

Focal Point



Parish Fête

Picture: Paul Wigmore

Bitton Parish Magazine

October 2008 35p

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This Month's Front Cover

I hope you like this month's front cover which is a colourful picture of a very colourful event – The Bitton Fete. In spite of the intermittent torrential downpours, the Fete went ahead with its traditional programme of popular favourites, and some curious innovations. One of these involved a lady curate, a car-load of brand new sponges, buckets of water and a Suzanne Langlen tennis racket. Say no more. Another was based upon an ancient Gloucestershire egg-throwing ritual aimed at improving the fielding prowess of county cricketers. Like Mornington Crescent, it has no rules, no time limits, and no apparent winners, but was clearly most enjoyable, as indeed was the whole Fete. More anon in the following pages. Congratulations everyone, including Paul Wigmore, our rain-soaked photographer.

Paul's Message ~ October 2008 Onwards and Upwards!



Dear Friends,

In all three parishes of the benefice, significant and exciting developments are taking place. At Syston, a mission group is planning a programme of events to take St Anne's through the next twelve months. On 21st September, Rex Allen compered a harvest celebration with a difference, assisted by Deb Denny, who runs 'Music with Mummy' in Syston Church Hall. Children sang, danced and introduced some of the items themselves. John Llewellyn is arranging a quiz night on October 25th, and plans are afoot for a horse race and a fifties night!

At Bitton, the 'Living Stones' appeal moves up a gear as letters (450 of them) go out to every house in the parish, encouraging the community to contribute to the £125,000 needed for vital refurbishment. When this is achieved, attention will focus on mission as we seek to enable people to 'read' this fabulous building in the manner suggested by our recent guest speaker and broadcaster Martin Palmer.

At Warmley, the WOW! (Working at Worship) and WHAM! (Working Hard at Masonry) groups are set to put forward proposals at the October 20th PCC to make both our liturgies and our buildings more accessible to those who do not come to church. Work has also begun on the 'Christmas with the Beatles' production for Christmas Eve.

In addition, across the benefice, there is the exciting prospect of a Holy Land trip in November, 2009, organised by Maria. And these are just a few of the things that are going on!

All in all, there's plenty to keep your vicar out of mischief! Most of all, what warms my heart are the number of individuals obviously engaged and stimulated by what we are doing. We are beginning to look outwards and display a confidence and responsibility about what can be achieved, and this does us all good. We were never promised an easy life; but, what is true, as Jesus said, is that the more we give of ourselves, the more we receive from God.

My gratitude to you all. Keep up the good work and stay young!
God bless you.

Paul Denyer.



The summer holidays and distant memories for you the time but thanks again made the fete such a time, in spite of our

especially to Cheryl Wright and her team. Thanks also to those who organised and attended the Sunday evening service on the next day. Maria had written a very moving account of Jesus' life from Mary, his mother's point of view, which Olivia, Naomi, Heather and Jacqui performed with great professionalism. Ann Carrington sang a solo beautifully, and the very large congregation joined in the songs of praise. The speaker was Roy Brazier, chaplain to the Queen, who asked us all how we were going to respond to God's calling. Would we say "yes" in obedience, as Mary did when the angel visited her in her kitchen?

the church fete will be now! Thanks were said at very much indeed to all who successful and enjoyable chronic English weather,

You will remember that at St Mary's Church we donate some of our income to support the work of Ross and Sonia Wilson and their young family, who have been doing God's work in Bangkok for the past five years. I know that they find their work challenging and rewarding but it must become lonely sometimes being so far from home, family and friends. However this summer the Wilson family received two visits from their friends and supporters at St Mary's. David and Stephanie Bailey visited them for a few days at the end of July and the Midgley family visited them in August. They made us all very welcome indeed, and we attended a most uplifting Sunday service at their Bangkok Church, where we discovered that many of the issues facing their church are similar to those we face in Bitton. Please continue to pray for them. I know they really value our prayers. They also appreciate the small parcels we send each month. Please sign the rota at the back of church to take your turn.

We recently held a prayer breakfast where we prayed for the success of 'the living stones appeal', which has got off to such a fine start. Watch out over the next few months as we report on the completion of some of the projects outlined in the appeal brochure.

It's great to get together socially. Check out the various entertaining events that are advertised in this edition. Look forward to seeing you at some of them.

Liz Midgley
Churchwarden

AROUND OUR BITTON CHURCHES

October 2008



Upton Cheyney United Reformed Church

Elder – Muriel Williams

0117 – 961 6843

Our 3pm Sunday Services

5 October	Harvest festival	Mr John Creech
12 October		Mrs R MacLachlan
19 October	No Service	
26 October	Communion Service	Rev D Frost

Upton Cheyney United Reformed Church

Harvest Festival Service

Preacher: Mr John Creech

Sunday 5 October at 3.00pm

Gifts of non-perishable foods will be sent to
The Community of the Sisters of the Church ~ St Pauls ~ Bristol ~
Collection for Christian Aid
All Are Welcome to Share in this Celebration

Bitton Methodist Church

Minister – The Rev. Denise Harding

20 Victoria Road, Hanham, Bristol BS15 3QH – 0117 961 5592

Correspondence Secretary – Mr Reg Pullin

113 Parkwell Road, Cadbury Heath, Bristol BS30 8HA – 0117 967 1073

Our 6.15 pm Sunday Services

5 October		Rev Gordon James
12 October	Communion Service	Rev Den Harding.
19 October		Mrs J Hawkins
26 October		Mr B Saunders

AROUND OUR BITTON CHURCHES

St Mary's Church Bitton

Vicar: The Rev'd Canon Paul Denyer 0117 967 3965
The Vicarage, Church Avenue, Warmley, BS30 5JJ
Curate: The Rev'd Maria Shepherdson 0117 960 8442
25 Poplar Rd, Warmley, BS30 5JX

See separate insert for full details of St Mary's Office Holders

Our October Services at St Mary's

Thursday 2 October	9.30	Celtic Service of Holy Communion
	10.15 – 11.15	Coffee and cake
Sunday 5 October	10.30	Parish Communion
Sunday 12 October	Harvest Festival	
	8.00	Holy Communion
	10.30	Harvest Thanksgiving Family Service Hosted by the Cub Scouts and Beavers and featuring the work of Water Aid followed by Harvest Home Lunch at Manor Farm, Upton Cheyney by kind invitation of David and Cathy Hawking
	6.30	Choral Evensong with the Ammonites
Sunday 19 October	10.30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 26 October	8.00	Holy Communion
	10.30	Morning Prayer

Our main Sunday morning worship at 10.30 seeks to meet
the needs of all ages by providing special groups for –

Pathfinders 10 years and over

Explorers 7 to 10 years

Under 7s will be looked after in the Lady Chapel with toys, games, stories

Come to the Church at 10.30 and we will put you
in touch with the right group

Tea Club Meetings ~ October 2008

Tuesday 7 October Rev Maria Stephenson will talk to us about
some of her experiences

Tuesday 21 OctoberLunch outing to New Manor Farm at West
Harptree . Meet at the White Hart at 12 noon.

St Mary's Church ~ Flower Rota ~ October 2008



4th October

11th October

18th October

25th October

Pam Heyes

Harveste Festival

Marlene Gallop

Ann Bush

The Parish Register

September 2008

Weddings

8th August

Philip Grimley to Samantha Freeman

9th August

Nick Bond to Gemma Bunce

Funeral

5th September

Bryan Bush

Harvest Decoration at St Mary's

We shall be decorating the church on [Saturday, 11th October, starting at 9.30am](#). Produce from your gardens, or even Asda, would very gratefully received to help us make a bountiful display, and to fill the Harvest Boxes that are distributed around the village.

Hope to see my usual team, plus anyone else who would like to join us.

[Judith Butson](#)

The' Don't Miss' Page

Jazz and Puddings at St Mary's ~ An Unbeatable Combination

Join us as we recreate

The Roaring Twenties and The Age of Jazz

with

John Marsh - Pianist ~ Jeremy Catkins - Vocalist ~ David Higson – Presenter
followed by

A Gourmet Pudding Tasting Fiesta

Bar Available

Friday 24th October at 7.30pm

Tickets at £7.50 from

Ann Willis 0117 932 386 or Sarah Heavens 0117 932 5376

St Mary's Church ~ Harvest Home Manor Farm Upton Cheyney

by kind permission of
David & Cath Hawking

Sunday 12 October midday

Adults £6 ~ Children £4

Tickets from

Janet Ivens (932 6951) or Maureen Perrett (**932 3186**) or David
Hawking at Manor Farm

Home Farm Trust Coffee Morning

With sale of Christmas Cards

Thursday 16 October

Everyone is invited to 8 Church Road

From 10.30 to 12 noon

There will also be a Bring and Buy stall

Make a Difference

Bitton Recreation Ground Needs More Trustees

Bitton Recreation Ground is a local well-established registered charity responsible for improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants of Bitton by the provision and maintenance of the Recreation Ground at Bath Road, Bitton.

We are now seeking to increase the number of our Trustees, and are particularly looking for those with background in finance, property and or fund-raising. The Board of Trustees meets monthly, in the evenings, in the heart of Bitton,

This is a Voluntary Position. If you are interested in using your skills and experience to make a difference, then please get in touch. You could develop new skills and widen your knowledge of the voluntary sector and the local community.

How to apply:

Contact Mike Thomas, Chairman, for further details:
0117 932 3302 Email: mike.thomas@southglos.gov.uk
Address: 151 High Street, Bitton, S Glos, BS30 6LA
Closing Date For Applications: 17 October 2008

St Mary's Book of Remembrance

A Big Thank-You to Marlene Gallop

Once again we are indebted to Marlene Gallop for updating the St Mary's Book of Remembrance which lists those who are buried, or those whose ashes have been scattered in St Mary's Churchyard. It should now be complete, but if you find that some names are missing, please let me know.

David Perrett 0117 – 9 - 323186

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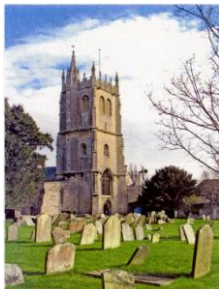
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Our Advertisers are important to us. Please co-operate.

'LIVING STONES' APPEAL ~ PROGRESS REPORT



The £125,000 appeal for the restoration of St Mary's, which includes the installation of a hidden kitchen and new lighting, is now well under way.

Pledges and gifts from the congregation have topped the £25,000 mark and our first three grants totalling £7,200 have arrived.

During the month of October we are seeking the help of everyone living in the five villages which make up our Parish and a letter with all the details will be delivered to every house. If by any chance nothing has reached you by 20 October please do give me a ring.

Jill Gibson

'Living Stones' Appeal Secretary 0117 - 932 2122

BITTON'S OWN 'FLICKS IN THE STICKS'

will be screening

CHOCOLAT

Friday 17th October @ 7.30pm

Church Hall, Church Lane, Bitton

The Bitton Village Residents Association is delighted to announce 'Flicks in the Sticks' is up and running!

Programme

7.30pm for pre-film snacks and chat.

8.15pm Film Starts

Interval for Choc -Ices and other Refreshments

10.30 pm approx ~ Film Finishes

The Film

Chocolat is a magical English Language movie set in a tranquil old-fashioned French town and is based on the best-selling novel of the same name by Joanne Harris. It stars:

Juliette Binoche ~ Judi Dench ~ Johnny Depp

It was nominated for 5 Academy Awards including:

Best Picture ~ Best Actress ~ Best Supporting Actress

Chocolat is classified as suitable for persons of 12 years and over.

**We look forward to seeing you on Friday 17 October at 7.30pm
Tickets £3.50**



Remember the line-up on the cover of the September *Focal Point*? In the centre of the trio in the photograph was Sybil Watts. Sybil's association with our Focal Point magazine goes back a long way. For seventeen years she was responsible for putting together all the material for each issue, turning hand written contributions (often barely legible) into neatly typed, well paragraphed, accurately spelt articles. And it was all done on a manual typewriter cutting a stencil for a Gestetner; those were the days when every typo had to be covered in correcting fluid, given time to dry, then re-typed.

Sybil was born in 1914, the youngest of six children: Alfred, Gwendoline, Gertie, Dora, Flora – and Sybil. They lived at Seede's Farm in Upton Cheyney and all the children attended the Upton Cheyney School where they had a good grounding. Upton was full of young people in those days. At one time the school boasted over one hundred pupils for, as Sybil explained, there were a lot of long families in the village. There were whist drives and dances in the hall beyond the school and, on special occasions, concerts. Sybil's family was very musical and talented; they could play and sing and recite. Her father had a fine bass voice whilst brother Alfred could sing bass or tenor. Sybil played piano duets with Gertie and she remembers her sister, Dora, reciting *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* which she knew by heart.

At home Sybil's family made their own entertainment with cards, jigsaws (proper wooden ones), and board games: draughts, snakes and ladders, and ludo. Sybil's especial favourite was crib which she played with her brother Alfred when she came home from school. She remembers, too, the freedom to roam the countryside and long walks with the family, as well as days spent trying to dam the Boyd then bathing in the icy water.

For most children in Upton education ended when they left the village school at the age of fourteen but Sybil and her sister, Flora, were able to go to Kingswood Grammar School (now Kingsfield School) which had opened in 1924. They cycled, or walked to Bitton station where they caught the train. When she left Kingswood, Sybil trained at the Commercial School in Clifton and then began her first job – as secretary to the Manager at *Torrence's Engineering* works in Bitton. When the Manager left to start his own company – *Cox's Machinery Ltd* at Oldland Common – he persuaded Sybil to join him and she worked there until the company moved to Feeder Road. There

followed eight years at *Crossfield and Bodie* and her last job was with *Thornton Baker* (now Grant Thornton).

Sybil is the last remaining one of her brothers and sisters but she enjoys regular visits from her nephews and nieces. She attends the United Reformed Chapel in Upton where until recently she coaxed the remaining notes from the ailing organ, and where she now plays the piano. She takes a keen interest in cricket, and has on occasions written in frustration to the England Selectors particularly when she has disagreed with their choice of captain. Her cricketing hero is Jack Russell – ‘the best wicket keeper in the country’.

When, in 1993, Sybil retired from *Focal Point* she was presented with an engraved plate – a tribute from everyone who’d enjoyed reading the magazine she’d produced for so many years. She went on contributing poems and articles after her retirement and last month she appeared on the cover.

Nicola Bennetts

A Footnote on the Fete

A big ‘thank-you’ to Sarah, Angela, Bas and Robin, The Baron’s Court Quartet, for organising their second end-of-fete Quiz Supper Party at the Church Hall, which was attended by 40 – 50 weary organisers, helpers and fete supporters. Sarah handled the Quiz, which was won by the Perrett team; Angela organised the Cornish Pasty supper, Robin was Mein Host at the Bar, and Bas counted the money. The other entertainment was provided by Ian Carpenter, fresh from his triumphs in Las Vegas, who had the audience goggling with amazement at his mind-reading chicanery. He was assisted (?) by various members of the audience, most of whom created mayhem with his more elaborate deceptions.

It was a grand way of rounding off a memorable Village Fete.

Let’s hope this becomes a regular after-fete event. (Ed)

Deadline for November Edition

Articles, Poems, Reports, Letters, Reminiscences, Photos,
Cartons, Complaints

To The Editor please, in Tahoma 10 font if possible, by

Monday 13th October 2008

John Evans, The Gailes, Upton Cheyney, Bitton BS30 6LY

Email: john70gailes@btinternet.com

The Topsy Turvy World of Soccer.

Apologies to my reader(s?) for missing the deadline for the September issue through holiday complications. Once again I am writing this on the beautiful Broadhaven South Beach in Pembrokeshire hoping to meet the deadline for the October edition. It's hell, but somebody has to dig the sand castles.

Mention must be made of Team Britain's outstanding successes in the Beijing Olympics, with new gold medallists now becoming household names. Perhaps even more significant are the heroics of our equally successful Paralympics team in the follow-up games in the Chinese capitol. But, hey, we're off to the start of a new soccer season.

This was brought home to me by spending a fortnight in North Wales with Jude, a soccer-mad grandson, who spent every leisure moment kicking his new football – a reward for a good end-of-term school report. Nearer to home, City are showing promise, while Rovers are scoring, and shipping, a load of goals.

My thoughts on the beautiful game cannot pass without some comment on the record sums being paid for the transfer of foreign players to English clubs, and perhaps more significantly, by the takeover of yet another English club, Manchester City, by an oil rich dynasty from the Middle East. The surreal goings-on at Man City are all the more poignant when the origins of the Club are considered. In the C19th the daughter of the Rector of St Mark's Church in Gorton was a campaigner for the provision of better housing and sanitation. for the poor of the Parish. This Anna Connell, advocating healthier living through sport, founded Manchester City F.C. in 1880 to answer the need for improving the health of the disadvantaged, fostering community cohesion and alleviating poverty.



In the pursuit of ever-increasing profits, English Soccer is guilty of betraying the spirit of its founders, particularly when, as so often occurs, clubs are sold off to leading figures in countries where democratic rights are negligible, and human rights are rarely observed. Our soccer clubs are becoming the playthings of the super-rich, who have little concern for the history of the game, and no understanding of the feelings or concerns of the fans....who deserve better.

Gosh, I feel much better now that's off my chest.

Rovi Retsoc – Our Roving Sports Correspondent

A Visit to the Lost Gardens of Heligan with Rob Allen

There can be no debate. The Summer of 2008 has been the dullest on record. So why am I feeling inspired and not downcast? Because I have just returned from a week in Cornwall (and yes we did have rain but not enough to spoil things): Inspired by my very first visit to the [Lost Gardens of Heligan](#), a country estate that has been in the hands of the Tremayne family for over 400 years.

Armed with a much appreciated book on the History of Heligan borrowed from dear friends who had visited the Gardens some years ago, I was ready for an entertaining visit and I was not disappointed. It seems ironic that when the first pioneers decided to take on the massive task of bringing the gardens back to life we were in the middle of our last recession, so quite understandably most people thought they were mad to attempt such a task. Thank goodness they persevered because the result has inspired more people to carry on their work which is quickly restoring these wonderful gardens to their former glory for future generations to appreciate.

I found so much to enjoy at Heligan, but I shall restrict myself to a few outstanding examples. I was particularly taken by the Jungle Area where many of the plants that Chief Trading specialize in, such as bamboos and tree ferns, looked so stunning after a few decades in such a natural environment.



The sundial garden, with its verbena bonariensis set against white phlox, simple planting with maximum impact, was peaceful and beautiful. The vegetable garden, full of produce which is served in the restaurant, was a delight. For those who have already visited Heligan, I'm sure you will have your own favourites. To those of you who have not yet treated yourselves to a

visit, try mid to late April simply because of the giant Rhododendrons, some 40ft tall, that should be in flower. For those who love wildlife there is a new area that has been featured on BBC's Springwatch. In conclusion, I guarantee that Heligan will inspire and lift your spirits which, let's face it, would be a bonus after our wonderful (!) summer.

Jobs for October

- ✚ In the vegetable garden, plant spring cabbage, garlic and overwintering onion. Remove any yellowing leaves from brassicas.
- ✚ Continue planting Autumn bedding and containers for now and Winter, and of course continue planting Spring bulbs.
- ✚ October is an excellent month for laying a new turf lawn and feeding existing lawns.

- ✦ It's been a particularly good year for apples, so make sure you pick and store them.
- ✦ Most of all give yourself time to enjoy the wonderful Autumn colours in your garden.

With Best Wishes from Rob and all the Staff at Chief Trading Post

* * *



St. Mary's Church Fete September 6th 2008

Well, that's it for another year. The bunting has been rolled up, signs taken down, tables and chairs returned, marquees dried, folded and stored and the Melanie Holley dancers, Oldland Brass, gundogs, our soaked curate, stallholders and our tireless 'heavy gang' can now enjoy a well earned rest after our *feteful* weekend.

The St. Mary's Church fete committee would like to express a huge and heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped in preparing, setting up, and clearing up in extremely challenging conditions and who contributed to making this year's fete such a success in spite of the rather wet and muddy weather.

The extremely generous donations of time, effort, money, prizes and the sheer goodwill demonstrated by those meeting and greeting, baking, buying, making, growing, selling, performing and spectating is very much appreciated.

Special thanks go to the Rev. Maria Shepherdson for opening the fete, Richard Humphreys who valiantly manned the '*al fresco*' loudspeaker throughout the afternoon, Brian Chappill our meticulous fete treasurer, Joyce Cooper and John Evans who had the difficult job of judging the children's art and fancy dress competitions and David Selman who expertly directed the 'heavy gang' logistics once again this year and, together with Joyce, takes such great care of the fete marquees and equipment on behalf of St. Mary's.

Thank you for turning out in your wellies and raincoats and helping to raise over £4000 for St. Mary's. We hope you had a fun time in spite of (maybe because of) the 'Glastonbury comes to Bitton' weather conditions!

See you all next year!

Cheryl Wright

on behalf of the Bitton Fete Committee

See page 19 for an anonymous poetic dramatisation of this year's fete

Puzzle Corner

Answers to Edith Cary's September 'Find the Flowers' Competition

(With apologies to Edith whose surname I frequently misspell – Sorry Edith).

1. Daisy. 2. Sweet Wiiiiam. 3. Solomon's Seal. 4. Scarlet Pimpernel. 5. Snap Dragon. 6. Thrift. 7. King Cup. 8. Harebell. 9. Carnation. 10. Hollyhock. 11. Morning Glory (or Snow Drop). 12. Stock. 13. Catmint. 14. Canterbury Bell. 15. Red Hot Poker. 16. Sweet Pea. 17. Geranium. 18. Sage. 19. Celandine. 20. Primrose. Near misses were scored by Jan Wookey (1 error) and The Focal Point Multi-Tasking Collating and Stapling Team - Jill Gibson, Maureen Perrett, Ann Willis & Margaret Wilcox - who collectively worked through the competition while putting the magazine together (1 error). Our first 'out of the hat' all-correct winner of the September Prize is Sheila McGrath. Congratulations Sheila. Prize on its way.

The October Prize Puzzle on Well-Known Proverbs

1. TMCSTB
2. ASITSN
3. BOAFFT
4. DLAGHITM
5. ECHASL
6. ABITHIWTITB
7. FBC
8. TPIMTTS
9. CBAH
10. ARSGNM
11. NVNG
12. BCBC
13. ATGING
14. TNSWF
15. LBYL
16. BIOSD
17. INUCOSM
18. PWLIGHSTS
19. OOTFPITF
20. HWLLLL

(Answers : to the Editor: John J Evans, The Gales, Upton Cheyney, Bitton, BS30 6LY: Email: john70gales@btinternet.com)

Is Bitton Ready for a Town (Village) Crier?



Last week I happened to be sitting next to a Town Crier at a golf match dinner. He needed little encouragement to speak about his Town Crier Duties, and he had little difficulty in making himself heard. To begin with we were sceptical about the need for this medieval form of news broadcasting in an age when the communications world is dominated by television and the internet. However, when he began to list the hundreds of occasions when was asked to 'give voice', we began to wonder.

His official duties, in connection with the Cathedral, the Mayor, the Council, and the Military associated with his small country town, appeared to be minimal, but his unofficial duties were as extensive as he was prepared to undertake. These included: appearing at banquets, dinners, weddings, private functions; switching on the town's Christmas lights, kicking off at important football matches; opening new local enterprises; advertising local meetings, welcoming foreign visitors; opening fetes, festivals, fund raising events, sports meetings, school concerts and sports days; welcoming new intakes into local schools.

The list seemed endless, and his enthusiasm for his ancient post, established over 700 years ago, which brought him into contact with so many community groups, was boundless. He had no doubt that small rural or semi-rural communities, such as Bitton and its surrounding villages, could only benefit from an a Crier, acting as a focal point for advertising Village events, and for helping to create and maintain Village pride and cohesion.

Perhaps, more importantly, an extrovert Crier with a loud voice and a cheerful personality, could bring some welcome humour, colour and excitement to our village life, and I can think of several local people, who might fit the bill.....and Town Criers don't have to be men!

Illustrator Needed For Focal Point

At Focal Point we are hoping to find a willing artist who enjoys working with black and white line-drawings and cartoons to illustrate some of our articles. If anyone out there could help, please contact the Editor.

John Evans – 0117 9322164: Email: john70gailles@btinternet.com



Local Youngsters Brave the High Seas

From 11th – 21st August 2008, Charlotte Burmester, Tess Somerville and I spent 10 days aboard the Stavros S Niarchos, having the time of our lives. We took part in the last leg of the Tall Ships Race from Bergen in Norway, via Aberdeen, where we were stuck for 2 days, and finishing at Der Helder in the Netherlands.

We arrived on board incredibly early on 12th August;; a few hours sleep and then the steep learning curve began. We needed to leave port at 9.30am to take part in the Parade of Sail, which meant making our way through the fjords and out to sea in time for the start at 9pm. It was absolutely breathtaking to be surrounded by so many Tall Ships as the sun set.

Throughout the week we were split into 3 'watches' – red, white & blue. We ate and slept with our watches, and of course, went on watch at various times throughout the day, even at 4 in the morning! During this time we were on lookout for other ships and oil rigs, manning the helm and taking readings from various pieces of technical equipment. It was great fun, especially in the ridiculously stormy weather which had us clinging on to things for dear life, and all the watches got on really well.

The highlights of the week for me were climbing the masts, going out across the yards to the sails, going out on the bowsprit in the bumpy waves, and simply enjoying the panoramic scenery with my new friends. Climbing the mast for the first time was terrifying but the exhilaration gave me an adrenalin rush which helped me to carry on to the top. It was exciting and really showed me that I could do anything that I tried. It was also amazing to see the whales, dolphins, jellyfish, and all the birds so far out at sea.

Being on board Stavros was almost certainly the best time of my life. I had so much fun being thrown about on the stormy waves, learning so much about sailing in one of the beautiful tall ships and, perhaps most importantly having time away from home to learn things about myself. It really boosted my confidence and I met some great people who, I am sure, will be my friends for life. I would really love to try a transatlantic voyage next.

Naomi Wilcox

*Thank you Naomi. What an experience! Every year, The David Norman Trust, helps to sponsor youngsters from our locality on these exciting Tall Ships voyages, organised by the Sail Training Association. If you would like to know more about the Trust, and how your youngster might become involved, please contact **Gwen Norman** : 0117 – 9322018* (Ed)

Making a Splash in More Ways than One

News from the Churchyard Project

Anyone attending the Church Fete might have seen the results of the work of the Churchyard Project Group. The area in front of the church is now complete with every stone mapped, numbered, photographed and transcribed. Also the great news is that Karen Cox is making amazing progress typing up the burial records into an Excel document so that we will be able to cross-reference each stone to the burial records. She still has 80 years to computerise but then all the burial records from 1572 – 1992 will be available in one easy to read, searchable document.

We have discovered that rubbing the stones with flour makes the inscription more legible, so we are going back to re-read some of the more difficult stones. Wendy Smale was working in the churchyard this week and like magic, a stone that was totally illegible before suddenly became quite clear and revealed a rather tragic story, possibly written by his wife Betty. The inscription reads:

1791 John Lewton Cox

A single life he lived

And from the barge was drowned

By which he lost his life

And in the river found

Also Betty Cox 1804

Poetry Corner

The Power of Poetry

Poetry can be a joy, an inspiration, a revelation or a solace to both poet and reader. However, it was not until we visited a former concentration camp on the German-Polish border, some years ago, that I discovered that poetry could be far more powerful than I had imagined. In the camp shop attached to the museum, I came across a small volume of poetry written by prisoners of that horrendous regime, illustrating that love, humour, comradeship and spirit, can sometimes survive the most callous and cruel privations. These quite extraordinary poems had been translated into English and Esperanto (the experimental international language that was developed over a century ago in the hope that people who shared a common language might find it easier not to kill each other.) Try imagining that you are sick, frightened, cold, hungry, tired beyond endurance, terrified of life and appalled by thoughts of death. Could you conjure up a spirit of glorious, if private defiance in the face of such grotesque circumstances? If the poems in this volume are any yardstick, the answer for some has to be a resounding 'Yes!' See for yourself.

Our Sole Possessions

In the ghetto
where it was still possible
to make love,
I met her.
We were seventeen and blushing
in each other's gaze as we embraced.

Once in the camp –
separated by barbed-wire fences -
we knew no barriers.
Guard towers blazing with spotlights
searched the darkness
as I crawl to the women's barracks –
digging, squirming my way
between life and death.

I reached the door
where I could slip inside,
led by her whisper
to our yearning.
The nightmare of the day
was swallowed
in the chasm of our embrace
where we soared to celebrate
everything human:
our sole possession.

Sharing those few moments –
nothing but each other-
we rose to the rhythm of moon and stars
glowing with eternity

An Unknown Survivor of the Holocaust

Looking Forward to the Fete

It's St. Mary's Fete 2008, I mustn't be late!
I must take my turn to soak the curate!
But look at the sky, Oh me oh my!
How will I stay dry? Courtesy perhaps of our brave RNLI?
Or maybe wellies will be *de rigueur*, this year – not as glam
As the Melanie Holley dancers, dainty and fleet of foot.

It will be such a hoot to see
 The Story Book Characters in fancy dress – sure to impress!
 There's a gun dog display and a vast array
 Of scrumptious cakes and ices at knock-down prices,
 And I wonder if I shall win in the raffle prize spin.
 There are Boules, cream teas and "roll up please" to take
 Your chance to bag a haul, on the bottle or tombola stall.
 White Elephant and books, such treasures and pleasures can be mine,
 (One man's rainwater is another man's wine!)
 Oldland Brass are playing my tune – '*Bubbles and balloons*':
 Behold the great artists and cooks we have in Bethune,*
 Creative masterpieces for all to see, and then at last a cup of tea!
 We leave the gallery of art, and then, we happily depart.
Anon (*My Lips are Sealed – Ed.*)

Journey's End and All's Well

After 168 days away, we have tested 56 different beds and as many showers. If you are thinking of renewing beds or bathrooms, look no further! We have experienced the great pleasure of renewing acquaintance with family and friends, but the adjustment to routine and normal life has been immense, especially for Stephanie, who has wandered around for some weeks in a daze. It is only now, with a little nudge from John E, that we write to summarise our exploits, and above all to thank you for bothering to take an interest in our travels. It was good to receive your news and comments, and we are indebted to Paul for including us in the church newsletters, and to John for making sense of our despatches and including them in Focal Point. We have been touched by the number of you who have said you enjoyed reading about our trip, and we did learn that God is always present, even when there is no evidence of Christian churches.

The experience has been wonderful. There were no major problems. We stayed healthy and safe, and knowing your prayers were with us made such a difference. As we reflect on our exploits, I suppose we did have a few close shaves, not to mention many flights, an overnight train from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, two cruises and a couple of speedboat chases, several bus trips, taxi rides and lots of tuk-tuk journeys at break-neck speed. If you would like to see an edited version of our thousands of photos and video clips, we plan to do a couple of evenings, probably in the church hall, so that you can see highlights, ask questions, drink a glass or two. It will be a fundraiser for Living Stones, and we should love to bore you all rigid with our holiday photos!!

David and Stephanie Bailey