world of Orthodox icons.

If you were a bog standard monk or nun, you waved a fond farewell to home, family, shopping, cakes and sex. If you were an uber-saint like the stylites, you also said goodbye to the ground. But holy fools went even deeper into



St Gabriel of Georgia

the spectrum, and found the ultra-violet of holiness as divine lunatics, outsiders and troublemakers. They added one more impossible thing to their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and that was humility to the point of humiliation.

A woman once found St Gabriel weeping in a church. He told her why: 'Christ was born in a manger, but people respect me and kiss me on the hand.' The favourite Bible verse of the holy fool is the one where St Paul says, 'We are fools for Christ'. Maybe the snake-handling Pentecostals could adopt it. But not just them, of course. Me too.

OYSTER TRAINING

From time immemorial, ie 2007, we were promised a new fast tube line to link west London with the centre of London and points beyond. It would be modern, frequent and fast, passengers would be whisked smoothly to the West End at Bond Street or Tottenham

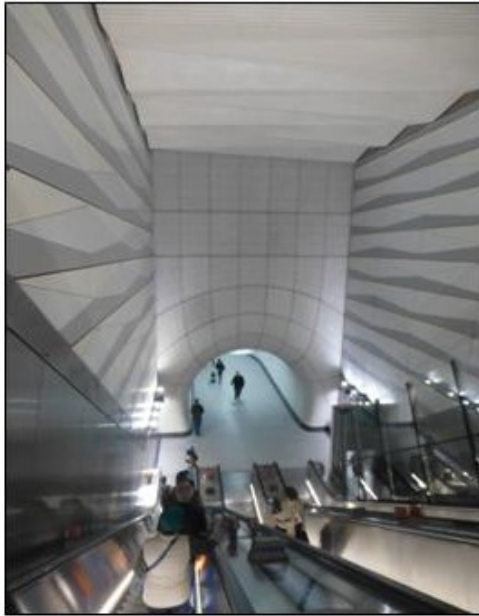


Court Road and on to Liverpool Street and then either to Abbey Wood in the south-west or Shenfield in the north-east. It was called Crossrail and then became the Elizabeth line (but is still thought of as Crossrail by many of us, not for republican reasons but because 'Elizabeth line' is somehow a bit of a mouthful). Work started in 2009. There were many delays and cost overruns. The final cost was some £4/5 billion greater than the £14 billion originally estimated. Which was not too bad, considering it was the most ambitious and complex construction job in Europe at the time – and (realistically) nearly all construction jobs on this scale are subject to delays and cost overruns.

From time to time we would ask for an update on how the building was progressing. For this, we turned to our grandson in Australia, a rail enthusiast who knew to follow Geoff Marshall on YouTube for news of progress. It was always: "It is hoped to complete Crossrail by" followed by Geoff Marshall's gloss. Each new announcement was met with disappointment as delay seemingly followed delay (not helped by Covid of course). It was always a case of "jam tomorrow, never jam today."

And then we were finally allowed to go to Australia to visit the family who we had not seen for four years. It was there that our grandson (Lucas – now ten) was able to give us the great news that the Elizabeth line (or nearly all of it) was to finally open on Tuesday 24th May - just after we were due to return to London. There were heavy hints that we could travel on it that day and that there were commemorative oyster cards to be bought which could be added to his collection of Railway(UK) Memorabilia.

Thus, two days after our return (battling jet lag) we set out to complete this mission. Which was more difficult than anticipated. This was because being old and having Freedom Passes (bless you Ken L!), we were no longer familiar with the fare complexities of contemporary metropolitan



travel. Commemorative oyster cards could only be bought at certain stations. One of these was Ealing Broadway so we decided that this would be our starting point. At the ticket office (which didn't seem to deal in tickets at all) we were directed to the Oyster card ticket machine opposite the ticket office. However, the machine seemed only to deal with 'topping-up' existing cards and not with buying new cards. (Other people were having similar difficulties – which was comforting as these situations always seem to make you doubt your capacity to deal with the modern world). Finally, a really helpful

official came out of the ticket office and showed us how to do it – agreeing that it was all a bit obscure. The next bitter pill was that you have to pay £5 for the new card itself and then have to load it with £5 (or whatever) in order to travel on it, ie the £5 is a kind of poll tax. The official agreed that this was 'totally unreasonable – but what could you do?'

But finally, we made it to the platform and – along with other young and old enthusiasts - boarded our first Elizabeth line train. We made it to Paddington in no time at all. But there – unfortunately - we had to change to a different platform, which involved walking the breadth of the station, negotiating stairs, all the while searching for and deciphering the appropriate signage. But we made it, helped by the crowds of people with cameras and notebooks - obviously making the same sort of pilgrimage. Through Bond Street (still not open because of escalator and other difficulties), Tottenham Court Road, Farringdon and Liverpool Street where we decamped. Neither of us had seen the station for years and we wanted to see how it compared with distant memories. The answer was very little compared – in fact, it was more an exercise in archaeology than actual memory. But there was a nice café which more than made up for (very distant) memories of drinking tea at 'threepence a cup luv.'

Then it was home the way we had come – but this time to Hanwell.

Verdict: the trains are airy and modern and smooth. The journey to the West End took only a fraction of the time it would have done via the Central or Piccadilly line. It will be even faster once the Paddington hiccup is sorted out and the trains run through without having to change.

The seats were a bit hard!

Marion Ditchfield

OLIGARCHS! - WHY OLIGARCHS?

The previous article showed how the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, wanted to transform the Soviet economy to a mixed socialist and market economy along the lines of Scandinavian and North European economies and asked for help from western countries. At first, the west – basically the US – was sympathetic to this notion – but following the collapse of the Berlin wall and the old Soviet empire, they saw less and less point in coming to the rescue of their old communist foes. Triumphalism ruled the day and the US administration decided that neoliberal shock therapy was to be the way forward for transforming Russia, and that Boris Yeltsin, who had just engineered a successful ‘coup’ against the nascent parliamentary democracy in Russia, was their man.

Accordingly, bevvies of ‘suitable’ US economists (with Harvard and Chicago universities in the lead) decamped to Russia to help organise and impose the reforms (always with the promise of money to follow if their proteges did what they were told, promises rarely fulfilled).

Unfortunately, there were few economies less suited to the exigencies of the neoliberal shock doctrine than the Russian economy in the early and mid nineties. Indeed, the whole Russian mind set, both before and after the Bolshevik revolution, had never set great store by the western obsessions of efficiency, profitability, competition, etc. (The Protestant work ethic and post-Enlightenment rational choice theory had never made much of an appearance, or even commanded much interest, in traditional Russian thinking). Thus, Soviet managers were highly skilled at coping with the demands on them under the Soviet system of planned production targets, but were discouraged against the risk-and-reward behaviour of market capitalism. But the therapists, either by inclination or by ideology, were entirely uninterested in factors such as the social and industrial structures of society, their cultures and traditions, believing (apparently genuinely), that the shock programme was all that was required to transform any sort of society into a democratic western style free-market society.

Thus within weeks, in accordance with neoliberal shock therapy, the ‘reforms’ were pushed through at dizzying speed – huge budget cuts, removal of price control, faster privatisations, the full ‘reform’ agenda. Change was so rapid that it was impossible for people to keep up. Workers often did not even know that their factories and mines had been sold – let



alone how they had been sold or to which private owner (something which would be repeated in Iraq a decade or so later).

In accordance with the therapists' disinterest in social and cultural factors, they never seemed to understand that roughly half of Russia's cities had only one large industrial enterprise, and three fourths no more than four. Consequently, the decrease in production caused tremendous unemployment and underemployment. In addition, (contrary to what might be thought), Russia did not have a system of state social security. Instead, it was the companies, mainly

the large industrial firms that were traditionally responsible for providing a huge range of social welfare functions – building and maintaining housing for their workers, and managing health, recreational, educational and similar facilities. So when they collapsed, the whole welfare system collapsed as well - the state and local authorities being in no position to step in and provide. The inevitable result was mass unemployment and poverty. And those that remained in employment often found themselves working for the estimated (in 1997) 98,000 companies that were defaulting on payments to their employees. Some were paid in kind – for example, women workers were paid in brassieres and shoes that they resold in the streets; workers of Moskvich, the auto plant in Moscow, were paid in spare parts; those of the Ivanovo textile plants were paid in bedsheets, and those of the Gus-Khrustalny porcelain factory were paid in crystal and ceramic vases. The employees would then set up stalls or take their wares onto the streets or railway stations and sell or exchange them for other goods as best they could. Like Germany in the 1920s, the middle class was forced to sell personal belongings from tables in the street – desperate acts that the Chicago School economists praised as “entrepreneurial,” proof that a capitalist renaissance was under way, ‘one family heirloom and second hand blazer at a time.’

And like Germany in the 1920s, there was a general feeling among the population of great humiliation. Even Putin has said that at one stage – while still a serving lieutenant colonel of the KGB – he had been reduced to moonlighting as a taxi driver to supplement his income. (Some of these events are side-lighted in the film ‘Trans-Siberian.’ In this film, set on the Trans-Siberian train, Ben Kingsley playing a KGB policeman explains how in Soviet times he had been accustomed to flying everywhere in luxury but was now reduced to these tedious railway journeys and a

general hand to mouth existence. It gradually becomes apparent that he is engaged in a lethally dangerous drug cartel to supplement his income. (Gamekeeper turned poacher)

Public health indicators showed dramatic corresponding declines. It is estimated that between 1992, the first full year of shock therapy and 2006, Russia's population shrunk by 6.6 million: life expectancy dropped for men from about 64 years to 57, while women's dropped from 74 to about 71. Unnatural causes of death – murders, suicides, and accidents (particularly among the young) contributed significantly to this decline as did alcohol related deaths and deaths from infectious and parasitic diseases (mainly because medicines were no longer affordable to the poor).

In summary, comparisons are difficult; but the post-Soviet decline has been assessed as being about half as severe as the economic catastrophe borne out of the immediate consequences of World War I, the fall of Tsarism and the Russian Civil War. In short, the result of inflicting the neoliberal shock therapy on post Soviet Russia was disastrous.

Which begs an important but rarely (if ever) posed question. Did the shock therapists really believe that imposing their system/medicine/beliefs on post-Soviet Russia would somehow transform it – more or less overnight - into a freedom loving, market loving, democratic society? If so, their ignorance and arrogance was breathtaking. If not, then what was their real purpose? Was their belief system, their ideology - as many cynics suggest - simply an elaborate rationale to allow people to act on unfettered greed, to line their pockets, to make huge profits?

The muddling factor is that however 'pure' one's motives may be, once you accept that profit and greed as practiced on a mass scale create the greatest possible benefits for any society, then pretty much any act of personal enrichment can be justified as a contribution or means to building the 'promised land'. The temptations are obvious. They were obvious to the Russians and they were obvious to the various neoliberal economists implementing the programme. (Which helps to explain why, years later, Harvard University agreed to pay a \$26 million settlement, the largest in the institution's history, when two of its economists were found guilty of violating their contracts not to profit from the work they were engaged in). Whatever the truth about motivations, the damage was done. Russia was reduced to a level of poverty and social chaos from which - even now - it has not fully recovered. The result was the growth of endemic corruption and gangsterism which saw the rise of the oligarchs and the eventual emergence of Vladimir Putin. This is examined in a further article.

Much of the above is based on Naomi Klein's book 'The Shock Doctrine' (2007). It is based on meticulous research and interviews with many of the key players during this period.

John Ditchfield

JOHN BIRCH'S COMPETITION

Competition No. 45: Scotland, Places and Their Locations, Which fits where?

| | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| Kirkwall | Thurso | Stornoway | Fraserburgh | Leverburgh |
| Castlebay | Arbroth | Perth | Oban | Dunbar |
| | Brodick | Lerwick | | |
| Orkney | Isle of Arran | Lothian | Argyll and Bute | |
| Strathern | Angus | Barra | Harris | Aberdeenshire |
| | Western Isles | Highland | Shetland | |



Answers to Competition No 44: Double-Barrelled Town Names

Market Drayton
 Bishop's Stortford
 Leamington Spa
 Church Stretton
 East Grinstead
 Ashby de la Zouch
 Letchworth Garden City
 Erskine Bridge
 Fort William
 Ebbw Vale
 Chipping Sudbury
 Earl Shilton



We look forward to your answers - send them either by email to jbirch1821@gmail.com or by post to J. Birch, Pantgwyn, High Street, Borth, Ceredigion, Wales SY24 5HY

WORDSEARCH: BIRDS SEEN AND HEARD

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BLACK-BACKED-GULL BLACK-HEADED-GULL BLACKBIRD
 BRAMLING CARRION-CROW CORMORANT CURLEW
 DUNLIN EGRET GEESE HOUSE-SPARROW JACKDAW
 KITTIWAKE LAPWING MAGPIE OYSTER-CATCHER RED-
 KITE RINGED-PLOVER ROBIN ROOK SHAG SKYLARK
 STARLINGS SWIFT TERN

Put the remaining 12 letters together
 find the bird that was used as a 'radio'
 in both world wars.

Compiled by Rosemary Birch to

Answer: Collared Dove (Over 300,000
 were used with 36 being awarded medals)

JUNIOR WORDSEARCH: TABLE TENNIS

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**PING PONG BALL
BAT/PADDLE
NET
INDOOR TABLE
OUTDOOR TABLE**

**SERVE
BOUNCE
FOREHAND
BACKHAND
RALLY**

**POINTS
GAMES
MATCHES
SINGLES
DOUBLES**



Compiled by Liz Alsford



DIARY

The church is open. The services will also continue to be live streamed on FACEBOOK. Face masks are optional.

Monday 10.30am to 11.30am, 'Studying Together'

Wednesdays 10am to 12 noon Toddler and Parent/Carer group in Church

Saturday 10.30am to 12.30pm West End Café open

Thursday 8.00pm July 14th & 28th Choir Practice in Church

Christian Meditation - Meditators meet online. For further information, contact: Georgia Tutton at gmrtutton@aol.com

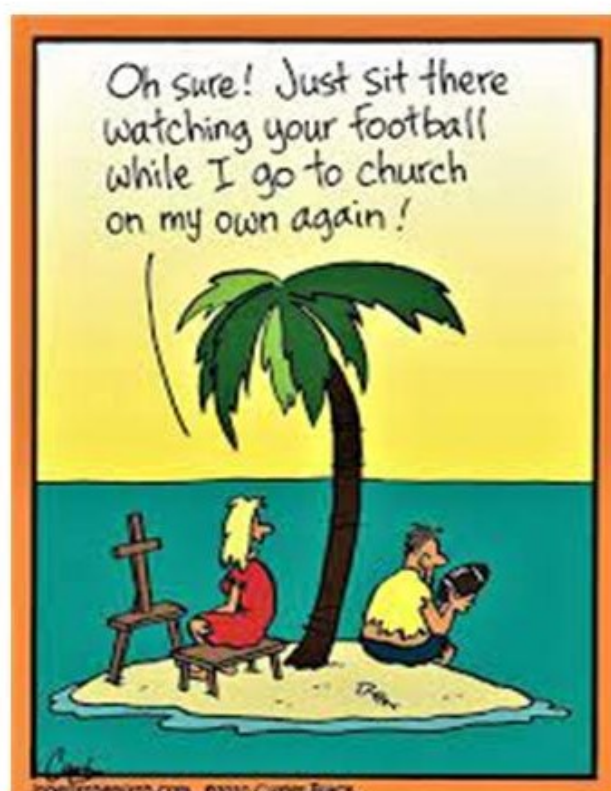


JULY

- 1 12.00pm St Jude's Proms Recital by Samuele Telari, accordionist
- 3 **11.00am Family Communion Service led by Revd Maggie Hindley, Retired URC Minister**
- 9 3-5.00pm Garden Party at Chris & Lorna Page's 32, Wordsworth Walk
- 10 **11.00am Family Service led by Revd Ewan King, Interim Moderator HGSFC**
- 12 7.30pm Joint Elders & Deacons Court
- 17 **11.00am Family Service led by Revd Derek Lindfield**
- 24 **11.00am Family Service led by Ms Alison Pickering, Baptist Lay Preacher (West Hendon Baptist Church)**
- 29 1.00pm Piano Recital by Eri Yamamoto, refreshments at 12.15pm in support of Christian Aid
- 31 **11.00am Family Service led by The Revd Dr Martin Wellings, Superintendent Minister, Finchley Methodist Circuit**

AUGUST

- 7 **11.00am Family Communion Service led by Revd John Mackerness, URC Minister, Chaplain, Heathrow Airport (Holy Communion)**



NEWS AND VIEWS



PRODUCTION
DISTRIBUTION
EDITORIAL PANEL
TYPESETTER
EDITOR

John Ditchfield
Jill Purdie and others
Joan Holton and Marion Ditchfield
John Ditchfield
Marion Ditchfield

The August/September edition of News and Views will be a double issue published on Sunday 7th August 2022. Articles should therefore be delivered to the editor, Joan Holton or the typesetter, John Ditchfield, (john_ditchfield@hotmail.com) by Sunday July 17th.

We welcome articles, as well as reviews of books, films, plays etc. from members and friends. These will not always represent the views of the editorial panel or of the Church. Publication is at the discretion of the Editors.

Remember - we are on line at www.hgsfreechurch.org.uk where you will find past issues of News and Views.

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