

NOVEMBER 2017

SPIRE



HAMPTON HILL'S PARISH MAGAZINE

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Meet the clergy



VICAR Rev Derek Winterburn

Derek was born in Orpington, Kent, and ordained in 1986. He served in several diverse London parishes before becoming vicar here in 2016. He is married to Sandra, a teacher, and has two children. A keen photographer, he posts a picture online every day, combining it with a daily walk or cycle ride. He can be contacted at any time other than on Mondays (his day off).

Tel: 020 8241 5904

Email: vicar@stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk

CURATE Rev Jacky Cammidge

Jacky was born in Abertillery, South Wales and ordained in 2015. She is a self-supporting minister and has been at St James's since starting her ordination training. Jacky is married to Alan, and has three children. During term-time she runs Hampton Hill Nursery School with her family, based in the church hall.

Tel: 074 9677 0505

Email: curate@stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk



ASSISTANT PRIEST Canon Julian Reindorp

Julian was born in Durban, South Africa, and ordained in 1969. He has worked in parishes in East London, Chatham and Milton Keynes, and was Team Rector in Richmond until retirement in 2009. He continues to lead a busy life, often out and about on his trademark red scooter. Julian is married to Louise and has four children, three stepchildren and nine grandchildren.

Tel: 020 8614 6800

Email: julianreindorp@hotmail.co.uk



Other contacts...



CHURCH OFFICE

Nick Bagge

The administrator deals with enquiries, and manages all church hall bookings.

Opening hours: Mon, Wed, Fri 0930-1230; and Tue, Thu 1230-1530.

Tel: 020 8941 6003

Email: office@stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk

Address: Church Office, 46 St James's Road, Hampton Hill TW12 1DQ.



CHURCHWARDEN

Gwynneth Lloyd

Tel: 020 8943 0709

Email:

gwyndy215@gmail.com



TREASURER

Nick Harris

Tel: 020 8943 2025

Email:

nicholasjharris@gmail.com



ORGANIST / CHOIRMASTER

Mark Blackwell

Tel: 077 6814 6879

Email:

Mark@mhrconsultancy.co.uk

ALMA Laurence Sewell 020 8977 2844

Ark Playgroup

Debbie Nunn 020 8979 3078

Bell Ringers

Susan Horner 020 8979 9380

Book of Remembrance Recorder

Janet Nunn 020 8979 6325

Brownies and Guides 0800 1 69 59 01

Charities and Links Team

Ann Peterken 020 8891 5862

Children's Champion

Linda Webb 020 8783 1515

Church Cleaning Team

Debbie Nunn 020 8979 3078

Churches Together Around Hampton

Ann Peterken 020 8891 5862

Churchyard Records

Janet Nunn 020 8979 6325

CMS Mission Partner Link

Liz Wilmot 020 8977 9434

Deanery Synod Representatives

Clive Beaumont 020 8943 4336

Eco-Church

Derek Winterburn 020 8241 5904

Electoral Roll Church Office 020 8941 6003

Flower Arranging Team

Coryn Robinson 020 8979 6786

Hall Bookings

Church Office 020 8941 6003

PCC Secretary Nick Bagge 020 8941 6003

Planned Giving / Finance Team

Carol Bailey 020 8783 0633

Properties Team

Bryan Basdell 020 8979 2040

Safeguarding Officer

Jane Newman 020 8979 6154

Scouts Richard Moody 020 8286 6918

Servers Lesley Mortimer 020 8941 2345

Shell Seekers Linda Webb 020 8783 1515

Social Team Parish Office 020 8941 6003

St James's Hospitality / Parish Breakfast

Clare Ryan and Kirstie Craig 079 6413 1135

St James's Players

Martin Hinckley 020 8979 0528

Theatre Club Peter Hale 020 979 9287

Traidcraft Ann Peterken 020 8891 5862

TWAM Janet Nunn 020 8979 6325

Visitors' Team Liz Wilmot 020 8977 9434

Welcome Team

Janet Taylor 020 8979 0046

From the Editor

November is a time for remembering service personnel, their families and friends who have served in the world wars, more recent conflicts and are still serving today. Our cover photo taken in Westminster Abbey shows today's soldiers at the tomb of the Unknown Warrior. Derek writes about the centenary of the Battle of Passchendaele commemorated this year.

On a more personal level we commemorate All Souls on 5 November, remembering our own families and friends who have passed away. Details of the service, entitled *In Loving Memory* can be found on Page 3.

Derek has also written the first of three articles on Rites of Passage as they are called in the Church of England – Births, Marriages and Deaths to you and me! It seemed appropriate to start with funerals in this edition.

As we reported last month, Justin Hollingsworth has retired as our printer. The Spire Team invited Justin and his wife Tina to



lunch a few weeks ago and made a presentation to them on behalf of the church. We wouldn't be where we are today without his hard work.

There's more about our new printers, Paul and Julie Venn, on page four.

Best Wishes

Janet

Cover photo: Silent tribute at the grave of the Unknown Warrior, Westminster Abbey

SPIRE

The Spire is published nine times a year for the Parochial Church Council of St James. We make no charge for this magazine, but if you are a regular reader we hope that you will contribute towards printing costs to enable us to expand our outreach across the parish. Cheques should be made payable to the PCC of St James, Hampton Hill and sent to Spire Appeal c/o the church office.

STORIES FOR THE SPIRE

If you have a story idea or would like to make a comment, contact Janet Nunn, the editor.

Telephone: 020 8979 6325

Email: janunnhh@btinternet.com

E-SPIRE / WEBSITE

To receive the magazine by email, please contact Prill Hinckley.

Email: p.m.hinckley@blueyonder.co.uk

CIRCULATION

The Spire is available in church and shops. It is also delivered across the parish and posted further afield. Further information from Susan Horner, 5 St James's Avenue TW12 1HH.

Telephone: 020 8979 9380

Email: smhorner5@yahoo.co.uk

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Printer Peter James Printing Limited

Telephone: 01932 244 665

Email: PJP123cards@aol.com

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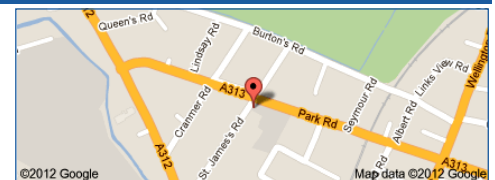
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Please recycle this magazine after use



Finding us

The church is on the corner of St James's Road and Park Road. The hall is next to the church and vicarage. There is ample parking. Buses include R68, R70 and 285.



Clerical Capers



'I haven't the heart to tell her the bishop went home 20 minutes ago!'

TONIGHT

Deanery Synod

Living out a life others sacrificed



What's the point of remembering wars? For the past few years we have commemorated key points in the First World War. This year, the centenary of Passchendaele has been picked as the key anniversary (last year it was the Somme). Is this more than an obsession with war and suffering? Is it anything else other than revising history lessons?

These commemorations certainly include some telling of history — filling out the story behind the battlefield's name for the next generation. Passchendaele, or the Third Battle of Ypres, sums up the awfulness of that war.

There was sustained rain, deep and dangerous mud, and the first use of mustard gas, but it was particularly terrible in the scale of the casualties.

Over the period of the campaign (July-Nov 1917) perhaps half a million people were killed or wounded (the numbers may be considerably more).

Debate about the battle goes on

The ground that the British and Canadians captured does not seem impressive — just five miles in six months — but the German army was fatally weakened by the terrible casualties.

It was controversial at the time and military historians continue to debate the wisdom of Field Marshall Haig's strategy.

There is an element of education in our remembering. But I think there is something more human, more personal, about honouring those who died or

survived. We don't feel a connection with those who fought at Agincourt or Waterloo in the same way, yet we feel that we have gained from those who fought for us 'within living memory'.

Although we might struggle to articulate what exactly was the cause of the First World War, I imagine all of us would think Britain was better off as a result (defeat

of German militarism, international co-operation that ultimately lead to the United Nations, greater respect for workers, rise in valuing the role of women, mistrust of future warfare.)

We can't thank them directly

We cannot say 'thank you' directly to those who gave their health or life in that armed conflict and the ones that have followed, but we can remember them, with appreciation.

I think there is an implicit covenant with those who fight for us that we do not take them for granted or forget them. (That does not mean that we have to accept that every action is morally perfect).

Remembering in this way is more than an act of mental recall — there is a personal connection. We reach out and make a link.

Similar feeling at communion

Christian people have a similar experience at a Holy Communion service. We take bread and wine as Jesus told us: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' But most Christians would say that their remembering is more than a mental recall; we renew a connection with the one who died for us on Good Friday.

For as long as we feel that we have benefited from other people's sacrifices, we should remember them. It is our way of honouring what they did, and it is part of what equips us to live out the life they have won for us.

'There is an implicit covenant with those who fight for us that we do not take them for granted or forget them. Remembering them is more than mental recall — there is a personal connection'



St James Hampton Hill

Sundays

Holy Communion (said)
0800-0830

Parish Communion
0930-1030

Together at Eleven
1100-1145

followed by crafts and refreshments

Mon-Fri

(but not Tuesdays)
Morning Prayer
0915-0940

Tuesdays

7, 21, 28 November
Holy Communion
0930-1015

14 November
Holy Communion and Coffee
1000-1100 (second Tuesday of month)

Rock Choir

Wednesdays 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 November
1030-1200 rockchoir.com

Life groups

Tuesdays 7, 21 November
Thursdays 2, 16, 30 November

Ark Playgroup

Mondays 6, 13, 20, 27 November
1015-1215

For toddlers and parents / carers

Pop-up cinema

Saturday 4 November
1830 *Passengers*
Saturday 11 November
1330 *The Jungle Book*

All Souls' Day

Sunday 5 November
1530

In Loving Memory...
to remember those who have died

Remembrance Day

Sunday 12 November
0930

A service of commemoration. At 1050 we gather by the war memorial to observe the two minutes' silence and lay wreaths

Social Night

Saturday 2 December
1800

Join us in the hall for our food night

Christingle Service

Sunday 3 December
1000

Our annual all-age service with Christingle candles is to raise awareness of and money for The Children's Society

NEWS IN BRIEF

All creatures great and small join us in church

WHAT HAVE five dogs, a cat, a rabbit, two hamsters, and two snails got in common? They all took part in a Pet Service at St James's on 8 October...along with their owners, some pictured.

During the short service, led by Jacky, our curate, the congregation thanked God for all the animals in the world, sang three hymns, and at the end every pet was blessed. All the animals got on well and there were no accidents!



Buy your calendar now!

THE REAL Advent Calendar is five years old and celebrating its success with a redesign. For the first time, the 2017 calendar has 25 doors, so there is a chocolate for Christmas Day!

The calendar also comes with a 24-page activity book. The calendar costs £3.99 and is available to buy from our Traidcraft stall on 5 November and 3 December. We also have unique gifts that make perfect Christmas presents.



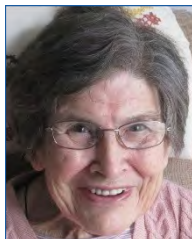
Remembering Jean Wilson, 94

MANY READERS will remember Jean Wilson, who died on 1 October, aged 94.

When her husband Gordon retired from full-time ministry they moved from Crewe to Hampton and became regular members at St James's and Gordon occasionally took services.

Both were passionate about world peace, and they helped set up the Week of Prayer for World Peace, now in its 40th year. Gordon died in 1991 and Jean later moved into a home for clergy and their spouses in Hindhead. When that closed earlier this year Jean moved to a nursing home in Gillingham, Dorset, to be near her daughter Rosalind. Gordon and Jean also had two sons, Charles and Lawrence.

Jean was last at St James's in 2013 when we helped celebrate her 90th birthday. Her funeral took place in Gillingham on 23 October and her ashes will be interred in St James's churchyard at a later date.



Splashing the cash for charity



SARA BUTTERFIELD, a trustee of local charity *African Vision Malawi*, visited Africa to see the charity's life-saving work with orphan children. Inspired by their work, she persuaded Twickenham Preparatory School in Hampton to form a partnership with Songwe, a school in one of the most deprived areas of Malawi and to support a new local initiative, the *Big Splash*, suggested by Sara. Eight months later, with the help of teachers and parents, the school's first ever pool party took place, attended by 300 people. The event raised over £900 for Songwe and the school Parents Committee.

FEATURE: RITES OF PASSAGE — DEATH

A matter of

Since the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* these two rites of passages are linked in many people's minds.

The experience of weddings has dramatically changed since Gyles Brandreth's Marriage Act 1994 changed the law so that a whole range of places could host ceremonies, and then the introduction of same-sex marriages in 2014. Perhaps the world of funerals has not undergone such a dramatic shift, but there has been a revolution of a quieter kind.

Fifty years ago the majority of funerals included burial, but now 70% are cremations (probably much higher in London). As our society has become more secular (and multi-faith) the number of funerals in which the Church of England has been involved has fallen, but it is still about one in three (2,800 a week).

As a vicar I welcome the greater choice that families now have with the option for a humanist celebrant for example. It must be better that people have a professional non-religious choice.

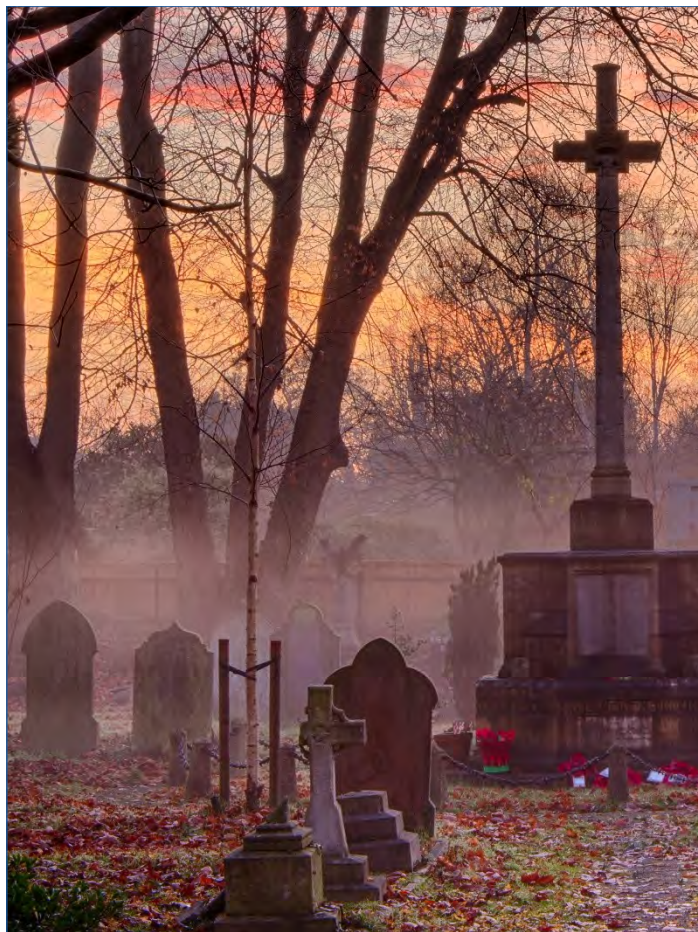


DEREK WINTERBURN

A spiritual decline?

However, while the number of people who say they are not religious grows ever larger, I am not so sure that the number of people who would say they were 'spiritual' has declined. It is a common experience to meet a person who does not go to church (so they would not be 'religious') but would describe themselves as 'spiritual'.

Unfortunately the media do not seem to understand this and assume that if one is not 'religious' one must be an atheist. This throws up a paradox: for example, a recent story in the *Daily Mail*, read: 'Why do even



Faith in life after death is part of the Christian belief, but that does not exclude 'less religious' people from having a church funeral. Our new series about the rites of passage starts with the big one: Death

atheists still believe in life after death? In an ever more irreligious age, the number of us who believe in heaven is going UP.'

But after a batch of statistics released a month ago, the Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Revd Paul Bayes, said: 'In this modern world people are more willing to be honest and say they have *no religion* rather than casually saying they are *Church of England*. This honesty is welcome.'

Christian funerals a closed shop?

What does this have to do with funerals? I fear that the spirit of the age is suggesting that unless you are a card-carrying member of a church then you would be a hypocrite to want a Christian funeral, or would be unwelcome.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The majority of the services Anglican clergy take are for people

who have 'no previous history' with a church (or a very slight connection).

This concerns me not because the church is losing income, as is sometimes suggested, but because what we offer is so much more than the 20 minutes' service before the curtains close.

Anyone can have a Church of England funeral. Part of the Church's mission is to consider everyone in the local parish eligible for a wedding or a funeral. We can offer services in church, or in a local cemetery or crematorium (or one following the other).

Coming to church offers some major practical advantages (space, seating capacity, the option for a longer service) as well the beauty and specialness of the building. We can even video record the service for you to show to people who are not able to attend on the day.



life and death



A funeral to fit the person

Sometimes families prefer to have a simpler private funeral service at the crematorium or cemetery followed by a larger thanksgiving service (the church is ideal for this). This can have advantages for catering, or is just easier to manage emotionally.

The clergy meet with the family beforehand to personalise the funeral. Within the tested framework of the service there's a range of possibilities including readings, music and a variety of people speaking. While a funeral has an element of sadness, there can

be thanksgiving and celebration as well. We will help tell the story of the person who has died alongside the story of God's love and the Christian hope.

We offer 'aftercare' too. Sometimes a bereaved person values further visits, and other low-level support.

At All Souls' we host an annual service for the recently bereaved and those remembering loved ones in which people are remembered by name. We have a Garden of Remembrance in which cremated remains can be buried; this is easily

accessible and a lovely, tranquil place. The names of those who have died can be written in the Book of Remembrance kept in the church.

Belief can be a comfort

We speak about hope. Far more people believe in life after death than are in church on a Sunday.

At a time of loss that belief can be a comfort and a guide, but it needs to be nourished. Bereavement is hard, but there is good news. For the future we look to a time of reunion, and this is also a message that strengthens us now. We would encourage everyone to think about what they want when they die. That would include choices of hymns, music and readings, and these choices should be made clear to their family and included in their will.

There is an extremely helpful website that can help with this (churchofenglandfunerals.org), but the clergy at St James would be very happy to talk to anyone to plan their funeral too.

■ This year's All Souls' Day service, *In Loving Memory...* is on **Sunday 5 November** at 1530, followed by refreshments. Anyone is welcome to attend, and if you would like any names included there will be a sign-up sheet in church nearer the time, or you can contact the church office.



Around the Spire

Holding the front page!



THIS IS the second issue of the *Spire* produced by our new printers, Julie and Paul Venn (pictured). They purchased the Lancashire-based firm, Peter James Printing, 18 years ago, and moved it to Shepperton.

Initially working from their home, they soon expanded to premises near

Shepperton railway station. They say that they are delighted to be printing the *Spire* and look forward to a long and happy friendship with the team, a feeling reciprocated by the *Spire* committee.

Remembering David Bonner, 89

THE REV DAVID Bonner, who was a non-stipendiary minister at All Saints Church, Hampton, in the 1970s, died on 20 September, aged 89.

David also helped at St James's during the interregnum between Rupert Brunt and Nicholas Chubb and when Brian Leathard went on sabbatical.

David was 16 when he went to theological college, but was called up for National Service before completing his training. When he came out of the RAF he went to work as a banker in the City, but finally got his wish and was ordained at All Saints, Hampton, where he and his wife Elizabeth worshipped. In 1984 he became full-time vicar of All Saints, Twickenham where he stayed until retirement in 1991.

The couple's daughter Zena Williams worships at St James's. David's funeral was held at All Saints, Hampton, on 17 October.



The new Mr and Mrs Hunter...

ON SATURDAY

16 September
Clare Williams married
Matthew Hunter
surrounded by their friends and family.
After a joyful ceremony officiated by our curate, Jacky, they went on to celebrate at a reception in the Surrey hills.



Leaf Sweep and Gutter Clean needs your help!

THE ANNUAL Leaf Sweep and Gutter Clean will be carried out on **Saturday 2 December** from 0915. The gutters of both church and hall need to be cleared of leaves. This work is carried out by the Properties Team — but they need your help. If you can spare some time please turn up at church suitably dressed. There will be hot drinks and snacks for the helpers!



It's been lovely to welcome the children back after their summer break. This autumn our new leaders Fiona, Becky, Dawn and Genevieve have joined the team and they are really enjoying their time with the children.



LINDA WEBB

The Shell Seekers begin in church and then we come through to the hall at the end of the first hymn. We start by gathering together to light the candle before we have a prayer. We then have a bible reading followed by a discussion and an activity which helps us explore the reading.

Two groups catered for

We have two groups of children, with the younger group from Reception to Year 6 and the older group from school Year 7, the children moving up to the older group in the spring term of Year 6. We are hoping to name our two groups and any suggestions are welcome.

We are following Matthew's gospel for the majority of this term, and would hope to have one of our projects for the spring term which both the children and the leaders always look forward to.

Although we have our two groups, we know the children also enjoy spending time all together so we like to give them the opportunity for this.

A good example was during the summer holidays, below, when the children enjoyed playing games together, and also the preparation morning for our Christmas sale.

■ This year our Christmas sale is after the Christingle service on 3 December, so please put it in your diaries and come armed with some money!



SHELL SEEKERS GROW

Our Sunday School has grown over the past year to include more youngsters — but it *always* welcomes new members!

We don't expect children to attend every week, though we are delighted if they do as it helps with teaching.

If you have children and would like them to experience the fun please speak to Derek, me, or one of the other Shell Seeker leaders.

We would be delighted to see you come with your children for a trial session. We meet every Sunday during term time, starting in the church.

With a new full-time children's leader hopefully starting by January next year, this is an exciting time to become a Shell Seeker.



Shrine of Hazrat-e' Masoumeh

Qom is one of Iran's largest cities and its second most sacred city for Shi'a Islam after Mashhad. In the March edition we featured Kabala and described the differences between Shi'a and Sunni interpretations of Islam; it also complements the recent article on Iran by Gwynneth Lloyd.



LAURENCE SEWELL

Qom is the main centre of Shi'a scholarship in the world and the site of the Fatima Masoumeh shrine. In recent history it came to more global recognition through Ayatollah Khomeini who led the opposition to the Shah Pahlavi regime from the city, and who returned there from exile after the eventual overthrow of the Shah following the Islamic revolution in 1979.

mausoleum is the burial place of Fatima Masoumeh (the *Infallible One*), sister of the eighth Imam, Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (in Persian *Imam Reza*, 786–819 AD, whose tomb is in Mashhad). In 816 AD she was travelling to meet her brother when she became ill near Qom and died on reaching the city, and thereafter her mausoleum became a place of pilgrimage.

The great shrine complex we see today, that non-Muslims can only visit accompanied by a Muslim, dates from the early 17th century when Shah Abbas encouraged his subjects to go on pilgrimage within his empire rather than visiting the shrines in Najaf and Karbala in Iraq that were under the control of his enemy, the Ottoman Turks. The golden domes and beautifully decorated minarets were restored early in the 19th century during the reign of Fath-Ahi Shah.

A theological centre

After a period of economic and military difficulties as Russia gained hegemony in the region in the 19th century, Qom once again regained prominence as a theological centre in the early 20th century with its many religious seminaries and institutes offering advanced religious studies, and for the *marja-i taqlid* (literally *source of imitation*), the term applied to the high ranking jurists (ayatollahs) that reside there whose authority is to be followed and who execute sharia law.

Qom's proximity to Tehran has allowed the clerical establishment easy access to monitor the affairs and decisions of state. Many Grand Ayatollahs possess offices in both Tehran and Qom and it is estimated that there is a clerical population of more than 45,000 in the city.

A long and turbulent history



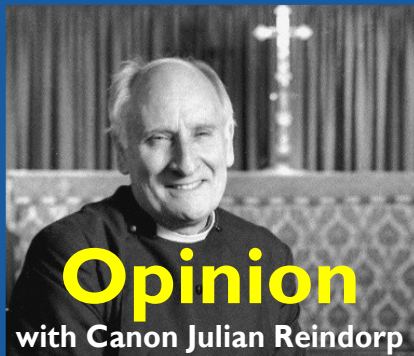
Qom Royal Green Persian rug

The city lies about 80 miles south-west of Teheran as the northern mountains give way to the semi-arid plains in the centre of the country, and is a regional capital with a population of over 1.2 million people. Apart from its religious significance, it is a large industrial city based on nearby oilfields and is famous for its silk rugs and carpets that use intricate and tightly woven designs. It has had a long and turbulent history; being sacked and plundered both during the Mongol invasion in 1221 AD and by Tamerlane less than a century later.

However, it recovered and was described by Venetian explorers in 1474 as 'a small but handsome town with an abundance of everything and with good bazaars'. By the early 16th century it had become an important theological centre in relation to Shi'a Islam.

The shrine of Hazrat-e' Masoumeh, the gateway to which is pictured right, lies at the physical and spiritual centre of Qom. Its





Opinion

with Canon Julian Reindorp

WELFARE DEPENDENCY

Whenever I hear or see this phrase I know that's me! Well over half of all benefits in our country come to pensioners. We are all welfare dependents in some way. Recent research shows that most of us will draw upon social security at some point in our lives. We will all use the NHS, more as we get older. But as a society we seem so often to punish those most in need. Recent freezing of benefit levels, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies, will raise relative child poverty to 26% in 2021, a 50% increase from 2015, which will almost undo most of the reduction in child poverty achieved since 1997. In so many ways 'austerity' has fallen on those least able to bear it.

FOOD BANKS

William Rees-Mogg MP, who some papers suggest could be a candidate to lead the Conservative Party, recently used the actions of foodbank volunteers as an uplifting sign in our society. A fellow Roman Catholic and foodbank volunteer agreed with his statement that the state cannot do everything, but wrote in the *Guardian*, 'I do not find my experience working there "uplifting"'. Our clients — many of whom are on the receiving end of punitive benefit sanctions issued by public agencies — come to us as a last resort so that they may at least have some food for themselves and their families. Many of them, despite our best efforts, find the whole experience humiliating and distressing, and for many of my colleagues and myself, rather than being uplifted we finish our shift deeply upset at hearing first-hand the experience of so many of our clients... the very least that a civilised state can and should do is to provide the means for all its citizens to obtain sufficient and appropriate food for themselves and their families.'

MODEL BROKEN

Britain's economic model is broken and produces widespread inequality the Archbishop of Canterbury has warned in a report backed by business leaders. The report by the Commission for Economic Justice, *Time for a Change*, which features senior business and civil society leaders, stressed that all political parties needed to reject the current patterns of economic growth. They simply deliver most of the gains to corporations and the richest in society. Recent research shows that between 1980 and 2014 the share of income received by the bottom half of earners, fell from 20.5% to 12.5%, while in a mirror image trend, that enjoyed by the top 1% rose from 12% to 20%. As I read this and so much else I reflect that if we are to tackle inequality and the deficit we need a far more progressive tax system in which many of us need to support higher taxation.

OBAMA'S BIRTHPLACE

We all know the advice 'never let a fact get in the way of a good story'. A grim illustration of this is the controversy around Barack Obama's birth. It was first whipped up by supporters of Hilary Clinton in 2008 and exploited by Donald Trump. It was suggested that as he was born outside of the US, in Kenya, he was not qualified to run for the presidency. In 2009 his birth certificate from Hawaii was issued in the short form, and then in the long form in 2011. Case closed? Well, some 45% of Americans still had doubts about his birthplace before this final publication, this dropped to 33% but then rose again to 42% by 2012. In a post truth culture feelings seem to matter more than facts.

CUT OUT THE CROSS

The German supermarket chain Lidl airbrushed out the crosses on famous churches that featured on the packaging of its Greek products. Lidl Belgium said it removed the crosses 'to guarantee political and religious neutrality.' Lidl has since apologised.

Shine a light for troubled children

Our loyal Children's Society boxholders have delivered another terrific

total — in excess of £650 this year — and we have sent a cheque to the charity to support their important work. The Children's Society has been



DAVID HETLING

working to improve the lives of young people nationally since 1881 and, over the years, has constantly modernised its methods and causes to address the demands of a changing society.

In recent years for instance, the charity has turned its attention to the unique needs of migrant children arriving in Britain and is also tackling other high-profile concerns such as mental health issues in youngsters and the effect of budget cuts on local services impacting young people.

This time of year also gives us another big opportunity to support the work of the Children's Society.

Our Christingle service will be at 1000 on Sunday 3 December and we will be handing out the familiar candle collection boxes at that service. The plate collection that day will also go to the charity.

These boxes are a handy place for loose change and they soon fill up — last year we collected over £300 and this brought our total as a church to over £1,000 in giving to the Children's Society when added to the regular box holders.

Do come along to our Christingle service this year and embrace the generous spirit of Christmas by taking a candle collection box for filling up please!

The funds raised at our Christingle celebration are vital in helping the Children's Society continue to reach and support children who have nowhere else to turn, help them to have their voices heard and give them a brighter future.



Christingle plays an important part in helping other children

COMING SOON

Hampton Hill Christmas Lighting Up Parade

A firm fixture in local life, the 53rd parade on **Friday 24 November** at 1900. The borough mayor will switch on the lights. Local churches will be involved in the parade. There will be music and shops will stay open later. More information, when available, from: lovehamptonhill.com

Scarlett's Carol Concert

Back for a second year, on **Friday 1 December** at 1800, a carol concert, featuring star guests, to raise money for Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in memory of Scarlett Lil, a Carlisle Infant School pupil who died in 2014.

Two concerts at the White House

Two concerts are taking place at the White House, The Avenue, Hampton. The White House Big Band plays the classics on **Sunday 12 November**. The Middlesex Yeomanry (Duke of Cambridge Hussars) Concert Band's Christmas concert is on **Sunday 10 December**. Both concerts start at 1430, and tickets for each are £10.

REGISTERS



Amelie-Rose Carson, daughter of Jonathan and Nina, and granddaughter of Christopher and Dominique Carson, was baptised at the *together at eleven* service on 24 September. The service was enjoyed by young and old and was followed by a splendid gathering in the church hall to celebrate Amelie-Rose becoming a member of the St James's family. She is pictured with her parents and sister Elena-Louise.

SEPTEMBER

BAPTISM

24 Amelie-Rose Carson, East Molesey

WEDDING

2 Lee William Raymond Hedges and Angharad Regina Jaffe, Hampton

16 Matthew George Thomas Hunter and Clare Louise Williams, Hampton Hill

FUNERALS

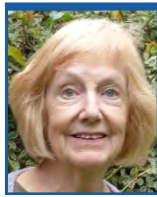
1 Arthur Louis Ansell, 94, Hampton

13 Dorothy Evelyn Gunns, 99, Twickenham



Keeping me on my toes!

What an impossible choice! Choosing my 10 favourite out of the perhaps 110 ballets I have seen since my mother took me to my very first performance. I started ballet classes at the age of seven and I was completely smitten after my first visit to the Sadler's Wells Ballet (later to become Royal Ballet). I have continued ballet-going ever since, along with intermittent classes. My choice of ballets here is largely influenced by the music in each case, a vital element for me.



MARY SCANLAN

Symphonic Variations (1949)

This, my first ballet, starred Margot Fonteyn, Michael Somes and Moira Shearer, with choreography by Frederick Ashton, music from Cesar Franck, and with scenery by Sophie Fedorovitch. It is widely thought to be the best work ever created for the company – a classical dancework of great purity. For the dancers it was an 'absolute marathon, making demands never made before.... a test of sheer stamina that very few dancers could stand at that time'.



The Firebird (1910)

Igor Stravinsky was 28 years old, and virtually an unknown composer, when commissioned to write the music for this one act ballet for the 1910 Paris Ballets Russes season. Choreographed by Mikhail Fokine, it is based on a Russian fairy tale about a magical bird that can be either a blessing or a curse to its owner. An instant success with both audience and critics, the ballet was the beginning of the Diaghilev/Stravinsky collaboration, later producing *Petrouchka*, *Rite of Spring*, and *Pulcinella*.



Apollo (1928)

Choreographed by 24-year-old George Balanchine for New York City Ballet, it was performed in Paris in 1928 with Stravinsky conducting. The ballet is in two tableaux, telling of the Greek god of music, visited by the three muses: Terpsichore (dance), Polyhymnia (song) and Calliope (poetry). It takes classical antiquity as its subject and uses a chamber orchestra of 34 string instruments.



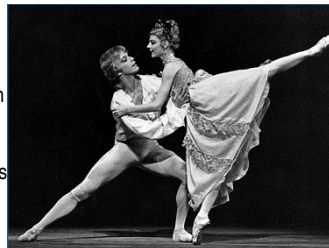
Daphnis and Chloe (1956)

Daphnis and Chloe, Frederick Ashton's 1956 ballet with Ravel music, has romantic connections, being the first time my then fiancé had accompanied me. Listening to Ravel's soaring *Daybreak* theme now, I am transported back to that evening when we saw Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes. Tony was hooked and later that year queued all night for tickets for the Bolshoi's first visit. Since then we have seen both Bolshoi in Moscow and Mariinsky in St Petersburg. The story concerns Daphnis and Chloe's courtship and the latter's abduction by, and escape from, a band of pirates. The final scene takes place in the god Pan's sacred grove and at daybreak a luxuriant melody builds, Daphnis awakes, sees Chloe among some shepherdesses, the two throwing themselves into each other's arms as the melody reaches a passionate climax.



Manon (1974)

One of Kenneth Macmillan's full-length ballets, with music by Jules Massenet and design by Nicholas Georgiadis, it reflects both opulence and degradation. The powerful telling of Manon and Des Grieux's idyllic love is a modern masterpiece, a tale of lavish splendour, miserable poverty and betrayal, and the opening night audience in 1974 gave Antoinette Sibley and Anthony Dowell a standing ovation.



Romeo and Juliet (1956)

No apologies for another Macmillan ballet in this 25th anniversary of his death, with Prokofiev's instantly recognisable music underscoring the passion of the ballet's star-crossed lovers. Prokofiev's original 1940 ballet score, produced by the Bolshoi, received international acclaim and was awarded the Stalin Prize. The version I saw on their 1956 visit to Covent Garden starred Galina Ulanova as Juliet and Yuri Zhdanov as Romeo. Macmillan's 1965 production starred Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev.



Mayerling (1978)

Particularly poignant, I was at the 1992 performance when Macmillan died backstage at the Royal Opera House. When it was announced at the final curtain the stunned audience left in near silence. In what is regarded as his greatest masterpiece,



Macmillan tells the true story of the suicide pact between Rudolf, heir to the Austria-Hungarian Empire, and his teenage mistress, Mary Vetsera, in 1889. This dark and powerful ballet received a standing ovation at its 1978 premiere, and Franz Liszt's music matches the drama's emotion, with Nicholas Georgiadis's designs conjuring up the oppressive court society.

Elite Syncopations (1974)

This Macmillan ballet, for 12 dancers, with Scott Joplin music, is very different from the emotional stories in the longer ballets, having an upbeat, hip-swinging spontaneity, with 'easy-going rhythms'. The band is at the back of the stage, while the dancers perform in front, adding to the 1920s atmosphere. In 1975 the BBC filmed the original cast dancing in Battersea's Big Top, the piece entering the repertoire of Birmingham Royal Ballet in 1978 at Sadler's Wells, where it has just finished another run to mark the 25th anniversary.



Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (2011)

Choreographer Christopher Wheeldon, composer Joby Talbot and designer Bob Crowley had a winner in this 2011 ballet. True to the Lewis Carroll story, the White Rabbit is followed by Alice down the rabbit-hole (a computerised tunnel) through the door after sipping the 'Drink Me' bottle, to a magical world of a tap-dancing Mad Hatter. All the familiar characters appear, including the caterpillar, a croquet game with flamingos, a hatchet-wielding cook, a dreamy Cheshire cat, and a Queen of Hearts bent on beheading a tart-stealing knave!



The Prodigal Son (1929)

The Prodigal Son is the Biblical parable from Luke's Gospel of the son wasting his inheritance on riotous living yet welcomed home again. With choreography by George Balanchine, Prokofiev music and Rouault designs, it premiered in 1929's Paris season of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Revived in 1950 by New York City Ballet the title role was danced by Jerome Robbins, later to make his name as a choreographer, most famously with *West Side Story*.

