

**ST MARY'S  
OLD SWINFORD  
Parish Church  
MONTHLY NEWS  
SEPTEMBER 2019  
ONLINE EDITION**

# ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD Parish Church

## MONTHLY NEWS SEPTEMBER 2019



### RECTOR

The Revd John Flitcroft  
The Rectory  
Old Swinford  
Stourbridge, DY8 2HA  
Tel: 01384 395410  
E-mail:  
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### CURATE:

The Revd Alex French  
58 Arlington Court  
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### SUNDAYS AT ST MARY'S

8.00 am	Holy Communion
10.00 am	Parish Communion and Children Together
6.30 pm	Evensong
10.00 am	(second Sunday) Worship Together



### WEEKDAYS AT ST MARY'S

Daily:	9.00 am - Morning Prayer (Monday to Thursday)
Daily:	5.00 pm - Evening Prayer (Monday to Thursday)
Wednesday:	1.30 pm - Toddlers' Group at St Mary's (term time) parents & toddlers
Thursday:	10.30 am - Holy Communion in Lady Chapel
Thursday:	7.30 pm - Bell Ringing Practice
Friday:	Choir Practice and Youth Groups (in term time)
Saturday:	10.00 - 12.00 noon - Open Church – refreshments available
<b>Clergy Day Off</b>	Friday

### OTHER REGULAR EVENTS

Prayer Group	Third Wednesday in month, 10 -11 am	Tel: 393454
Mothers' Union:	Second Tuesday at 2.15 pm	392951
St Mary's Walking Group:	Last Saturday of the month. Depart 9.30 am	

## CONTACTS

<b>Reader:</b>	Mr Roger King	379800
<b>Church Wardens:</b>	Mrs Judy Hall	377349
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
<b>Director of Music:</b>	Mr James Bradley	07973 934177
<b>PCC Secretary:</b>	Miss Katey Fletcher	378182
<b>Monthly News Editor:</b>	Vacant –Please contact the Parish Office	
<b>Safeguarding Officer:</b>	Mrs Liz Fourness	394359
<b>Church Hall and</b>		
<b>Coach House: - Bookings:</b>	Parish Office	441003
<b>Parish Administrator and</b>		
<b>Publicity Officer:</b>	Mr John Sutton	441003
<b>Parish Office:</b>	Open 9.00 am -1.00 pm Tuesday to Thursday, 9.00 am to 12.00 noon Friday Closed Saturday, Sunday and Monday	441003
<b>Church website address:</b>	<a href="http://www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk">www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:st.mary.os@btconnect.com">st.mary.os@btconnect.com</a>	
<b>Facebook:</b>	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/stmaryschurcholdswinford">www.facebook.com/stmaryschurcholdswinford</a>	
<b>Magazine e-mail address:</b>	<a href="mailto:stmary.parishmagazine@hotmail.co.uk">stmary.parishmagazine@hotmail.co.uk</a>	

## ENQUIRIES ABOUT WEDDINGS, BANNS OF MARRIAGE, BAPTISMS.

Please come to the Church on Saturday morning between 10.00 am and 11.00 am for Vestry Hour. You will be warmly welcomed. Tea and coffee will be available.

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## PARISH REGISTER

### Baptism

7 July	Charlotte Ivy Walker and Phoebe Cartwright
21 July	Harrison and Robyn Grainger
4 August	Isla Jean Aldridge

### Weddings

28 June	Daniel Thomson-Smith and Abigail Down
20 July	Joseph Homer and Jodie Lennon
10 August	Rajiv Ariaraj and Helen Crow

### Funerals

20 June	Wendy Blagg
26 June	Muriel Bourne
11 July	Lynda Gould

## DIARY SEPTEMBER 2019

### **SUNDAY 1**

Monday 2

Thursday 5

Friday 6

Saturday 7

### **SUNDAY 8**

Monday 9

Tuesday 10

Thursday 12

Friday 13

Saturday 14

### **SUNDAY 15**

Tuesday 17

Thursday 19

Friday 20

Saturday 21

### **SUNDAY 22**

Tuesday 24

Wednesday 25

Thursday 26

Friday 27

Saturday 28

### **SUNDAY 29**

### **ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

7.00 pm Christmas Tree Festival meeting in narthex

10.30 am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel

Clergy day off

10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church with Vestry Hour

12.00 noon and 2.00 pm Weddings

### **TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

7.30 pm Standing Committee meeting

11.30 am Communion at Hollycroft

2.15 pm Mothers' Union meeting in the Coach House

10.30 am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel

Clergy day off

10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church with Vestry Hour

Ride and Stride for Churches

### **THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

3.00 pm Baptism

2.00 pm Tea in the Coach House

7.30 pm PCC meeting

7.30 pm Magazine Committee meeting

10.30 am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel

Clergy day off

10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church with Vestry Hour

### **FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

2.30 - 4.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the narthex

11.30 am Communion at Holly Lodge

10.30 am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel

Clergy day off

All together as Kingdom People at Worcester Cathedral

10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church with Vestry Hour

11.00 am - afternoon concert rehearsal

7.30 pm Gig Caritas Concert in Church

### **FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

### **Dates for your diary**

Saturday 12 October,

Harvest Supper in the church hall

Sunday 13 October

Harvest Festival services

Saturday 19 October

Viva Musica Concert in church

Saturday 26 October

Friends of the Music Concert in church

## LETTER FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

If you are reading this when September's magazine first comes out, it is likely that I will still be away on retreat. A year ago I booked an 8-day 'Individually-guided retreat' at St Beuno's in North Wales, which St Mary's has very kindly funded. Thank you. I first came to this retreat house in 2017 and it was a revelation! Set in beautiful gardens high on a hillside overlooking the Vale of Clwyd and with views to Snowdonia and the coast around the Great Orme, St Beuno's is a former Jesuit theological college. Gerard Manley Hopkins trained for the priesthood here between 1874 -7 and many of his best-loved poems, including 'Windhover' and 'Pied Beauty', were inspired by the natural world so evident around the house.

In 1866 what can best be described as a folly, the 'Rock Chapel', was built on a wooded hill to the south of St Beuno's, it is a 20 minute walk from the main house. On my first visit, this tiny chapel, lit by intensely coloured stained glass, became my favourite place to pray and I would spend up to 2 hours alone there.

One of my heroes of our faith, Gerard W Hughes, was St Beuno's last 'tertian director' (the final stage of Catholic training for the priesthood is called the tertianship). Around 1980, with others, he began to develop the house as a 'spirituality centre'. Since then, non-Jesuits like me have been able to stay and learn to pray. Hughes wrote about his time as the director of St Beuno's in an autobiographical work: 'God, where are you?' which includes his recollection of sharing that ministry with a large Labrador called Beuno. Hughes wrote that Beuno taught him about 'detachment' – the dog being so attached to the food treats which Hughes offered that he would completely forget his previous attachment to the gloves, scarves and other items of clothing he liked to liberate from the guests; (including, once, a nun's veil; 'I discovered later' wrote Hughes 'that she was a very little nun').

Although no dog greets the guests now, St Beuno's provides a wonderfully welcoming venue and the guided retreats they offer make you feel renewed and refocussed through the disciplines of silence and contemplation. Each day retreatants meet their guide for about half an hour and the rest of the time we are encouraged to be silent and to resist any temptation to use phones, computers or any other distracting device. There is a daily Eucharist and a few other opportunities for corporate worship. Otherwise reading and walking take up the rest of my waking hours.

In the ordinal, candidates for the priesthood promise, 'in the strength of the Holy Spirit, continually [to] stir up the gift of God [and] to grow in holiness and grace.' Like many of the other promises we make, it is a daunting commitment. Time spent on retreat gives clergy chance to reflect on their spiritual health and to discern how the gift of God, (including ministry with all its challenges), may continue to be 'stirred up' so that holiness and grace may grow.

I thank the PCC and all the people of St Mary's for giving me the opportunity for this rich reflection.

God Bless You.

## ALEC BEEVERS

Although it is over three months since Alec passed away, I hope it is not too late for me to thank all my kind friends at church for the love and support they have shown to me. It has been such a great help to enable me to overcome the sadness of Alec's death.

I would like to thank Richard for playing the organ at the thanksgiving service, and also to thank Tony who wrote such a moving tribute in the Monthly News.

Special thanks go to our curate Alex for conducting the cremation service followed by the thanksgiving service in church, and also the interment of ashes in the churchyard.

We especially appreciate Alex coming to our home and giving us communion the day before Alec went into the hospice. Thank you Alex for your understanding, guidance and friendship.

**Janet Beevers**

Paul Beevers has shared details of a challenge he has set himself as a means of expressing the thanks of the family to Mary Stevens Hospice for the care provided to Alec in his last days. Paul will undertake a significantly challenging bike ride in Weardale, in the North Pennines. Paul described his ride in this way.

"On 1 September 2019 I'll be taking part in Velo 29 North, a 100 mile cycling event in County Durham. Most of you will know I'm a keen cyclist, and I've done a few epic rides. However this will be by far the toughest challenge I've undertaken due to the length and gradient of the hills, and I'll spend much of the day at over 1,000 feet above sea level. More than once Dad warned me against exploring the area by bike because the hills are so challenging, and the weather so changeable. With an epic organised ride going straight through Weardale and the villages where Dad spent his childhood, it's the ideal opportunity to (somewhat defiantly) pay tribute to the man and raise funds in his memory for Mary Stevens Hospice."



If you would like to read the full details of Paul's challenge and/or wish to support Paul's fundraising please go to the JustGiving link [Read Paul's story](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/paulbeeverscycling) on Facebook. <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/paulbeeverscycling>

## THE NORTH PORCH

It will not have escaped the notice of any visitor to St Mary's that work has begun on the renovation of the north porch. We were very pleased that the originally anticipated delay was significantly reduced and that the damaged plasterwork has now been removed to allow the stonework to dry out in preparation for a new interior wall finish that will enable the stonework to 'breathe' in the manner these materials require. The whole project will take place over several months as the removal, restoration and redecoration phases occur so it may well be sometime before we are able to view the wonder of the finished project.

The new underground drainage channel created to the right of the porch will help to ensure rainwater is removed to prevent further dampness.

Please excuse the necessary timescale involved and the inevitable minor disruption the situation will impose for a while. There may well be times when there appears to be nothing happening but be assured our Master of Fabric is working hard and doing his best to liaise with the many agencies involved to ensure the work is scheduled for completion at the earliest possible date.

## All Together as Kingdom People

On Saturday 28 September, people from across the Diocese will come together for All Together as Kingdom People - a day to be inspired, encouraged and equipped to grow as Kingdom People.

This year we will be joined by the Bishop of Liverpool, Paul Bayes, who will host a workshop on evangelism and will address us in our closing worship. There will also be plenty of opportunities through formal and informal workshops to come away with new ideas to reinvigorate your worship, prayer ministry or to help make running your parish easier.

There will be sessions suitable for families to attend together along with a climbing wall and sports cage completely free of charge, as well as practical prayer stations and a chance to be involved in a 'Kingdom Arts' project.

Bishop John said: "Our last All Together Day in 2015 was a great success with people gathering from right across the Diocese. This is another fantastic opportunity to come together to be inspired by new ideas to use in your own parish as well as share in worship and food together."

There is a timetable of workshops and more information on the day on the diocesan website: <https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/all-together>

## OCEPS - THE CLASS OF 2019

In the middle of July, as the start of the school holidays approached, St Mary's was delighted to host the Leavers' Service for the Year Six pupils for whom their time at Primary School had come to an end. The evening began with a very warm welcome shared with all by the Revd John Flitcroft, who spoke of how valued are the strong links between the parish church of St Mary, Old Swinford and the school it seeks to support in many real and positive ways. Such a significant occasion in the life of these young people deserved the recognition given to it by all involved.

The theme of the service had been developed around pupils' memories of their past seven years at Oldswinford Church of England Primary School, from the earliest of events in 'Reception' through to the more recent realisation that it was soon to be time to move on. In groups, each reflecting on a specific year of their time at OCEPS, the pupils revealed their particular memories of significant times. With each memory shared, the children identified an artefact which they held aloft and then added to the Memory Chest that filled as the service progressed. The personal words spoken with confidence by each of the children and their combined voices in song illustrated the influence the school and all who contribute to its work have had on their experiences and development.



That their educational experience has been founded on a principle of faith was something that was underlined in the introductions to each of the groups of memories, that formed a thread throughout the service and was underlined by the presentation to each pupil of a Bible.

Mrs J Seker, Acting Headteacher, spoke with affection and respect for these young people as she shared with the pupils the good wishes of all the school staff. She emphasised the conviction held within the school's philosophy of the qualities and attributes the school had endeavoured to encourage and nurture in these youngsters as preparation for their move to their secondary schools and as a foundation for their happy and successful futures.



## CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL 2019



After our successful Christmas Tree Festival in December 2017 it was decided to hold another in two years time. It is now time to begin planning for the next one. One comment that kept being repeated last time was that it was a shame the trees were not in Church for Christmas. This has been considered this year and so the Festival will take place from Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December till Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December and the trees will stay in place over Christmas.

In order for planning to begin in earnest there will be a meeting in the narthex on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September at 7.00 pm for any one interested in helping in any way with our Christmas Tree Festival 2019. Not only will we need groups to decorate a tree but we will need people to help with stewarding the festival, people to help with refreshments and provide entertainment (playing the organ, singing, hand bell ringing etc).

If you feel able to help in anyway do please come along to the meeting or contact me 01384 377146.

**Sally Frost**

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## SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER IS EDUCATION SUNDAY

There are 100 Church of England schools in the Diocese, educating approximately 22,500 children and young people across Dudley and Worcestershire. All schools ensure they offer a curriculum that is rich, broad, deep and engaging, whilst church schools in particular ensure that they have a focus on spiritual growth and character development.

Diocesan Director of Education, Dr Margaret James, said: "Church schools have been reaffirmed over the last two decades as being at the heart of the Church's service to the nation. The call for church schools is for them to serve local communities in such a way that brings hope and aspiration, within an ethos characterised by respect. Inspired by the words of Jesus in John's Gospel, church schools are places in which every child is helped to live an abundant life."

At St Mary's we celebrate the particularly close relationship we have with our local Oldswinford Church of England Primary School and we thank every one of the very many people who contribute in any way to our thriving links with this and several other schools.

## SATURDAY 14 SEPTEMBER

Annually, on the second Saturday in September, cyclists, pedestrians, horse riders and motorists descend on Britain's roads and footpaths to take part in the sponsored Ride & Stride event, fundraising for their local County Churches Trust.



This annual event provides the main source of income for each Trust and enables them to make grants to churches in need. Ride & Stride is inter-denominational and participants are invited to seek sponsors who pay an agreed amount for each place of worship visited by bike, foot, horse or car on the day, between 10am and 6pm.

Full details can be found at <https://www.rideandstrideuk.org/counties/worcestershire-and-dudley/>

At Open Church this day visitors may call and ask for their visit to be recorded as authorization of their fund raising. Please support as you can.

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### WELCOME AND FAREWELL

In the July/August edition we published an introduction to James Bradley as he stepped into his role as the new Director of Music at St Mary's'. Ironically, James' first full service with the choir on 21 July was also his last - for a few weeks - as the choir members began their annual summer break. We look forward with encouragement and appreciation to the great musical celebrations in services when the choir returns in September.

At the same service we recorded our thanks and shared best wishes for the future in the form of a gift with two greatly valued members of our musical team.

Mollie Butcher has sung with the choir for ten years, has developed a cherished voice and become an accomplished chorister.

George Nicholls has thrived as his organ playing skills have developed at a gallop. He is , already, a much admired musician who has benefited from the strength of support of his peers at school and from all his audiences.

Both Mollie and George are off to university in September. We wish them every success with their studies and the careers that will follow. Above all we assure them of a very warm welcome at St Mary's whenever they are able to return and to share in our musical worship.



## **MONTHLY NEWS EDITOR REQUIRED**

The magazine committee is keen to recruit a new editor, someone who will oversee the compilation and presentation of items for each Monthly News. The editor works with a range of material based on regular information sharing, articles that report on past or advise on forthcoming events associated with church activities, items presented by interested groups or individuals and items the editor may devise as being of general interest to the readership.

The new editor would preferably require sound IT skills and familiarity with Microsoft Publisher, although training could be provided and the means of presentation could be reconsidered. A period of role-sharing may be appropriate to enable familiarisation and a smooth transition.

Of course, with new individuals new ideas may arise. This may be an opportunity for the Monthly News concept to be developed in a new direction, so all expressions of interest will be welcomed. New ideas and approaches should seek to maintain the relevance of this publication as a means of sharing the mission of the Church.

If you have had no involvement with the Monthly News to this date but would consider future participation, perhaps you would like to share in our meetings and the collective management processes in order to inform your decision. The date of the next editorial meeting of the committee will be on Thursday 17 September. Please ask a committee member for more details. You will be welcome to come along and discover for yourself how we operate currently.

If you would like to know more or know of someone who might wish to consider the role (or would like to become involved in a different role) please make contact with any member of the committee, Stephen Howard, Brenda Selby, Nigel Perry, Carole Duff, Rod Jukes, Janet Peart, Tony Tatford or John Sutton.

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## **ST MARY'S WITH ST JOHN'S MOTHERS' UNION**

24 members and friends enjoyed an outing and splendid cream tea in the garden of Kate Oakley in July. The weather was kind to us so we relaxed and heard the latest news of developments in the village, Kititi in S.W. Uganda through the charity 'Planting for Hope in Uganda' with which Kate is involved. One major development was the building of a second well for clean water in the village.

We were able to purchase a variety of goods which the community produce and monies go directly to support their endeavours to empower the community.

We thanked Kate for her hospitality.

Next meeting: Tuesday 10 September at 2.15 in the Coach House – Recycling – All are welcome.

**Dawn Nex**

# ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP

## 2019 - 2020 PROGRAMME

Date	Location	Miles	Leaders	Tel. No.	Lunch
28 Sept 2019	Canals, Langley Green to Black Lake. Travel by train and tram— bring bus pass	5	Mike	01384 390537 07779 873892	Pub
26 Oct 2019	Highley from Severn Valley Country Park	5.5	Sue and Tony	01384 838635	TBA
23 Nov 2019	Worfield <b>Note change of date</b>	5	Sylvia	01384 392244 07762 906170	Pub
December No walk					
25 Jan 2020	Hinksford and The Bratch. Travel by bus, bring bus pass	5	Chris	01384 396883 07779 255827	Pub
29 Feb 2020	Alverley	5	Linda & Keith	01384 825177	Pub
28 March 2020	Ironbridge	5.5	Sally & Malcolm	01384 377146 07779 255827	Pub
25 April 2020	Alverley	5	Jean & Ray	01384 836924	Pub
30 May 2020	Packwood & Baddesley Clinton	5.5	Sally & Malcolm	01384 377146 07779 255827	Pub
27 June 2020	Ombersley	6	Toni & Bob	01384 377096	Pub
25 July 2020	TBA	5	Avril and Stan	01384 392290	Pub
August 2020 No walk					

### NOTES

1. Unless otherwise stated all walks leave from St Mary's at 9.30 am
2. There are no walks in December 2019 or August 2020
3. All walks are on the last Saturday of the month except November 2019
4. For picnic lunches please bring your own food. For pub lunches there is usually a good selection of meals for you to purchase
5. Country walking is not risk free, all persons joining our walks do so in the knowledge of this fact.
6. For further information on the walks please telephone the walk leaders

## THE CHURCHYARD

If it hasn't already begun, there will soon be signs of essential work being carried out to some of the trees in both the north and south aspects of the churchyard. Since a major inspection was carried out about six years ago various works, as identified in the associated report, have been completed. Inevitably, the impact of past time, associated growth and the ravages of severe weather have brought complications that have seen trees die from disease, overgrowth that endangers the building onto which they intrude and fallen and hanging branches which create further hazards to the trees and to those passing by.

To the north (front) aspect of the church a dead conifer has to be removed and substantial pruning is needed to the 'Tree of Heaven' that is growing over the wall and roof of the vestry. *Ailanthus altissima* is a 'decorative' tree that originates from China, was brought to the western world during the great horticultural expeditions of the eighteenth century before the negative elements of its habit had been identified. Now it is recognised as a potentially invasive species and is even prohibited in some countries.

To the south of the church several of the deodar cedars have shed branches. Possibly associated with squirrel damage as well as snowfall and wind, some of these trees have suffered significant damage. The Irish Yews that form an avenue along the steps at the west end of the church have grown tall, have suffered similarly from the weather and are losing their compact form. These need to be reduced in height by half, and their branches tied, as new growth may help to reform their traditional conical form.

None of these challenges are easily resolved or achieved at no cost. All planned work to trees above a certain size has to be referred to the diocesan authorities for approval, in addition to seeking the authorisation of the local authority tree officer. Additionally, because the church and the relevant area of the grounds lie within the Church Road Conservation Area, the local authority has to be informed and further approval sought in relation to the potential impact of any works on the locality.

As you read this report summer growth should be slowing. We thank Muddyboots and the Community Payback team for all their work in helping to maintain the churchyard. Unfortunately, Victor Ellams who undertakes the care and very regular mowing of the main church lawns is incapacitated following an operation to repair a torn tendon. We thank Victor for all his work and wish him a speedy and very successful recovery.

If anyone might have any time to give to help mow the church lawns please contact John in the Parish Office - 01384 441003.

## DIOCESAN OFFICE RESTRUCTURING

The Diocesan website carries details of an extensive restructuring that is being undertaken in response to the financial challenges faced by the Diocese. Sadly, tough decisions mean that some people will lose their job, whilst others face major changes with increased responsibilities and consequent greater demands on their time. The future use of the Old Palace as a base for the Diocesan Office is under consideration.

We share our thanks with all those who have helped St Mary's in the past and now face new life and work opportunities. Please pray for all those involved and for the successful outcome of this significant change and all that may arise as a consequence.

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### ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP

Parish Walk – 29<sup>th</sup> June.

For our walk this month, we left church at 9.00 am for the drive to Whitminster, Gloucestershire.

We assembled at the Stables Café, on the side of the Gloucester and Sharpness canal, for coffee, before starting the walk. This canal is 16.5 miles long and was once the broadest and deepest canal in the world.

Walking along the canal a short distance to Saul Junction we then branched away from it and headed across fields, before the short stretch of road leading back to the canal.

We crossed over by the swing bridge, turned right along the canal bank for 100 metres then left the canal again, crossing several fields before we emerged into Frampton on Severn. This village lies between the River Severn and the River Frome, from which it takes its name and the village green of 22 acres is reputedly the largest in England. Much of the village forms part of the Frampton Court Estate, owned by the Clifford family.

Walking through the village, we turned off through the lych gate and along an avenue of trees to reach the church of St Mary. Passing the church and the war memorial, we took the marked footpath leading us past the sailing club and into the grounds of Frampton Court.

The gardens and surrounding parkland are Grade II listed. The current park is mostly grass and trees but there are lakes developed from earlier gravel pits. We had previously decided to have a picnic rather than a pub lunch and it was overlooking one of the lakes that we stopped for lunch, benefitting from some shade given by the trees.

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Cont'd....

After lunch, we exited the grounds crossing the B4071 from Frampton. Further tracks took us over the River Frome and the Stroud Water Canal and eventually to Whitminster. Crossing over the road, we entered the grounds of Whitminster House and on through the churchyard of Whitminster Church, before re-joining the canal just above Saul Junction. Crossing over the canal by another swing bridge, it was a short walk along the canal back to the café.

The weather was extremely hot and ice creams and cold drinks were consumed before we returned home.

**Malcolm Frost**

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## **JULY 2019 WALK**

The weather forecast for the last walk of the season was for steady rain for the most part of the day, so we were pleased that 10 hardy walkers were game enough to join us.

We drove to Bewdley, parked near to the river and made our way over the bridge, designed by Thomas Telford, across the River Severn. We took the Riverside North Road and headed off on a public footpath which took us through a caravan park and out onto Northwood Lane. We then passed under the Severn Valley Railway line, crossing several fields and a bridleway and out onto farmland.

We then took the opportunity to have a short break and enjoy the views. We could just see the Malvern Hills and the Abberley Hills as well as Titterstone Clee and the Brown Clee Hills.

We continued through Halls Farm and then through Trimpley village, taking Hoarstone Lane at the crossroads and continuing down the hill towards Bewdley.

We crossed to our left through a double gateway which took us through Wassell Wood and back onto Hoarstone Lane again.

We then crossed into more fields and started making our descent towards the town again, admiring outstanding views of Bewdley as we went, back to our starting point.

Six of us rounded off the morning by a fish and chip meal in Merchant's restaurant before heading home, wet but refreshed after the heat of previous weeks.

The day was not at an end, however, as we all had a great evening at Sally and Malcolm's to plan the rota to take us up to next July!

Thank you both for the food and your hospitality and everyone for their contributions.

**Avril & Stan Williams**

# A LETTER FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF WORCESTER

## View from the train

I am writing this travelling on a train back from the Kirchentag church convention in Germany. The Kirchentag meets every other year in a different city in Germany and has done so since 1949. It is an amazing Christian event, drawing in 100,000 people from all over Germany, Europe and around the world. Every day there are Bible studies, lectures and discussions, surrounded by a whole host of organised and impromptu concerts and street theatre. There is a carnival atmosphere with much laughter and fun as people both young and old meet up, finding old friends and making new.

There is a serious side. The Kirchentag started as a lay movement, coming to terms with what happened during the Second World War. Since then it has always engaged with the issues affecting society, and is all about how to live as Christians. The top politicians attend and you might even find a member of the government leading a Bible study.

I was involved in two particular acts of worship. The first was the Meissen Eucharist, celebrating the partnership between the Church of England and the German Protestant Church, which is expressed in the links we have with Magdeburg. The second was a service around the theme of Brexit, which concerns our German brothers and sisters as much as it does us. I preached a sermon in dialogue with a French pastor, in which we affirmed the bonds of affection between us, our unity in Christ trumping political differences.

So my train journey continues. We've just crossed the border from Germany into Belgium. There is no sign, but you see the difference in the look of the buildings and the different road signs. It occurs to me that the Belgians are not any the less Belgian because of the European Union, nor the Germans less German. They do not lose their national identity. And as I reflect on the experience of the Kirchentag, it is clear to me that our identity as Christians comes before everything else as well.

The Kirchentag reminded me once again that this identity is expressed above all in how we live out the love of God in the world, wherever we happen to be. We take the world seriously because God does - indeed He made it! In these troubled times perhaps we need to be even more aware of that, courageous enough to speak truth to power, and hopeful enough to build up the bonds of affection between people and nations.

And now we've reached Brussels. It still amazes me that I'll get on another train here that will take me right through to London. Thankfully it is not only bonds of affection that will keep us connected; we always will be part of Europe.



## We are grateful for the sponsorship of the following businesses



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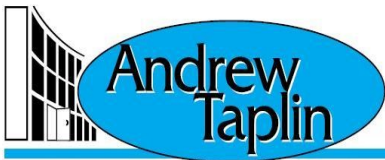


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