

ROUNDA BOUT



THE COTTERIDGE CHURCH
Witnessing at the Heart of the Community

May 2015

From the Editors' Desk



Welcome to a bumper issue of Roundabout! After having to delay the last issue due to lack of material it is refreshing to have almost too much. Please remember that Roundabout is your magazine, and its future relies on your contributions, so please continue to support it.

Please let us have your items for the July issue no later than 2 July. You can put them in the Roundabout pigeonhole in the Pennine Way or email them to marfleetwright@tiscali.co.uk.

Steve & Caroline

From the Vestry

Dear Friends

It is hard to believe that as I write I have been with you for eight months. Time flies, as the saying goes, but it has been a rewarding time.

I have really valued your warm welcome, valued insights and words of wisdom!

And speaking of time flying, in just a few weeks we will be celebrating the birth of the church and I have been reflecting on how it must have felt for the early followers of Jesus after his ascension.

Here are my thoughts:

When you feel low, when you feel alone life can be hard. When you don't dare move one way or the other, things can be rough. When it appears as if there is nowhere to turn, it's easy to lose heart. Shaken and scared, Jesus' first friends huddle in an upstairs room in Jerusalem as the crowds celebrate the giving of the Law on Mt Sinai. It's at this moment, when they are at their lowest, that Jesus' friends' lives are turned inside out and upside down. They are afraid but are still ready to be surprised by God. The Spirit of energy, life and love blows through their fear and fills them with a vision of hope, freedom and new life. Because Jesus' friends were ready to begin again – open to being surprised by God – a movement was born - the Church! A movement that has changed the world. This Pentecost Sunday falls on the 24th May – the day when we give thanks to the God of surprises for filling and warming John Wesley's heart. Wesley was open to be led by God into surprising places.

Let us also be open to the Holy Spirit to move and shake and enable us to follow in God's way.

So when you feel downhearted, read Acts and know that God will never leave us, never let us down and will instead breath new life into us, energising life giving breath, and with that we have an amazing journey in front of us.

The peace of Christ be with you,



Mary

Family & Friends

Welcome to Martha Rose Naughton born on Sat 7 March, weighing 6lb 14oz. Congratulations to Clare, Craig and Anna. And welcome also to Felicity Jennifer Adams born on Friday 24 April weighing 8lb 13oz. Congratulations to Sarah, Tim, Madeleine and Heidi. We were shocked to hear of the sudden death of Brian Hayhow and our thoughts and prayers are with Rachel and family.

Rev Joseph Stephens 1926-2015



Growing up as the eldest of 4 children on a farm in Pilning, Gloucestershire, Dad was the peacemaker and the one who maintained friendships with his brothers, Philip and John and his sister, Rachel, as well as his 21 cousins, most of whom lived within cycling distance. The failure of the farm took the family to Bristol, where the boys attended Kingswood Grammar School. He and Philip proudly opened the batting for the school cricket team, mostly because they were good blockers of the ball rather than big hitters! Dad's love of cricket and regard for Tom Graveney stayed with him all his life. At 18 Dad was called up and

assigned to the Royal Signals as a radio operator, because he had studied A level physics. Anyone who knew Dad will know that his most practical (and very useful) skill was making a cup of tea – radios were well beyond him!

From the age of 11, Dad wore glasses which should have prevented him from being posted overseas, but the wonders of the Army Physical Development Course transformed his sight to 20/20 vision so in 1945 he was posted to the North West Frontier Province of British India (what is now Pakistan). In Peshawar he was a cipher clerk, transmitting and transcribing Morse Code messages and working closely with Muslim, Sikh and Hindu local soldiers. It was at this time he enjoyed a holiday riding in Kashmir, a place he described as one of the most beautiful in the world. In a very volatile situation Dad was the last British soldier on the remote station. On the day all the other British soldiers left, Dad's local colleagues came to him with a bowl of fruit and some flowers to express their support for him and the regard they had for him. It was a gesture which deeply moved Dad and influenced much of his later work in developing such strong personal links with colleagues of all faiths and in the work of the Interfaith Council. He was demobilised in 1948, and initially helped out in the grocer's shop his parents ran in Bristol. It was at this time that Dad spent a night queuing outside Lords Cricket Ground to see Don Bradman play his last Test Match. He was out for a duck!

A job with Duckhams Oil took Dad to work in London, staying in a hostel in Hammersmith and attending services at Rivercourt Methodist Church where he met Diana. He then chose to study at Edinburgh University, maintaining his relationship with Diana long distance until they married in 1954 & she joined him in Edinburgh working in nurseries while he trained as a teacher. Dad got a job in a challenging school in Armadale, but newts were his downfall! Love of nature has run right through Dad's life and he hoped to inspire his class by keeping newts in the classroom. At the weekends the newts came home to the rooms he and Mum rented, but there would be knocks on the door all weekend from children wanting to see "Sir's newts". During his 2 years of teaching Dad felt increasingly called to the Methodist ministry, so in 1957 he began his training at Hartley Victoria College, Manchester, financially supported by Diana working full time. After much hard work Dad was awarded his BD by Manchester University.

Ministry began in South Wales where he ministered to the congregation at Cowbridge and was chaplain to the boy cadets at RAF St. Athan. It was here that I was born in 1961, on his 35th birthday.

Sept 1961 took us to Treherbert in the Rhondda Valley. It was in Treherbert that Catherine was born in November 1962. As a small child Dad would often put me in an early version of a car seat with a few toys and take me with him while he went to do his pastoral visits. The psychiatric hospitals were the best because I could sit and look at all the lovely grounds while Dad was inside visiting!

Darlington called in 1964, so began a hugely exciting 6 years in which he:

- Helped to found Samaritans in Darlington
- Worked with people suffering from alcoholism (including John who stayed with us for 8 months)
- Campaigned with Mum to legalise abortion and homosexuality.

During those 6 years Mum provided support, making tea and looking after us.

Holidays in Yorkshire often took us to Whitby where Dad could enjoy swimming in the sea. The North Sea is never warm, but Dad loved it and convinced Catherine and me that it was warmer in the water than out and we believed him, many times!

Team ministry at Moseley Road & Sparkhill drew Dad to Birmingham, a move which he and I relished from the beginning but which Mum and Catherine found very difficult for several years. Moseley Road had a vibrant group of mostly black youngsters who were regularly wrongly arrested under the SUS laws, so Dad spent many hours in police stations with the lads securing their release. As chaplain at Sorrento Maternity Hospital in Moseley, Dad was ministering to many Muslim women, so he went to night school to learn Urdu and Punjabi so that he could greet the patients and their families. He then realised this was not enough so he secured funding for employing an interpreter, Zohra became the first of several interpreters to work with Dad both at Sorrento and in the wider community. When he was chaplain at Uffculme Psychiatric Clinic he formed a friendship of many years with Jim, a patient with whom Dad enjoyed many discussions about literature & from whom he learned much. Because Catherine and I were in the middle of studying for O and A levels, Mum and Dad decided to stay in Birmingham for Dad's next appointment. Dad was told there was no prospect of ecumenical work at King's Norton Methodist Church, but at least there would be at Hawkesley! Within a very short time 3 congregations were committing themselves to working together to form The Cotteridge Church. Dad's ecumenical links led to him becoming District Ecumenical Officer and a warm relationship with Bishop Hugh Montefiori; together they led a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was at this time that Dad moved from sketching to painting & started going to art classes which he continued to do until the last 8 years.

Retirement in 1990 gave Dad the opportunity to be chaplain at Reaside Clinic, a secure mental health facility, which he relished, although even he felt unnerved at times.

Dad's mother, then in her 90s, came to live opposite Mum and Dad in Bournville so they could support her with regular meals and company. This lasted for 2 years until Gran decided to move up the road into Selly Wood House for the last months of her life. Again Mum and Dad supported her there.

In 1994 Simon was born and in 1996 Victoria joined Catherine and Nick's family. Dad spent many happy hours singing to both of them ("Don't sit under the apple tree" was a real favourite), drawing for them or doing whatever else they asked him to do. This time and support was especially important for Simon, Victoria and Catherine when Nick became ill and after his death.

When Dad was diagnosed with Macular Degeneration it was a major blow for both Mum and Dad, curtailing their much loved trips out into the countryside. It was particularly cruel for Dad because reading had been a life-long passion, both poetry and fiction. As reading became restricted to talking books, so music became much more important. Dad always had a broad taste in music which included Glenn Miller; Miles Davis & Jazz; Louis Armstrong; classical music and a lot more. He continued to enjoy it right to the end. Mum and Dad moved back to Cotteridge 10 years ago and then into Beaumont Park so that they could maintain their independence as long as possible. It was at this time that we celebrated Catherine's marriage to Julian. The last 17 months Dad has been so well cared for and has still made connections with both staff and other residents at Neville Williams House.

Throughout his life Dad

- built bridges and brought people together.
 - o People of faith to form the Birmingham Interfaith Council
 - o Bringing the Black-led and White-led churches together in the Black and White Partnership.
 - o 3 congregations to form The Cotteridge Church
- He accepted people as they were, saw their potential and supported them in their growth.

That was Dad.

Jane Stephens

My favourite memory of Joe Stephens

I have always told people that Joe Stephens was one of my favourite men on the planet. He had such a gentle way about him and seemed to cope with any situation in a dignified way. In September 1980, when my brother Steve married his lovely Jenny, Joe was officiating. The celebrations continued at Jenny's parents' house, where there was plenty of food. My daughter, Carol (5) was the smallest bridesmaid and took her duties very seriously. She was asked to walk round with a plate of nibbles to offer to the guests, so she approached Joe and offered him the goodies. "Do you want a crisp God?" she asked. "No thank you, Carol," he replied. She ran over to me and shouted "Mom, Mom, Mom. God knows my name!" "Of course he does, Carol." I could see Joe smiling behind her. Happy memories are Joe's lasting legacy in my family.

Babs Blay

'I love coming to Church'

I really loved reading at the Easter service. I like to read about God and to God. While I read with Hendrik the others did actions like washing feet, waving palms and shouting hurray because Jesus is the reason for the season and he had risen. Another thing I liked was learning about The Cotteridge Church. We have three crosses on things because three churches became one big whole church. You can see the wall of one of the old churches in the Pennine Way. We made a display and put on hearts because people love God and Jesus and our church is for everybody.*--

Yvette Onuoha-Merino [aged 6 ½]

Easter Charity Collections

Every year those attending the Easter Morning Communion Service are given a film canister with a mini chocolate egg (or two!) by the Senior Group of Junior Church. Once they have enjoyed the treat, members of the congregation are asked to return the canister with a contribution to the charity chosen for that year, on the day or over the following weeks on the collection plates.

In response to our donation following the 2014 collection, the charity 'Magic Breakfast' wrote:
Dear Cotteridge Church

On behalf of the Magic Breakfast team and Trustees I would like to say a big thank you for the incredible donation of £220.17.

Your support will provide 1000 free nutritious breakfast to children arriving at school too



hungry or malnourished to learn. Given that a hungry child cannot concentrate, this healthy breakfast enables the child to access a whole morning of learning – crucial to their educational attainment. Recent research with our partner schools showed that 93% saw increased energy and concentration in class and 88% agree that the breakfast club has increased attainment and attendance. So your support is making a big difference...

Once again, thank you for your support, your generosity is much appreciated.

Kind Regards

Carmel McConnell, Founder, Magic Breakfast

In 2015 the Easter canister collection will go to the charity 'Mind', which provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem, as well as campaigning to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding. The charity was suggested as the one we should support this year by one of the Seniors Group as it is the charity for which pupils at Kings Norton Girls School are currently fundraising, and a number of the group attend that school.



'Mind' states on its website:

We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect.

We hope you agree that this is a very worthwhile cause for us to support this year. So we urge you to return your canister with a donation, if you have not already done so, and we look forward to reporting on another excellent total in due course.

Thank you for your generosity.

Pam Waddell, on behalf of the Junior Church Seniors

Easter Week in the Cotteridge Church Day Centre

Easter is a busy time for us in the Day centre. We have an Easter raffle, where members can win cuddly lambs, chicks or bunnies, or even an Easter egg. We also try buy each of our members (43 at present), an Easter egg to take home.

The week preceding Easter has seen a lot of activity.

Monday started with Chris Dowd, who has been kind enough on a number of occasions to come and share his baking skills with us, and we have made chocolate truffles this time. Chris Pascal and Babs also shared their time and gardening skills with us and we took advantage of the opportunity to plant seeds ready for summer flowering (hopefully). The seeds will also be able to gather momentum in the greenhouse soon.



Tuesday saw our ever inventive volunteer John Gilders make Easter Bonnet biscuits with us

which were very tasty!

We visited the Lickey Hills Visitor Centre for a cup of tea and a breath of fresh air on Wednesday, and we sat in the warm watching all the activity in the play area.

The members all enjoyed our Easter carvery at the Cotteridge Village Inn on Thursday, and said it was lovely to go out for an 'Easter meal'.

Now we are all off for a lovely rest over Easter, ready to enjoy more activities after the break.

The Day Centre is open Monday to Friday, and we currently have vacancies on most days. If you or a friend or relative would like a day out with good food, good company and a variety of activities, why not pop in and have a look, or give me a call and I will happily come out to see you and explain a bit more about the services we offer.

Michelle

Greek Orthodox Easter Celebrations

There is no getting away from the lead-up to the Orthodox Easter celebrations, since Lent begins with a public holiday. This is Clean Monday and a bright, breezy day is wished for the traditional day in the country and kite flying. This day marks the end of the fun and frolics of Carnival time and the start of Lent itself.

During the first full week of Lent, most people will fast and some will continue to shun meat and dairy products for the entire season of Lent. Others will observe meatless days of Wednesday and Friday, which are usual all year.

Each Friday evening in coming weeks, Lenten services are held in church and everyday life gradually becomes quieter and more sombre, as preparations for Easter itself take place. Palm Sunday is a day of special services and, in recent years, crosses have been distributed to children. During Holy Week, all services are held in the evening and follow the events of the Gospel story day by day. On Thursday evening we witness the Crucifixion and the Cross remains prominent in the Church, decked in black and royal purple wraps.

Thursday is also the day set aside for the dyeing of hard-boiled eggs, predominately red, but various colours have become popular too, more recently. From now on, a bowl of eggs invariably decorates the table and are given to visitors in coming days.

On Good Friday, the church is open from early morning. People go to pay respects to the Cross and sit in quiet meditation. At the same time, other people are busy decorating a portable bower representing the grave of Christ. Each church has its own decorated grove which is carried around town on Good Friday evening, accompanied by the town band playing appropriate music and followed by people carrying dark coloured candles. The procession will eventually reach the town square, where a short service is held before the bowers are carried back, each to its own local church.

Meanwhile, as Holy Week reaches its climax, preparations continue. Shopping must be done, gifts are bought and traditional candles are made in readiness for the weekend ahead. In particular, the lamb which is the centre of the feast is bought and prepared for roasting. Many people buy a whole lamb to be roasted on a spit, starting early in the morning of Easter Sunday.

Saturday evening finds crowds heading for church for the Resurrection. People gather outside to await midnight, when church bells and fireworks proclaim Easter Day. This time,

white candles are carried and the holy flame leaves the church and gradually spreads



throughout the crowd. These candles are carried home, being kept alight as long as possible. Along the way, one hears the Easter greeting: "Χριστός Ανέστη" "Christ is risen" repeatedly, together with the appropriate reply: "ότι όντως ανέστη" "He is risen indeed"

At home, the Lenten fast is broken with the traditional soup made with the innards of the lamb awaiting roasting early in the morning. This takes place while visits are made and visitors welcomed. Buffet tables are laid out with nibbles. When all is ready, Easter lunch is laid out – platters of roast lamb, salads, red eggs.

Let the feast of the Risen Christ begin!

Diane Apostolakopoulos

'Say it with flowers'

"A big thank you to the flower team for the lovely floral pedestal arrangement in memory of my Dad's 100th Birthday in April. It has inspired me to have a go at attempting the pedestal arrangement myself sometime in the future, after I have some instruction from the existing flower team. Who knows I might enjoy it so much I will join the flower rota! If I, a novice, am willing to give it a go, could others be inspired to do the same? On Friday 5th June, Lin Brown will be showing me how she does the pedestal arrangement and the chapel flowers, please come along and join us at 12 noon in the Malvern Room for some hints and tips on floral arrangements.

Linda Woodhouse

Cotteridge Country Walks: Kinver

The Cotteridge Country Walkers (CCW) was formed in 1988 by Mike and Rita Page, members of the Cotteridge church. Twenty five years later it is still going strong, walking around five miles of a circular walk somewhere reasonably close to Cotteridge. Different group members lead each walk from about 10.30 – 3 pm once a month on a Saturday. So it is a social occasion where about 15 people meet up and spend the day getting out and about. We plan a lunch stop in the middle to have our packed lunch.

I led the group out around Kinver, a delightful little town just north of Kidderminster. Kinver

has been around since before the Domesday Book and is famous for many things, including



being part of the early industrial revolution. The town sits at the foot of a high sandstone cliff and that's where they built the parish church. I doubt too many parishioners climb the steep hill to attend services there! My route stayed lower down, following the valley floor and the River Stour upstream north towards Wolverhampton. We only went a couple of miles out but were soon in the country surrounded by horse paddocks and deciduous woodland. I made a note to return later in the spring, almost certainly the woodland floor will have a carpet of bluebells. On the way we passed the remains of an early industrial blade mill powered by the river.

At the site of the famous pub called The Stew Poney (now demolished) we turned back towards the town and followed the Staffordshire canal, an early example of industrialisation. Canals of this period were of course built to carry freight, in this case metal goods from the Midlands to the River Severn, and they stayed close to sources of water. Our towpath didn't stray far from the River Stour, but canal architecture is always interesting and on a domestic scale. Locks and bridges were built to be used by horses and the muscles of the bargees.

The day started clear and sunny but gradually clouded over. As we reached Kinver High Street we had a flurry of snow but it soon stopped. About half the party turned up to climb the hill to the church before returning to the car park.

Kinver won a 'best town' award a few years ago and the High Street is worth exploring, so the group ended the walk by calling in at one of several tea shops on offer.

Peter Childs

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Pennine Way Books

With your support through buying and donating books the money raised in 2014 on the Pennine Way book shelves was £1,165-50pence. The money was split three ways between the Church, Older Adults and Young People. The Older Adults used their share for Christmas and to purchase games and new puzzles. The Young People used some of the money towards the Food from around the World Evening to raise money for Refugees. They plan to buy Bibles and other Resources as well.

This year we have already got over £250 so are well on the way towards this year's target.

With your continued support we should reach the target. Please keep the books coming in. Thank you.



Linda Woodhouse

Souper Day!



As part of the Christian Aid Lent studies this year we journeyed with the Count Your Blessings resource into the wilderness of rural Ethiopia, where it is enormously hard to scrape a living in a barren landscape. The women who have to provide for their families (and it is mostly women who do it), often have to walk many miles through dry land to fetch water.

Elema, who featured in the Count Your Blessings resource said: 'We have to walk four hours one way and then back another four hours carrying the water we fetch, so it's really a problem whenever there is a drought.' Getting food and water - resources that are easily accessible to many of us - is exhausting, lonely and dangerous for women like Elema.

And as Jesus did, during Lent we often try to follow a spiritual discipline of prayer and reflection on what it might mean for us to love God and to love our neighbours; to think about the cost of discipleship. As part of their spiritual practice (not just at Lent but at other times too), some Christians fast, either giving up food altogether for a day, or eating more sparingly than usual, perhaps abstaining from what we might think of as luxuries or treats such as chocolate, cake or wine.

On Wednesday 11 March we took up the Christian Aid challenge to take part in their Super Soup Lunch campaign and provided visitors to our home with soup and bread in exchange for a donation to Christian Aid's Lent appeal. We made over 20 pints of soup, fennel and ginger (which ran out first), spicy butternut squash and hearty vegetable and by 1.30pm had completely run out after feeding over forty people! Sadly the last person to arrive had to make do with bread and cheese!

We raised £250, part of £60,000 that Christian Aid hoped to raise supporting people like Alice Karoki a nurse in Kenya and a driving force in teaching expectant families about nutrition and sanitation and the importance of babies being delivered in hospital. She started a support group, Isiolo, with the help of Christian Aids' partner ADSMKE, after realising that to bring about changes in behaviour and ways of thinking, the fathers had to be brought on board as well as expectant mothers. Within the group she encourages fathers to be involved, to make decisions with their wives about the health of the family and their finances.

Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of their dignity, freedom and hope, of power over their own lives. By helping us raise this money we are all part of a movement working alongside people living in the poorest communities to bring about positive change and greater hope.

Thank you to everyone who supported us so generously on our Souper Day, with your help Christian Aid can continue to make a difference.

Rowan Williams said that Christian Aid Week was the biggest united act of Christian witness across the UK. The Cotteridge Church along with St Joseph & St Helens and the Friends at the Quaker Meeting House have always been a huge supporter of Christian Aid in this area and we hope that all our envelope deliverers, collectors and cash counters will have a bumper year. Christian Aid is part of the larger DEC (www.dec.org.uk) organisation and your donation will be included in the contribution to the earthquake disaster in Nepal along with their regular aid to end poverty in Ethiopia.

Please support us and all the collectors and envelope distributors this coming Christian Aid Week May10-16 with your prayers and donations. Thank you.

Lin & Laurie Brown

Afraid, alone, in pain - Be the answer to Loko's prayer this Christian Aid Week

This Christian Aid Week, you can help transform the lives of women like Loko.

From 10-16 May, churches the length and breadth of Britain and Ireland will come together to pray, campaign and raise money to improve the lives of people like Loko.

Every year, 100,000 volunteers demonstrate God's love for the poor by taking part in house-to-house collections for Christian Aid.

This fantastic witness is a chance to take the mission of the church into your community.

Loko's choice in life is simple: 'If I can't collect firewood, my children will die.'

Four times a week, in a remote corner of Ethiopia, Loko makes a back-breaking eight-hour trip to gather wood. It's a task she dreads, but she steels herself to do it because if she doesn't her children will



starve.
She prays to God as she walks. 'I ask him to change my life and lead us out of this,' she says.
Just £5 could give Loko a loan to start her own business buying and selling tea and coffee, freeing her from her desperate task and allowing her to spend more time caring for her family.

Find out how you can play your part at www.caweek.org

Remembering Gallipoli 25 April



In 1915, my Great Great Uncle George Reid Wall enlisted in the 9th Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment. The Battalion sailed for Gallipoli on 20 June, arriving on 13 July. Uncle George was killed on the 10 August and is commemorated on the Helles Memorial.

I applied for tickets to attend the Gallipoli Centenary Commemoration at The Cenotaph and was successful.

Our 'Joining Instructions' informed Caroline and me that we had to be in place by 10.15 at the latest. We joined the queue to Security about 9.30 and moved along pretty quickly. We passed through the scanner, had our Invitations



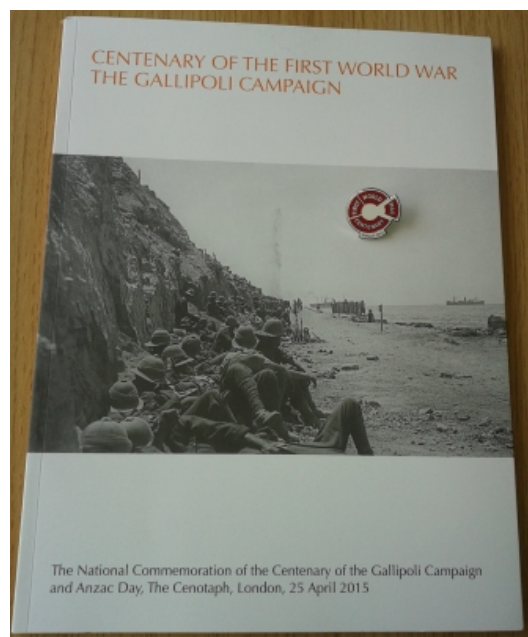
and photo ID checked and then joined another queue to a gazebo where we were presented with a commemorative brochure and badge, a bottle of water and a poncho (thankfully not needed).
About 10.25 we heard the sound of approaching bands: RM Portsmouth and Collingwood, Grenadier and Scots Guards and Turkish Air Force. These were joined by soldiers and sailors.

It was very moving to be in hearing of Big Ben as it sounded the hour to begin the Two Minutes' Silence at 11.00. The Last Post followed, sounded by RM Buglers, with the words of the Act of Remembrance being read by a descendant of a victim of Gallipoli. The Service followed the laying of wreaths and it was great to be able to sing 'I vow to thee, my country' accompanied by brass bands.

A March Past concluded the commemoration.

It had been a moving event which we will remember and talk about for a good while to come.

Steve Wright



Church Garden

Our Church Greenhouse is now erected, & in working use!! Many thanks to Laurie Brown and John Cliff for their work, which was not easy.

It is large enough to get wheelchairs in & our Day Centre members have already planted seeds which are germinating slowly.

We are keen to use the greenhouse to its capacity, & offers of help will be very welcome.

If you would like to germinate seeds, grow house plants, help in the garden, or be part of the Church Gardening club, please see Michelle (C.C.D.C.) or Chris (P)

Chris Pascal



Book Group

Our latest book Elizabeth is Missing by Emma Healey promoted a lot of discussion. The consensus was that this is an excellent detective novel with a difference. The main character who "tells" the story has dementia and frequently forgets where she is, where she is going and what are the clues that she finds. Despite writing notes of relevant importance, she forgets why she wrote them. The reader has to remember and interpret the clues as they appear throughout the book as there is no Hercule Poirot 'roundup' at the end. The book is also an excellent and insightful view of what it's like to have dementia and how confusing everyday life can be when



memory is short term. Maud's daily life is one aspect of the book and intertwined with this is the fact that her best friend Elizabeth is missing and no one will help her find her.

There are also the flashbacks to 1946 when her sister Sukey disappeared and they never found out where she went or what happened to her. If you like an interesting book, try this one.

On June 9th we will be meeting to talk about The Miniaturist by Jessie Burton. Set in late 17th century Amsterdam this is a historical novel about a loveless marriage where the young bride is given a miniature replica of her house and employs a miniaturist to make some objects to go in the house. The objects mysteriously seem to predict the future and reflect life in the real house.

As this is our second debut novel we will be looking back to the classics for our next book so suggestions at the next meeting please. We are always happy to welcome new people or those who only wish to come for one particular book.

Watch the weekly news sheet for details of venues and books.



Christine Adams

FA Cup Semi Final – Aston Villa v Liverpool



On Sunday 19 April my brother, Sam, and I made our way to Wembley to see the second FA Cup Semi Final between Aston Villa and Liverpool. As Sam works for Nike he applied for tickets for the game and a week before the game he told me that he had been successful in getting tickets for the Nike Corporate box. Obviously I was over the moon with the tickets and was looking forward to the game.

On the Friday before the game Sam sent me a message to say that we had been upgraded to the Royal Box..... Yes the ROYAL BOX at WEMBLEY Stadium!!!

I was over the moon with these tickets and he didn't disappoint. When I met up with Sam at Wembley we entered the stadium via the RED CARPET entrance (where the posh people enter) and went into the suite where there were lots of footballing legends from the game as well as some of Sam's work colleagues from Nike.

I couldn't believe the luck that I had been given for the day. A top quality standard three course meal, plenty of drinks of all varieties

and one of the best views in the stadium to watch the game from just above the dugouts.

The game started and the atmosphere was amazing with lots of noise from both sides. Liverpool took the lead after 30 minutes with some poor defending by the Villa, the Liverpool goal was scored by Philippe Coutinho but shortly afterwards Christian Benteke levelled just five minutes later. Half time was 1-1.

Drinks and nibbles in the Royal Box Suite and a couple of pictures with some celebrities took up the 15 minute half time break.

The second half started and Villa were on fire. On 55 minutes Fabian Delph put Villa into the lead with some brilliant link up play between Jack Grealish and Christian Benteke. From that point onwards for the next 35 minutes our hearts were racing ten to the dozen as we were very nervous for the rest of the game. Being nervous as a Villa fan is a common thing as we are not known for holding onto a lead for very long!

Lots of luck came to Villa as Liverpool didn't really perform as they should have done and the linesman made a big mistake not far from the end by ruling Mario Balotelli offside when he was definitely onside to deny them an equaliser to take it to extra time.

Villa managed to hold on to win the game 2-1 and make their way to the FA Cup Final to play the current holders Arsenal. This is the first FA Cup final since 2000 before the old Wembley was knocked down. The last time Villa won the FA Cup was in 1957.

After the game the celebrations started with a couple more drinks and some photos with some Villa legends.

The end of the day came with a very happy smiley journey home up the M40 and then only to gloat to some Liverpool fans when I went into work on the Monday morning.

All in all it was a fantastic day and I enjoyed it very much.

A massive thanks goes to my brother who managed to get these great tickets and let's hope he can do the same for the cup final at the end of May!

Phil Adams



Alex Clayton, Josh Vail and Adrian McGovern have recently attended the Queen' Badge completion course at Felden Lodge and have now qualified for the Boys Brigade highest award. They will receive their Badges at a forthcoming Parade Service.

At our annual general knowledge quiz the company raised £409 for The Acorn's Hospice, St. Mary's Hospice and The Cotteridge Church. The winning team included Lin and Laurie Brown. Thanks to everybody for their support.

The company will be having a team at the Battalion Athletics at Tudor Grange [16 May] and have also arranged the following Peckwood week-end [26-28 June] and an Outing to Weston-Super-Mare [11 July]. Camp this year is at Dyffryn Ardudwy [15-22 August].

Bob Hotchkiss

**MARKING THE 370TH ANNIVERSARY
OF
THE SIEGE OF HAWKESLEY HOUSE**



**A TALK
ON
THE SIEGE OF
HAWKESLEY HOUSE**

12-14 MAY 1645

**IN THE GROUNDS OF
MOAT HOUSE,
TURVES GREEN B31
WEDNESDAY 13 MAY**

7.15-8.00

DETAILS FROM STEVE WRIGHT

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**'WITH GUNS & DRUMS'
AN ILLUSTRATED TALK
ON
CIVIL WAR BIRMINGHAM
1642-1645**

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**BOURNVILLE COLLEGE
TUESDAY 12 MAY
7.30-8.30**





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