

### From the Registers

#### **Baptisms**

2<sup>nd</sup> May Jackie Gardner  
13<sup>th</sup> June George Drinkwater  
20<sup>th</sup> June Shaneille Dyan Constantine  
Shandra Danie Constantine  
Shannon Constantine  
Ramon Constantine

#### **Marriage**

26<sup>th</sup> June Jason Whidbourne and  
Donna Marie Collins

#### **Funeral**

18<sup>th</sup> June Gerald Tuson



**JULY 2010**



### Useful Information

#### **Team Rector:**

The Revd Dr Charles Miller Telephone: 520144

#### **Honorary Assistant Priest:**

The Revd Canon Norman Brown Telephone: 553454

#### **Churchwardens:**

Mrs Carol Bowman Telephone: 528962

Mrs Jean Hercus Telephone: 527822

#### **Regular services at St Michael's**

Sung Mass or Family Mass (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of month)

Sundays at 9.30 a.m.

Said Mass followed by light lunch Thursdays at 1.00 p.m.

(except for the 3rd Thursday in the month when it is a Healing Mass followed by light lunch)

Evening prayer (lay-led) Sundays at 4.30 p.m.

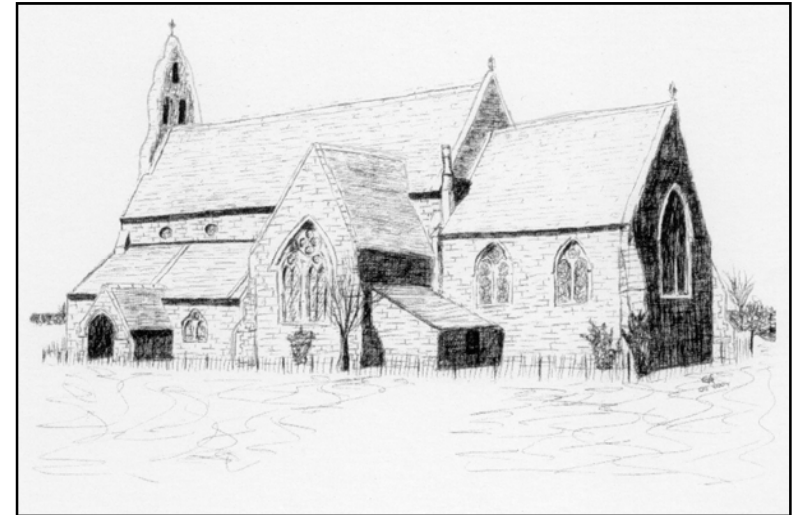
Mass of Our Lady 1st Saturday in the month at 9.00 a.m.

#### **For enquiries about weddings, baptisms and funerals**

please contact Mrs Linda Barker at the Parish Office.

Times of opening are: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays  
9.00 a.m. – 2.15 p.m. Telephone: 520144.

**For enquiries about booking St Michael's Church or the church room** please contact John Enticott Telephone: 523282.



# St Michael's Messenger

The Newsletter of St Michael and All Angels, Park Road, Abingdon.

St Michael's Messenger was designed in 'Publisher' by Anne Gould.  
It was compiled by Lois Rennells with advice and assistance from Carol Bowman,  
David and Jane Duce and Jean Hercus. It was printed in the Church Office by Linda  
Barker.

## From The Revd Dr Charles Miller, Team Rector

As the summer comes and so many aspects of life's activities - school, volunteer work and meetings, church programmes and events - wind down, it feels at the same time that so much is gathering momentum. The congregations at St Michael's and St Nicolas' must feel this as they await the arrival of Paul Smith, their new Team Vicar. As I write, communications are hastening to and fro with the Bishop's Office to find a date for Paul's licensing - probably in the second half of September. Hopefully Paul will have settled into St Michael's Vicarage and have begun to establish himself in his new community. Indeed, there is much to expect as he begins his ministry as priest, pastor and guide in the congregations' ministries and mission to the people of Abingdon.

At the same time our Curate Simon Thorn begins his priestly ministry on the solid momentum that he's built up over the past ten months. Doubtless that will grow and become more enriched and enriching as his training and experience take him deeper into priestly life.

Then early in July we welcome Dr Jane Baun as 'Assistant Curate' and deacon. Like Simon, she will minister on a non-stipendiary basis, but she will be giving a substantial amount of time when she is not teaching and lecturing in her special field of Byzantine studies at Oxford University.

All three, complementing the team of clergy and licensed ministers already working within the 'Central Cluster', will hugely enhance our common work in the Gospel. I hope that you feel as blessed as I do in this abundance!

As we look to the end of a long interregnum, let's give thanks for the surer footing with which St Michael's folk are taking forward their common life and witness; for the increased mutual support we all have given and received throughout the period; and for the opportunities that will present themselves to us to move forward in new and up-building ways in the months and years ahead as we fashion ourselves as 'co-workers' with God in the service of his good and gracious purposes. ♦

## Dates For Your Diary

28 <sup>th</sup> July	St Michael's Lunch Club.
1 <sup>st</sup> August	Abbey Chamber Concert 3.00 p.m. St Nicolas' Church. Violin and Cello Duo, Elisabeth Reed and Valerie Findlay, playing Bach, Mozart and Ravel. Tickets available at the door.
25 <sup>th</sup> August	St Michael's Lunch Club.
29 <sup>th</sup> August	Sunday Afternoon Tea in the Abbey. The last opportunity in 2010 to join in the St. Nicolas' Sunday afternoon tea parties. Come along to the Millstream garden in The Old Abbey Buildings at 3.00 p.m. and enjoy excellent cakes, tea and company. These are wonderful opportunities to get to know your neighbours at church and elsewhere.
9 <sup>th</sup> September	Church Council.
11 <sup>th</sup> September	Oxfordshire Historical Churches Trust Ride and Stride.
12 <sup>th</sup> September	Abbey Strings. Debut of Abingdon's newest ensemble, directed by Mariette Richter. Music by Bach, Mozart and Elgar. St Nicolas' Church 3.00 p.m. Tickets available at the door.
14 <sup>th</sup> September	Abingdon Deanery Mothers' Union annual Eucharist 7.30 p.m. at St Michael's.
29 <sup>th</sup> September	St Michael's Lunch Club.
3 <sup>rd</sup> October	Baroque concert. Megan Hooper and Anne Bardsley sopranos, Rachel McCubbin flute, David Pedder guitar, Ian McCubbin bassoon, Mike Bardsley harpsichord. St Nicolas' Church 3.00 p.m. Tickets available at the door.
27 <sup>th</sup> October	St Michael's Lunch Club.
11 <sup>th</sup> November	Church Council.
20 <sup>th</sup> November	St Michael's Christmas Fair.
25 <sup>th</sup> November	Coach Outing to Winchester Christmas Market organised by St Helen's Church.
27 <sup>th</sup> November	St Helen's Church Christmas Market.

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### Answers to Spot the Bird

1 Merlin, 2 Kittiwake, 3 Blackcap, 4 Robin, 5 Spoonbill, 6 Quail, 7 Bunting, 8 Blackbirds, 9 Grouse, 10 Wagtail, 11 Skylark, 12 Dove, 13 Owl, 14 Puffin, 15 Finch, 16 Magpie, 17 Kingfisher, 18 Wren, 19 Swift, 20 Hobby, 21 Dipper, 22 Crane, 23 Crossbill, 24 Kite, 25 Rook.



## July

Birds sing in the leafy trees,  
Butterflies hover amid the flowers,  
The meadow is scorched in the July heat,  
But will revive in a summer shower.

Now, amid the ripening corn,  
Harvest mice breed without fear –  
But little mice, beware, beware,  
Harvest time is getting near!

Fox cubs have ventured from their den  
To seek for prey as their parents taught,  
Nature, now somnolent and still,  
Smiles at the beauty she has wrought.

*Doris Dowling*



## In the box

Some time ago Doris and Tom Dowling brought into St Michael's a box of guidebooks and other printed material on places they had visited over the years as they thought others might find the material of interest. Currently the box is stored on the items-for-sale table in the church and it is worth having a look through it to see if it contains information about a place that you plan to visit.

One might suppose that cathedrals don't change much but there is always something new to make repeated visits worthwhile. The guidebook in the box for Wells Cathedral was dated 1965 and in those days the ingeniously designed and very attractive new refectory had not been built. You may also discover some interesting new interpretations of things within the building.

Wells Cathedral is famous for the unique carvings on the capitals of the pillars that depict peasant life. One tells a story in strip cartoon fashion in four separate carvings. The first shows an old man and a boy stealing fruit which they put in a basket, the second depicts the farmer realising what they are doing and sending his labourer after them armed with a pitchfork. On the third one it can be seen that the boy has escaped but the old man has been caught painfully by his ear and in the fourth he is being hit on the head with the pitchfork! In the 1965 guidebook the fruit being stolen is described as apples but the current writer of the guidebook has decided they are grapes. A mini survey among the members of St Michael's attending a Thursday lunchtime Mass resulted in nobody identifying the fruit in the photograph of the carving as grapes, some thought apples, others plums, apricots or berries of some kind.

The guidebook is now back in the box and the photograph of the carving is at the top of page 24 if you would like to see what you think. ♦

## Ordination of The Revd Dr Simon Thorn

Reading Minster was packed on the morning of Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> June, for the 'Service of Ordination of Priests by Stephen, Bishop of Reading' and there was a buzz of anticipation as we all arrived in brilliant sunshine and to the sound of church bells. Whilst waiting for the service to begin we were asked, in the service booklet, to pray for all those to be ordained and I realised that of the fourteen priests to be ordained at that service, eight had been ordained deacon with Simon at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford on 3<sup>rd</sup> October last year. As I had been present at that service as well, I felt it to be a real privilege to be sharing this day with them, as well as with Simon, as they accepted their further calling to the priesthood.

It is impossible to be a 'spectator' at a service such as this. At no time was there a feeling of watching other people 'being ordained'. Bishop Stephen drew us all into the spiritual experience of the commissioning. We were present as Jesus sent out his disciples, we were present as the early Christians accepted the responsibility of spreading the gospel and we shared in the sense of awe that 2000 years on we were witnessing men and women still accepting God's call to devote their lives to His service.

I would imagine that there were well over 800 voices joined in prayer, in the affirmation of faith and in hearty singing and as we emerged back out into the sunshine at the conclusion of the Mass to greet each other and our new priests there was a real sense of joy and fellowship amongst us all.

Simon had invited members of the congregations of our churches to join him in the chapel of St Peter's College, Radley, on the following Tuesday, as he celebrated his first Mass at their Patronal Festival Eucharist. This again was a memorable occasion, with beautiful music provided by a small group of singers, including Rachel and Jacob. Here we were privileged to join with Simon's family and friends on this very special day and, with them, to receive from him an individual blessing at the end of the service.

After the service we were welcomed to delicious refreshments in the Mansion and it was a very relaxing end to a very hot day to spend an hour in interesting company in such pleasant surroundings.

One week after his ordination we were delighted to welcome Simon to celebrate his first Mass in St Michael's Church and we hope it will be the first of many such occasions. Jacob was unable to be there as he was singing in the choir at St Helen's but Simon was joined by Rachel, who read the lesson, and her grandmother. As part of the Family Mass Simon was very happy to be able to welcome into the congregation four young members of the Constantine family, Shaneille, Shandra, Shannon and Ramon, who he had baptised at St Michael's two weeks earlier. In his sermon he used an analogy for the mission challenge facing us all as individuals, the sight of luscious strawberries going to waste in Peachcroft Farm because local people did not take the trouble to go out and harvest them but preferred to take the easy option of buying them ready picked and packaged in the supermarkets. Judging by the immediate reaction of the congregation and the discussion on the topic after the service, this was an inspired analogy. He did add that this was not intended as an advertisement for Peachcroft – but why not. Raspberries next! As a finale, we generously provided him with an interesting Welsh place name for his reading of the Banns - he carried it off like a veteran!



Father Simon with Father Norman

As is the custom at St Michael's we never miss the opportunity for a party and we all enjoyed wine and cake after the service during which time Norman Brown, who had assisted at the Mass, proposed a toast to Simon.

Thank you, Simon, for your contribution to our Church life over the past year, congratulations on your ordination and you carry our prayers forward with you for your future ministry, wherever it takes you.

*Carol Bowman*

of the group have a grasp of what she is saying and do a bit of translating. The French lady sure speaks rapidly.

In the evening we all return to the countryside for the first concert which takes place at the Église du Bourg-Saint-Léonard. The venue for this concert had been changed at short notice, resulting in a very sparse audience. However, it was all taken in good spirit and proved a good dress-rehearsal opportunity. As always wine and nibbles followed and these were again provided in the room of the golden age.

Sunday morning and our hostess has been out to buy the croissants fresh from the baker. We are all attending the Mass at the Église Saint-Germain. The church is packed and we supporters are made welcome as we join the congregation and indulge in a bit of chit-chat in French before the service begins. The choir enter the church preceded by the Priest in charge, our Rector, Charles Miller and Simon Thorn, all of whom are taking an active part in the proceedings. Hugh is wearing his RED St Michael's choir robe, whereas the other choir members are all in BLUE – this leads to some confusion amongst members of the congregation who think he must be a monk. This misunderstanding is soon explained.

After the service we return to our hosts for a Mothering Sunday lunch and Josiane's mother is there for the occasion. Her only word of English is "chicken" – fortunately that is what we are eating.

Back we all go to the Église Saint-Germain where the choir rehearse for their second concert, and I and another non-singer go off to view the huge parkland with its waterways and horses from the Camargue. Highland cattle are an annual feature but their arrival has been delayed because of flooding earlier in the year.

The concert is a great success, the church is packed and everyone is in good voice. Rachel Thorn delights us with her solos and son Jacob does himself proud with his singing, violin and piano playing. His singing of the Nunc Dimittis is accompanied by young Alfie Smith on the trumpet. Well done everyone.

On Monday morning our coach leaves at 8 o'clock. We stop off at a rest area where there are several shops, but the hypermarket has closed down and there is nowhere to buy wine – probably not a bad thing.

We arrive home safely, having enjoyed our trip and the chance to meet members of different Abingdon churches in both Abingdon and Argentan.

*Jean Hercus*

**A trip to Argentan,  
one of Abingdon's Twin Towns,  
by The Joint Abingdon Churches' Choir**

9.30 am on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2010 and the coach leaves Abingdon bound for a long weekend in Argentan. On board are 25 choir members and 3 "supporters". The churches represented are All Saints Methodist Church, Abingdon Baptist Church, St Helen's, St Michael's and St Nicolas'. Once in Argentan we were to be joined by another chorister and a supporter who had travelled independently

Stopping off at Clackett's End Services we fortified ourselves for the tunnel crossing, a most claustrophobic and monotonous 30 minutes, justified solely by its brevity.

Our route took us through Rouen where we were able to catch sight of the magnificent cathedral. We caught a distant glimpse of the sea near Boulogne and rode on through pretty countryside, crossing over some magnificent viaducts before arriving in Argentan.

Some of our group were staying in an hotel or gite and the remainder were to spend the weekend with families, brushing up on their French and enjoying the warm hospitality extended to them.

Imagine our surprise when Hugh and I find ourselves staying with a man who had been born in London and served in the Gordon Highlanders – his grandmother was born in Leith, Edinburgh and he has a great affection for all things Scottish. He and his wife have attended clan gatherings in Scotland, wearing the kilt and joining in the traditional celebrations. Even more surprising was the fact that he had taught at Thorne Grammar School, a stone's throw from where I had been born and grew up. They have three sons and the youngest was born in Doncaster Infirmary. We were able to meet him as it was Mothering Sunday in France and he was home for the weekend.

Saturday morning and the choir are busy rehearsing in the Église Saint-Germain. The "supporters" take advantage of this and set off to view the town of Argentan on foot. The weather is typical British Bank Holiday – dreary, but at least warm.

A picnic was to take place but dull skies mean we are in the Salle de l'age d'or – not the room of the golden age as you might translate it, but the hall of the local pensioners! We felt quite at home! We are treated to a splendid spread, and of course wine.

A visit has been arranged to Le Chateau du Bourg-Saint-Léonard and we are shown around by a guide who speaks no English! Fortunately some

**Annual Congregational Church Meeting**

The Annual Congregational Church Meeting was held after the morning service on 11<sup>th</sup> April. Thirty three members of the congregation attended and were joined by the Rector, the Revd Dr Charles Miller, following the service at St Helen's. There were 14 apologies for absence. In his address Charles said that the interregnum had lasted longer than anyone had anticipated and great thanks were due to the Churchwardens and to Canon Norman Brown for all their work in keeping St Michael's going. Carol Bowman thanked Charles for all his input into St Michael's over the past year. Heartfelt thanks were expressed to Canon Norman Brown and to Mrs Rebecca Brown for all their help and support.

Carol Bowman and Jean Hercus were unanimously re-elected for proposal to the Parochial Annual General Meeting as Churchwardens. Hilary Clare, David Duce and Glynne Butt were unanimously elected to serve on the Church Council for a period of three years and Lois Rennells was unanimously elected to serve on the Church Council for one year. No candidates had come forward for the two vacancies on the Parochial Church Council.(Hilary Clare has subsequently been co-opted to one of the posts.)

The following were elected sidesmen: Hugh Ashton, Pat Ashton, Sylvia Bond, Jane Duce, Anne Gould, Katharine Ison, Barbara King, Angela Potter, Teressa Prince, Lois Rennells and Rosemary Stephens. ♦

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**Christ Church Cathedral**

Not everyone may be aware that if you are a member of the Church of England in the Oxford Diocese you are encouraged to apply for a free pass so that you can visit the Cathedral whenever you wish. Application forms to apply for a pass are on the information table at the back of the Church. If you already hold a pass, it is worth checking on the back that it is not out-of-date as some older cards expired in December 2009. ♦

## Did You Know.....?

Did you know that the main door to St. Michael's was originally on the north side? Or that the present altar is not the original one? That you can see marks on the pillars where old gas lamps used to be attached or that there is still a clock face high on the west front? No – neither did I - until I started to prepare for the annual visit of children from Chandlings School!

The children were studying the Victorians and a tour of



St. Michael's was the highlight of their visit to this part of Abingdon. They were a lively group – interested to learn that the craftsman who made the altar - (incidentally, without using a single nail) was paid less than 4 new pence an hour. They guessed the significance of its eleven inset stars; they warmed to the idea of a choirboy or verger having to hand-pump the organ and marvelled that the church might, in Victorian times, be filled for a 5am. service on St. Michael's day before the Abingdon population went off to work.

I enjoyed the morning equally as much as the children seemed to and hope that at least some of their (and my!) newly-acquired knowledge may make it into the Victorian projects that will be the outcome of their visit.

*Glynne Butt*

## St Michael's Fellowship – Summer Entertainment.

“An evening with Flanders and Swann” or “Glynne, John, Paul and Tom; The Pianist and her Three Tenors” as the pianist and singers were introduced to the audience of some 50 people in the church room on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July. I write “in the church room” but in the church room and corridor would be nearer the mark. They came from our own congregation, other churches in the town, the St Michael's Lunch Club, the circle dancing group, friends and neighbours, all assembled for a truly memorable evening of songs by Michael Flanders and Donald Swann. The two halves of the concert were suitably interrupted for the consumption of strawberries and cream, washed down with a glass (or two!) of Pimms.

The repertoire included Transport of Delight (“That big six-wheeler, Scarlet painted, London transport, Diesel engine, Ninety-seven horsepower omnibus”), the Gnu song (“I h-ain't a h-elk. I'm a g-nu”), ending with the Hippopotamus Song. Paul gave an unforgettable rendering of “Madeira M'Dear” and a good use was found for discarded England flags in “The English”.

It was this latter song that made me think how society has changed since the lyrics of these songs were written. No longer are the streets of London host to the ubiquitous AEC Routemaster bus; and the Bendy bus too may soon be a sight of the past. The description of the Welshman in “The English” - The Welshman's ... He works underground with a lamp on his hat” is hardly descriptive of a stereotypical 21<sup>st</sup> century Welshman. But other songs, such as one of my own favourites, “The Gas Man Cometh” are as relevant now as they were when they were written – “Twas on a Monday morning the gas man came to call.” Indeed these lyrics were the inspiration for a song at our departmental Christmas Party last year – “The Student Cometh”.

Words from “The English” – “And they practise before hand which spoils all the fun” – well the pianist and the three tenors had clearly worked very hard to produce this evening of pure delight, and their practise didn't in the least spoil the fun! Let's hope for more of the same in the future!

*David Duce*

### Spot the bird

Longer established members of the congregation will recall that when Hugh Randolph was the editor of St Michael's Newsletter, nearly every issue included information about wildlife spotted in and around Albert Park. Looking through back copies it is clear that quite a few people were keen bird watchers. To spot the birds in the following quiz you don't need to leave your armchair but a pencil and paper may be useful. Answers on page 19.

1. A magician

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. A magician                        | 14. Out of breath                             |
| 2. After the catnap                  | 15. Peter....was an actor                     |
| 3. Bad news if the judge put this on | 16. Rossini's miscreant                       |
| 4. Batman's friend                   | 17. Royal angler                              |
| 5. Cutlery account                   | 18. Sir Christopher                           |
| 6. Feel very apprehensive            | 19. Speedy                                    |
| 7. Festive decoration                | 20. Stamp collecting is one                   |
| 8. Four and twenty.....              | 21. There's often a big one in the fairground |
| 9. Grumble                           | 22. Useful for lifting things                 |
| 10. Happy dog                        | 23. William's annoyed                         |
| 11. Looping-the-loop is one          | 24. You can fly one on a windy day            |
| 12. Noah's 'scout'                   | 25. You find it next to the knight            |
| 13. Not exactly low                  |   |

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### The Revd Laura Hodges

Congratulations to Laura who has been awarded a 1<sup>st</sup> Class BA Theology Degree from the University of Wales, Lampeter. ♦

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### St Michael's Christmas Card Competition

This year we would again like to sell our own St Michael's Christmas cards. We are running a competition open to anyone aged 16 or under to design a suitable card for us. There will be two prizes, one for those under 10 and one for those aged 11-16. The closing date is 30<sup>th</sup> September. Entries should be sent to Jane Duce, Upton, Faringdon Road, Abingdon, OX14 1BQ. ♦

### Double Celebration

The church room was the scene of a happy occasion on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April when a lunch time party was held to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Pauline Gammon and the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of Barbara Tomlinson. Pauline and Barbara both celebrated their actual birthdays on 20<sup>th</sup> April. Barbara and her husband Chris were active members of St Michael's Church until they moved to France in 2000. Chris was the treasurer and a member of the choir and Barbara did some wonderful embroidery making an altar front and the 'Welcome to St Michael's' embroidery in the south porch. They came over from France for the weekend especially for the party and came to the morning service the next day. Fortunately for us, not all the birthday cake was eaten at the party and we were only too happy to cut into it to go with our coffee after the service. ♦

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### Hope

On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June Andy Ripley the rugby player died at the age of 63. A 'character' during his playing days in the 70s, he was described in the Daily Mail as "the ruck and roll superstar - John Lennon with muscles." However it was J P R Williams' description of him that struck me that day: "His long hair and sandals were often frowned upon but he proved to be a second Francis of Assisi, showing remarkable kindness to animals."

So too this piece that was quoted. It was written by Andy three years ago, during the time of his illness.

*Dare we hope? We dare*

*Can we hope? We can*

*Should we hope? We must.*

*We must because to do otherwise is to waste the most precious of gifts, given freely by God to all of us.*

*So, when we do die, it will be with hope and it will be easy and our hearts will not be broken....*

*Cicely Silverstone*

## St. Michael's Fellowship

As the evenings have got lighter and the days warmer we have been meeting in the afternoons after lunchtime Mass. These meetings have a nice informal atmosphere and there are people who come who are unable to come to evening meetings. This season we have had three excellent talks:

- In April Susan Scott of St. Helen's Church told us of her career in nursing under the title "Caring is not enough". Her remarkable contributions to her profession were recognized when she was awarded the MBE.
- In May we welcomed Billy Pithers, team manager from the Home Farm Trust. As we have members of our congregation from the Trust's house in Victoria Road, we were very pleased to have this chance to share experiences and ideas. We made a special note of birthdays, and determined to arrange a visit to their centre at Milton Hill. We have also noted that they have a fete at Abingdon Abbey on 22<sup>nd</sup> August and a Christmas service at Dorchester on 15<sup>th</sup> December.
- In June we understood Cicely Bilverstone's title: "With a name like that!" Cicely gave us the fascinating story of the Bilverstone family - just a small part of her researches into family history. We are now looking forward to hearing more - this time from her (Smith) side of the family!

*John Enticott*

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## Is Spiritual Direction talked about in your church?

On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May, Glynne and I attended the above workshop at Douai Abbey. It was conducted by leaders from the ecumenical Spiritual Direction (Spi-Dir) team that is supported administratively by the Oxford Diocese.

The workshop was described as being for anyone who had a desire to see people grow spiritually as they seek God, whether or not they were a leader within their church. The idea of the day was to plan a

## Churchyard Update

The borders on the north side of the church have recently been cleared. Shingle has been laid along the vestry and north transept walls to improve the appearance and to aid drainage of this rather damp and overgrown area. The beds on either side of the north door have been cleared and the soil refreshed with plenty of organic matter. The Michaelmas daises have been retained and more planting will follow in due course. The hedges have had their first trim of the year. The cost of the new work will be met from the funds raised at the 2009 Christmas Fair.

*Jane Duce*

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## Reminiscing

Being asked to read one of the lessons at the central cluster churches combined service at St Helen's Church on 6<sup>th</sup> June, has stirred the memory for Anne Gould that she last read a lesson at St Helen's six decades ago. Anne recalls that she was a pupil at the Bury Street School which was the Church of England School at the time and in her final two years there she read the lesson on Ascension Day when the school gathered in St Helen's for a morning service. The pupils then had a half-holiday in the afternoon.

Anne also remembers when the St Helen's Vicarage was an enormous house in Park Crescent and in the days when The Revd Arthur E. Hayton was the vicar (1951-1959)\* there was a church social each month in the church hall. These were large gatherings that all age groups attended. The church hall was a capacious building behind St Nicolas' Church but was pulled down at the same time as the old police station and some cottages. Different groups would provide the entertainment at these socials, sometimes the Townswomen's Guild, or other groups including the Church Youth Club. When it was the turn of the youth club, they would provide some sort of variety entertainment – singing, dancing, plays etc. This occasioned rehearsals and sometimes, if they couldn't find anywhere else to rehearse, they would meet in the Vicarage as the Vicar's son Julian was a stalwart member of the youth club. The Vicar would perhaps be working in his ground floor study while the girls practised their tap dancing on the black and white tiles in the hall!

Revd Hayton was a familiar figure in the town riding his tall bicycle often wobbling as he raised his hat to passers by. ♦

### Look and See!

I wonder how many of us - even regular communicants - have noticed the carvings on the choir stalls and especially this one? Here a tall oak tree bears the shield with the three bags of St. Nicolas. I think the tree is the tree standing by the river of life (as in Revelation). The 3 bags recall how Nicolas purchased the freedom of the girls being sold into slavery. On the East wall we also see him carrying the 3 bags of gold albeit in the garb of a Western bishop! Nevertheless, although he was of the Eastern Church he is equally revered in the West. Perhaps at St Michael's it comes as a timely reminder that as we welcome our new team vicar, Paul, we have this special link to the church of St Nicolas' and our friends there.



*John Enticott*

### Christian Aid Week

Christian Aid week from 9<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> May 2010 has yielded in Abingdon £9,369 from house to house collections and a sale of goods in the Market Place (£450). The contribution by our own team and in-church collections was particularly pleasing, amounting to £1,108.03. We had 15 collectors, including one from Christchurch and one from St. Nicolas'. These are record figures.

The 3 Choirs Concert at Trinity Church on 26<sup>th</sup> June, featuring especially the Carswell School Choir, has realised around £1,300 - and counting.

*John Enticott*

customised taster event for spiritual direction in our own church/town. As the flyer reminded us, there are spiritually aware people both inside and outside the church. Growing numbers of people want to learn more about how to make sense of their faith journey, how to pray or meditate, and are not sure how to seek out someone who can share their journey.

In the workshop we:

- considered how to present spiritual direction in a way that can be understood by an enquirer
- discussed the elements of spiritual direction and prayer
- found creative ways to organise a taster event
- considered using resources such as music, drawing, pictures, role-play.

In my experience, people often feel that spiritual direction is just for priests, or that they are 'not spiritual enough', when really it can be a source of strength for anybody. All you need is a desire to get closer to God. To have a spiritual director usually involves meeting with someone for an hour every two or three months. The one offering this ministry will be a person of prayer who makes the commitment to accepting you as you are and where you are. The companion or guide's role is to share what God is doing in your life and to help you discern what God is saying by encouraging you in your prayer life.

The Spi-Dir material in answer to the question, 'What shall I talk about?' says that the important thing is that this is a 'sacred space' into which you *can* bring anything but into which you do not *have* to bring anything. There are no expectations, and no judgement. It is a listening and accepting space. So the answer to the question is, 'Anything that impacts on your relationship with God.'

I attended the day as a spiritual director and a member of the Spi-Dir Holding Group, but to Glynne this was a new experience.

Her reflections of the day are as follows:

*To be honest, I thought the topic was going to be something slightly different, but despite that I found the day interesting and thought provoking. Spiritual Direction (or 'Accompaniment') may not be for everyone, but it is certainly worth exploring further - and from being someone who would not have given it a*

*second thought before, it is now something I shall consider further. And a day spent in the prayerful atmosphere of Douai Abbey is always a treat in itself - particularly for those who, like me, are not very good at making space for thought and reflection in our daily lives.*

Whether this is taken further will depend on how much interest is shown in our own congregation and in the churches in Abingdon. In the meantime, if you have any questions or want any more information do ask either of us, or look on the Spi-Dir website:

[www.soulfriend.org.uk](http://www.soulfriend.org.uk)

*Sue Sheppy*

### **Three counties in three days**

Four members of St Michael's congregation (Anne Gould, Krissi Hartley-Morris, Helen Owen and Lois Rennells) joined the coach party from St Helen's Church in May for a splendid three-day journey of discovery. We visited Sherborne Abbey (Dorset), the Saxon church of St Laurence in Bradford-on-Avon (Wiltshire) and Wells Cathedral and the Bishop's garden and palace (Somerset). We also managed to fit in a visit to a National Trust manor house.

We talked a few days later about our experiences and agreed that the most memorable will be the visit to the Saxon church of St Laurence at Bradford-on-Avon and the opportunity we had to worship there together. The rector had prepared an order of the Anglo-Saxon Liturgy especially for us, which was the Holy Eucharist of Whitsunday. It was an extraordinary and uplifting experience in the sacred atmosphere of this ancient building.

The church of St Laurence is a characteristic Anglo-Saxon building, lofty and narrow with small windows. We were lucky to be there on a lovely day when we could have the south door open to let in the sun and the light. It is an ecumenical church in the care of the Ancient Churches Trust. The verger of Holy Trinity church, which is close by, joined us and explained the history of St Laurence's church after the service. He invited us to visit Holy Trinity where we were able to feel a kindred spirit on discovering from their Parish Magazine that they



Carved stones found nearby have been made into an Altar at the church of St Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon. Fragments of a cross have been set above it.

are currently in an interregnum. A new priest has been appointed and will join them shortly.

We also took particular pleasure in the splendid light and space of Wells Cathedral with its amazing inverted arches devised to support the tower; the magnificence of the altar fronts displayed behind glass panels around the walls of the Cathedral and the tranquil beauty of the Bishop's Palace garden.

The tour was impeccably organised by Ann Marie Lloyd of St Helen's Church with maximum efficiency and minimum fuss. She had arranged for us to have several guides at the Abbey, the Cathedral, the Palace and the Manor House so that we could get the utmost benefit from our visits. The hotel was very pleasant and the food good and abundant (too abundant!).

Next year's tour is already arranged and we were told that it will be to Kent, staying in Hythe with an optional visit to Canterbury.

*Lois Rennells*