

priory news

Deeping St James Parish Church Magazine

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October 2026



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From the Vicar



I wonder if you have a favourite season. Perhaps that's the wrong question to ask, if we believe that God is the Lord of Creation – surely, they all reflect the glory of God. (Perhaps that is akin to having a favourite



child!). But I'm going to ask the question anyway. Some love Spring for the bursting forth of new life, gambolling lambs etc.. Some love Summer for the sun (too hot!?). Some love Winter for the crisp snow and stark clarity. I like Autumn – partly due to its profusion of colours – but also, I think, because of a feeling of wistfulness, melancholy even. It is a time of change, of things coming towards an end.

The poet Keats talks about "Season of mist and mellow fruitfulness". How evocative! Perhaps there is an opportunity to take walks in the brisk air, noticing the changes round about us as we do.

Our First Sunday Praise in October is always our Harvest Festival. Traditionally, our idea of Harvest Festival never happened. There was the festival of *First Fruits*, dating back to Old Testament times, where the best of the first cut etc. was given to God in thankfulness. The end of the harvest was usually celebrated with a *Harvest Home*, which essentially was a big party, knowing you didn't have to get up early the next morning to do more harvesting! It wasn't until Victorian times that two West Country Vicars devised a service of thanksgiving, at which the church was decorated with fruit and flowers, and a harvest supper was arranged for the village community. The idea caught on quickly! We continue that with our celebrations, where non-perishable produce is given to Deepings Pantry (formerly Foodbank) and perishable auctioned for Water Aid. And we celebrate with a Harvest Lunch.

But even in this celebration, there is a deeper hint of melancholy, as we are encouraged, in many harvest hymns, to reflect on the harvesting of souls, and the final separation of the wheat from the tares. Thought-provoking indeed. Do watch out as you sing the harvest hymns.

Mark



House Group
1.00 pm Wednesdays
at 138 Eastgate, DSJ.
All welcome!

Parish Directory

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Why not visit our website? You will find it at: <https://www.dsj.org.uk>

In This Month's Priory News



Dear Readers,

Isn't it amazing how quickly the nights seem to draw in once we are into September? Don't forget

to put your clocks back before you go to bed on Saturday 24th October – well it should really be at 2.00 am on Sunday 25th but it's hardly worth staying up to celebrate, is it? The one positive thing about this is that for those with a sundial in their garden it will show the correct time for the next five months, providing we have the sunshine to make it work! (Batteries not included).

We have a very varied and interesting issue for you this month, so I'll leave you to get on with your reading. Just one thing before you go – please let us have your contributions for November's Priory News by **Friday, 23rd October** at the latest. Thank you.

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John

Margaret never fails to come up with a delicious recipe for us, does she? This month it's a Dorset Apple cake. Thank you again, Margaret.

The lovely picture on the front cover of the River Welland near Stamford was taken recently by Victoria on one of her walks with a friend. (Yes, she's the energetic one in the family!)

Safeguarding of Children

To comply with Safeguarding Policy, submitted pictures of recognisable children must be accompanied by written consent to publish from their parents or guardians. In addition, we will not publish names of any pictured children unless specifically requested by their parents or guardians. Editor: John Worthington, Cranmore Farmhouse, PE6 8RN. Tel: 01778 343860; email: priorynews@dsj.org.uk

Prayer for the month

Morning Prayer of Open Hands

God who was,
God who is,
God who is to come,

I open my hands before you.

I release what I have clenched too tightly:
what has been,
what might be,
and what I think I must make happen.

This day belongs to you.
I belong to you.

And in that belonging,
you do not bind me –
you make me free.

So here are my hands, open.
Fill them where filling is needed.
Leave them empty where emptiness is gift.
Use them where there is work for them to do.
Let them rest where there is nothing required.

Let me receive this day
rather than possess it.

Let me notice.
Let me participate.
Let me become.

God who was,
God who is,
God who is to come,

Here I am.
My hands are open.
This day is yours.
And I am free.

Amen.



"Praying Hands"
Pen & Ink drawing (1508) - by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)

By Reverend Mother Lesley-Ann Craddock

Reports & Forthcoming Events

Church Ladies' Fellowship

On September 3rd we held our first meeting of the new season. The service was held in the Church and the Rev'd Mark took the service which was very uplifting. Afterwards we went back to the Hall where Margaret gave out flowers to Liz Hutchinson and Rosemary Fisher and a card to Rosemary. Liz had been given a card earlier as her birthday preceded the meeting. Carole Mills provided the cards and Dot Turner the flowers. Thankyou. We then enjoyed the Faith supper and a good catch up with friends. The raffle was won by Dot Turner. Our next meeting was on September 17th we were joined by Vivian Hamilton. Trevor Harwood and Bet Washbrooke entertained us with Monologues and Poems. Margaret gave out birthday flowers to Josie Waghorn and Lynne Clarke, who have special birthdays, and they were also given cards to help celebrate. The competition was won by Juliet Mills for her limerick. Anthea Wray won the raffle and Liz Hutchinson was hostess assisted by Rosemary and Catherine.

Our next meeting will be on October 1st when Ross Greenwood, a local author, will be entertaining us. Everyone is welcome to attend as it is an open meeting.

Margaret Flegg Chairlady.

Mission Matters

On September 20th we were privileged to welcome Julie Golding to our 10.00am service to speak about Care Zone in Peterborough, to which charity we had recently donated £200. She spoke about the families the charity were able to help, who had been given a house or flat but needed furniture and household items to make the house into a home. She spoke movingly about the gratitude of the 'customers', and afterwards, when speaking with her, she said that Care Zone had been able to help over 800 families last year. The money we had been able to send had been used towards the purchase of beds.



If anyone reading this has spare items of furniture, bedding, pots, pans or other household items Care Zone would be delighted to hear from you. The contact details are below:

To arrange a free collection please call 01733 575083
or email donations@carezone.org.uk

Children in Need Sunday will be on November 15th this year and we shall be having the annual card, calendar and candle sale. Please delay your purchases of at least some of the items until you have seen what we have on offer.

Finally , we hope that you will all have December 12th in your diary and will support the Upton Ukulele Band who will be playing to support the Lincolnshire Air Ambulance. I feel sure that it will be a very entertaining evening.

Victoria

The Fairtrade Stall

.. (in church last month [September 20th]) was held just as Fairtrade Fortnight began. This special festival recognizes and celebrates farmers and workers in developing countries, highlighting issues of underpayment and exploitation. The stall was well supported with sales exceeding £100, 10% of which is retained by the church. Thank you. Best Wishes



Kate

Deepings Pantry (aka Deepings Foodbank)

(Rev Mark brings us up to date with some statistics from the Deepings Pantry. Further details can be seen on the advertisement elsewhere in this issue.)

The Deepings Pantry started on 6th April 2026, taking over from the old Deepings Foodbank. That week, four parcels were given out.

In 23 weeks of parcels:

The most parcels = 22 in a week.

Average parcels = 14 per week.

Total parcels up to 7th September 2026 = 321

Number of recipients (up to 7th September 2026):

Adults = 477

Children = 216

Total = 693

Total weight incoming = 3427.10 kg

Total weight outgoing = 4054.04 kg.

NB this does not include stock taken over.

Mark

Peterborough Soup Kitchen (Team 5)

Do you like to bake? Would you like to help those less fortunate?

Team 5 of Peterborough Soup Kitchen has been going from our area with mostly Deeping volunteers for many years-- at least 35 to my knowledge!

We currently need to have some more donations of cakes on a 4-weekly basis to hand out with soup and sandwiches, also made by kind volunteers. We are very grateful to people who do this baking as it helps to bring a little bit of extra care to what can be difficult lives.

Dates for which donations are required:

25/9/26
23/10/26
20/11/26
18/12/26

An annual rota thereafter. Even a commitment to bake for one date would be very welcome.

Contact Jenny Turner if you could help. Tel: 07906 936636 Email: turner.j@hotmail.co.uk

Thank you.

Jenny Turner

From the Churchwardens

1. We are still looking for anyone or two who could spare an hour or so to help clean the church once a week or whenever. Please see Carol or Jan Thank you

2. Our lovely Organ is in need of some repair - £9000 worth. We are very grateful to Deeping United Charities who have given us £4,500 and to Deeping St James Parish Council who have given us £500. Thank you.

We are now looking into other grants that may be available to help fund this work.

Jan

Registers for September 2026

Funerals: ***We commend into God's keeping:***

September 7th Liz Bridgeman
September 18th Sue Mulvanerty
September 28th Mary Hamilton

Cooking with Margaret

Dorset Apple Cake



Ingredients:

8 oz self raising flour
4 oz butter
4 oz caster sugar
½ lb peeled and chopped cooking apples
grated rind of lemon
beaten egg
2 oz sultanas

Method:

Set oven to 375°F/190°C/Mark 5
Put the flour and butter into a large bowl and rub in the butter until it looks like fine breadcrumbs.
Stir in the sugar, apples, lemon rind, egg and sultanas
Put into a well greased 8 inch cake tin
Bake for 30 to 40 minutes until golden in colour
Serve warm as a pudding or cold as a cake.

Enjoy. Margaret.

Rotas for October

Flowers

4th	Harvest Flowers
11th	Harvest Flowers
18th	Carole Mills
25th	Eileen Day
Nov 1st	Chris Pearce
8th	Remembrance Sunday

Coffee

4th	Carol & Abi
11th	Jan & Victoria
18th	Rob & Kerry
25th	Rosemary & Josie
Nov 1st	Chris & Liz
8th	Lin & Kate

Sidespersons

4th	Trevor & Ann
11th	Carol & Jan
18th	Rosemary & Liz
25th	Adrian & Kim
Nov 1st	Roger & Jan
8th	Tony & Christine

Intercessions

4th	Rev Mark
11th	Niccy
18th	Sandra
25th	Paul
Nov 1st	Revd Mark
8th	Bet

The Welcome Space

The 'Welcome Space' was set up in February 2025 as a joint venture between The Bell Tavern (by the bridge) and the Priory Church. It was originally set up as a 'Warm Space', where, for a couple of hours, people could come into a warm space, to chat, and to have a warm drink and some cake. As summer came, we decided that 'warm' space was not needed, so we changed the name to 'welcome', as that is what it is!

Initially, cakes were provided by our wonderful bakers, but over time local companies (e.g. Lilly's and Co-op) have helped, and some regulars also bake. Café Eventus provide chocolate brownies on the 1st Friday each month.

Do come and join us. We are a regular bunch of half a dozen or so, with others dropping in occasionally. As it gets colder, we get warmer!

THE BELL
TAVERN

Welcome Space

Welcome Space at The Bell Tavern DSJ.
Come to chat, read a paper, play board games, knit, meet new friends.
Free tea or coffee and a slice of cake.

Free Event, every Friday, 11am - 1pm

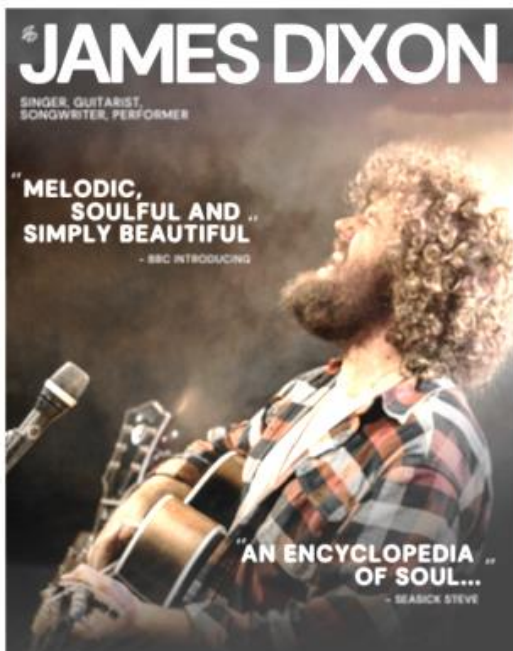
2 Bridge Street
Deeping St. James.

Free parking available.

In conjunction with DSJ Priory Church

 **Priory Church,**
Deeping St James

An evening with James Dixon



English folk and blues singer songwriter James Dixon visits Priory Church of St James on his Autumn tour to share his songs and stories. Having toured extensively with Seasick Steve, Wille and The Bandits, Nick Hart, Chris Wood, Steve Knightley and more, Dixon delivers unique guitar playing along with incisive and acutely observed lyric driven musical style.

One for fans of Neil Young, John Martyn, David Gray and the UK folk revival. For a taster try - [James Dixon - Good Ground \(Official Music Video\)](#)

Tuesday, 20th October at 7.30 pm

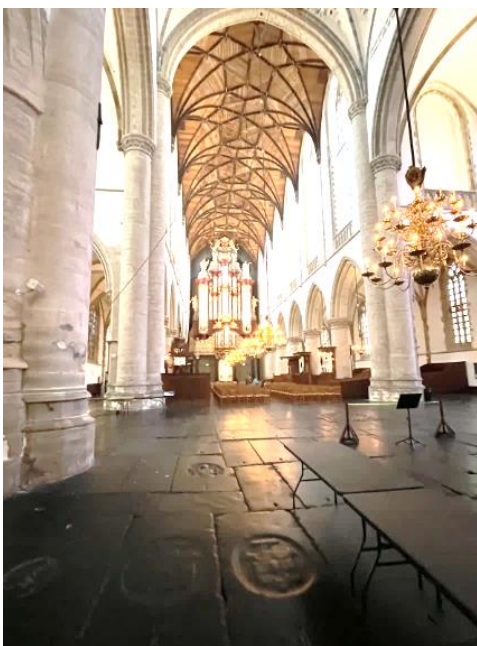
Tickets: £14 from Liz Noble or our Facebook Page.

Mark

St Bavo's Haarlem

Many cities across Europe accommodate multiple cathedrals, Haarlem, in the Netherlands, is one such city. On its East is the better-known Amsterdam, with its many tourist attractions. Zandvoort, known to motor racing enthusiasts until very recently as the home to the Dutch Grand Prix, is located on the coast to the west of Haarlem. Along one side of the market place in the centre of the city stands the protestant cathedral called Grote of St Bavo. Rising 76 metres high surrounded by cafes, shops and houses, this impressive building dominates.

The tower is an increasingly intricate structure as it rises from the main church roof. Having an octagonal cross section of ornately decorated grey stone, that is in fact lead clad wood, it is adorned with gold pillar tops and external bells. It is arranged in what can only be described as a four tier wedding cake, with each subsequent tier narrower than the supporting tier. Nestled upon the top is a dome, described as an open onion, constructed of an open framework of grey metal which would be equally at home on a mosque. Driving into the sky above this is a matching intricate metal cross supporting a gold coloured cockerel very similar to our own. Every pillar top around the church roof, as well as the previously mentioned wedding cake structure, is accentuated with an appropriately shaped pointed top.



Lastly, the colour of the building enhances its dominance, with light sandy coloured church-cross-shaped core topped with slate grey steeply pitched roofs. Almost lent against the outer sides of the main body of the church, like a lean-to extension, is an old red brick construction with window mullions and pillars matching the body of the church, again topped with a slate grey roof. Over the years this has been added to sympathetically with a number of single level buildings now used as shops. The Eastern end of the church, not to be out done by the rest, is semi-circular. The build took from 1370 to 1538, but in 1502, during the construction of the supporting infrastructure for the tower, they discovered the land was too soft to support the

original idea of a stone tower. Hence they built the lead covered wood structure which still weighed 250,000 kg.



As if the exterior was not enough, the interior contrasts with its simplicity but it is subtly complex. The high walls are painted white framed with bare stone and split one third/two thirds into two levels. The smaller lower level has gothic arches supported by patterned bright red and navy blue pillars, - 28 of them. The colour of each pillar is partially obscured by differing gold coloured patterns. Gothic arches spring up from the pillars and are reflected in the ceiling. I cannot just skip past the word "ceiling", as it does not do it justice. It is a cedarwood vaulted ceiling made up of what I can only describe as inside out umbrellas attached to the top of the pillars and bought together by star shaped constructions running down the centre of the ceiling. In the

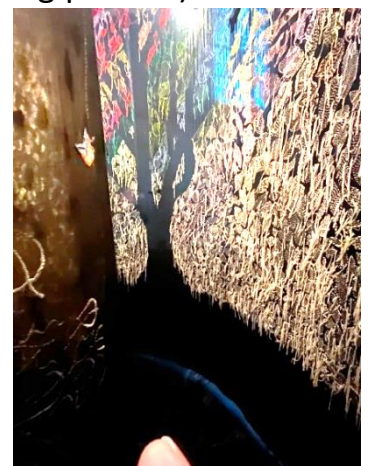
crossing, where the nave intersects the transepts (the bit in the middle of the cross) a similar structure forms a flower shape which has been painted white and intricately decorated with flowers. To add to intrigue a clock has been inserted into one panel. So if you find yourself lying on the floor looking up, wonder what the time it is and cannot be bothered to find your watch, there it is!

Opposite the ceiling is obviously the floor. Now you are waiting for me to say it is not the case here. However, it is like all other buildings, it has a floor but the odd or interesting thing about it dependent, on your point of view, is that it is entirely made up of about 1500 grave stones.



Enough of this wonderful building, but what is in it? There is a 17th century intricate pulpit with gothic covering and serviced by a pair of stairs. The choir stalls from 1512 are painted with coats of arms and the armrests and misericords (supports which fold out to support someone standing for long periods) are carved with caricatures of animals and human heads. There is a brass lectern in the shape of a pelican and a beautiful choir screen with copper tracery. Those are the more formal historic references but with

appropriate timing of the arrival of the Bayeux Tapestry to Britain, this cathedral church had its own embroidery. Hung in the side corridor of the nave was a black spiral of fine netting, some three metres tall allowing you to walk around it to the centre, in a maze



like fashion. Sown on to the netting were various natural shapes and scenes in brightly contrasting colours, creating a soft see-through but vibrant natural passage. Words do not do it justice so please see the adjoining pictures.

A rather strange set of items were three model ships sailing in mid air between two pillars. These were given by the Shipbuilders Guild and date from 16th and 17th centuries. They were modelled on ships built in Haarlem at the time. The sea has long left Harleem similar to these ships.



Another really strange thing, is that they ring two bells in the tower every evening between nine o'clock and half past and have done so since the 16th century. "Why?" I hear you ask. Answer: to signal the closing of the city gates. There is nothing strange about that, except that Haarlem no longer has any city gates or walls for that matter. These bells are known as **Damiaatjes** as legend has it the bells were taken from Damiate by Haarlem warriors during the fifth crusade. (That is long before Rugby League established itself in the UK – flippant!).

However the main event is the historically significant organ. The Christian Muller organ, built between 1735 and 1738, takes up most of the west end of the church and even incorporates the two main doors. This was, at the time of building, the largest organ ever made. Now to put it in context, it is not hidden away or shy: it stands 30 metres tall, has 62 stops and 68 registers, contains 5068 silver coloured pipes set in a bright scarlet case adorned with gold scrolling, statues and topped with the Haarlem coat of arms. Unfortunately, while we were there, this instrument was not used, hence I am unable to vouch for its superlative baroque sound, but it is regularly used for classical concerts.



Unbelievably, there are two other organs within the church, one high up on a wall called the 'birds nest organ', and the other (right) a portable organ, sitting on a 6-by-6 foot platform and standing about 8 feet high.

Question: Would we let a 10 year old play our organ? Well one has played the Muller organ and in case I have sent you to sleep while reading this article, here is a test or piece of detective work:



There are two famous composers who have wall plaques to confirm they have played this organ. From what I have written in this article, not Mr Google, you should be able to determine who they are and just to help further, neither of them is Chris Brown or Philip Spratley. The answer will be published next month including my workings out.

If you are passing it is well worth a look. A more in depth and possibly more accurate history of this building can be found on [Grote of Sint-Bavokerk - Wikipedia](#), the free encyclopedia and press translate button, if required.



Adrian Hallam

Other Christian Churches Are Available!

Last month Niccy and I had a few days in Northern Ireland, taking the ferry from Birkenhead to Belfast so that we could have the car with my scooter in the boot during our trip. We were going to visit my cousin Sarah who lives in Gracehill near Ballymena in Antrim. Sarah is actually the Rt Revd Sarah – yes, she is a Bishop! She was born and brought up in Brockweir in the Forest of Dean. Brockweir is a small village on the banks of the river Wye, about seven miles up the Wye Valley from my birthplace in Chepstow. Our family (our grandparents and their children including my mother and Sarah's father) were brought up in Chepstow and were devout churchgoers, attending St Mary's Anglican church. Brockweir is however a very

small village, so small that it doesn't have an Anglican church, and that is pretty unusual in the UK. In 1833 a local doctor made an appeal to address the spiritual needs of the village, and the Moravian Church responded. A church was built beside the river and so the Brockweir Moravian Church began its ministry, which is now just short of its bicentenary.

Sarah and her family settled in Brockweir and continued their church allegiance, but to the Moravian Church. Sarah eventually became ordained in the Church and served in various Moravian settlements in Yorkshire, before moving to Gracehill in 2012. In 2018 she was consecrated as a Bishop and in 2024 became President of the Irish Council of Churches, of which she is now the immediate past President. Quite a distinguished career! But exactly who are the Moravians?

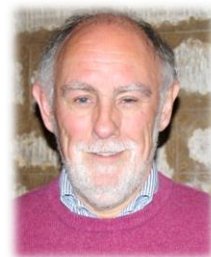
The Moravian Church was originally founded in 1457 in Bohemia, now part of the Czech Republic. In the eighteenth century refugees from Moravia (another Czech province) settled in Saxony (now part of Germany) and settled near the Polish border, naming their settlement Herrnhut, which means "Under the watch of the Lord". On August 13th 1727 there was a momentous event – an outpouring of the Holy Spirit – which inspired the Church members to become missionaries notably in the West Indies and North America. London was a stopping off point for the missionaries, but some stayed in the UK and so the Moravians began to spread their activities throughout England and Ireland. The Church is formally known as the Unitas Fratrum (Unity of the Brethren), and can be seen as part of the eighteenth century evangelical revival in the UK, which included, in the early days, John and Charles Wesley. The relationship with the Anglican Church was established very early on with a mutually amicable visit with the Archbishop of Canterbury and congregations were established in London (the Fetter Lane Chapel) and Yorkshire. The Church then concentrated on bringing God's Word to areas they considered poorly served by the established church (eg Brockweir) and there are now Moravian congregations scattered across England and Ireland. Some of these are in settlements where the Church hall, a school, housing and other services were grouped together to provide support to the congregations. These settlements still exist, although today much of the housing has been sold into private hands and for instance the schools have been absorbed into the state system. Settlements can be found today in Fulneck (Leeds), Fairfield (Manchester), Ockbrook (Derbyshire) and Gracehill – the last one now being a World Heritage Site. There are of course many other congregations which are not part of one of these settlements.

If you google the beliefs of the Moravian Church, I think you would find it hard to disagree with anything they profess. For instance they pay particular attention to (amongst other things) the Nicene Creed, the Apostle's Creed, the Athanasian Creed and the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England! The Church is in complete communion with the Church of England. I have been to a number of Sarah's services, and there is a Lutheran feel to them. She doesn't wear a cassock, but a surplice and often a clerical collar. There are set liturgies, but ministers and congregations are also able to use more free forms of worship. One particular form of service, developed by the Moravians, has been adopted very widely,

including by us in DSJ – the Christingle Service, which has its roots in the eighteenth century. Hymn singing is regarded as very important, as is the reading of God’s word, both Old and New Testaments.

Congregation members (and ministers and Bishops) are referred to as Brothers or Sisters. In many of the settlements there can be found a Moravian “God’s Acre” - the burial ground - with separate sections for Brothers and Sisters, and characterised by gravestones which are laid almost flat, only slightly raised at the head end.

A Bishop in the Moravian Church does not have a diocese as they do in the Church of England, but their duties are similar – pastoral care of ministers, organisation of congregations, representing the Church in ecumenical settings and I am sure a whole raft of administrative activities. And every time I have watched the BBC coverage of national church events in recent years, I have been able to spot Sarah as she represents the Irish churches!



Martin Fisher

Readers and Readings (October 2026)

		Reading 1	Reading 2	Reader	Psalm	Gospel
TRINITY 18 (Harvest Festival)						
4th	9.00	Deut 8: 7-18	2 Cor 9: 6-end	Victoria Worthington	Ps 65	Lk 12: 16-30
	10.15	Trevor Harwood				
TRINITY 19						
11th	10.00	Isa 25: 1-9	Phil 4: 1-9	John Worthington	Ps 23	Mt 22: 1-14
TRINITY 20 (Luke the Evangelist)						
18th	10.00	Isa 35: 3-6	2 Tim 4: 5-17	Joy Cunningham	Ps 147: 1-7	Lk 10: 1-9
LAST AFTER TRINITY (Bible Sunday)						
25th	10.00	Neh 8: 1-4a, 8-12	Col 3: 12-17	Ted Fisk	Ps 119: 9-16	Mt 24: 30-35
ALL SAINTS' DAY						
Nov 1st	9.00	Rev 7: 9-17	1 Jn 3: 1-3	Victoria Worthington	Ps 34: 1-10	Mt 5: 1-12
	10.15	Trevor Harwood				

The following is a copy of a Pastoral Letter taken from the Lincoln Diocese website:



The Bishops' Office

Pastoral Letter to the people of the Diocese of Lincoln

Monday 21st September 2026

Dear friends,

Today's News

Today we have all received the news that Bishop Stephen is resigning as the Bishop of Lincoln, with effect from the 1st October. The statement from the national Church ([click here to read](#)) confirmed that Bishop Stephen remains the subject of an ongoing investigation. Our diocese will now enter a period of vacancy-in-see and the process for discerning the appointment of a new diocesan bishop will begin.

We recognise that this news may provoke a range of feelings. It may unsettle you and may have caught you as unexpected. Some may feel anxious about the future. Some may have very different responses. We share this range of reactions. However you respond, we encourage you to reach out to each other as Christians together. Support will be available from your church community, from diocesan colleagues, and from us. If the news distresses you, then there are contact details at the end of this letter for other sources of support.

Gathering in Prayer

Over the coming months, there will be different opportunities to gather as a diocesan family to pray together and seek that 'still small voice of calm' which is the reassurance that God is at work even through moments of human frailty, along unexpected journeys, and during seasons of change.

St Paul encourages us more than once to pray ceaselessly; to devote ourselves to prayer (Romans 1.9, 1 Thessalonians 5.17, Colossians 4.3). And so we invite you to join us in prayer for each other, for those in need or distress, for this diocese and our journey ahead, for those who report abuse or harm and those who respond and support them, for our colleagues who investigate concerns and oversee safeguarding (particularly our diocesan and national safeguarding teams). Pray also for Bishop Stephen, and for all those who will carry the responsibility of discerning God's call in the forthcoming appointments process.

Let us find reassurance in the words of Psalm 121: 'Our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.' This is a timely reminder, just at the moment we are driven to ask 'I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?'

Thanksgiving and Faithfulness

Over the last months, with our Diocesan staff colleagues, we have sought to continue God's work in Greater Lincolnshire, which is our primary calling. In doing this we have the privilege of sharing in this ministry with you all. Thank you for your ongoing faithfulness during a time when the ground under our feet has often felt unsteady. Your encouragement, prayers, and shared commitment have been humbling. We believe that God is with us in times of sorrow and joy, in times of lament and hope, indeed at all times. This is the foundation of our faith and our life together.

Continuing our Shared Work

When Archbishop Sarah came to visit us in February, she encouraged us to press on with our vision and strategy for the diocese, *Time to Grow Together*, and to work together for the sake of God's kingdom in our parishes and partnerships. That strategy will be presented to the Bishop's Council of Diocesan Trustees this month, with a formal launch for *Time to Grow Together* planned for Diocesan Synod in November.

As we move into this new season, we are conscious of the limits on our capacity as a senior leadership team in the past seven months, and that this has impacted the ways in which we want to serve you. We are pleased to share with you now that we are in the final stages of appointing an acting archdeacon to increase that capacity – a colleague who will be working two days a week to provide leadership and support, primarily in the South of the diocese. We are also exploring supplementing each of our two archdeaconries with an associate archdeacon. Funded centrally and holding parish responsibilities, we hope that these new colleagues will be a resource for our local mission partnerships, helping our churches to navigate the complex demands of ministry, especially those which relate to complaints, compliance and what seem to be ever increasing expectations with respect to administration. We will write again about these plans, but our over-riding hope is that this will help to release our church leaders, lay and ordained, for pastoral care, mission and ministry.

Drawing on what is Old and New

When Jesus taught his disciples about the kingdom of heaven, he spoke of one 'who brings out of their treasure what is new and what is old' (Matthew 13.52). Let us do the same: looking to the past as it gives us strength and looking to the future with a renewed sense of hope.

Our letter comes to you in these final days of the Season of Creation, which is itself drawing both old and new from the riches of our heritage. The season began with the new Festival of Creation in Christ and ends with the Feast of St Francis on 4th October. In these days, we have been reflecting on fallenness and limitation, but also gift and opportunity. We are reminded that we are a new creation in Christ, and with that comes a responsibility for stewarding all that God has entrusted to us.

St Francis was charged to go and rebuild God's house, and he did this with courage and humility. Might we be inspired by his example, and that of his early followers, in the Diocese of Lincoln in 2026? Let us go and build and rebuild together, in the service of God's kingdom.

With our thanks and prayers,



The Rt Revd Dr Nicholas Chamberlain
Bishop of Grantham
Acting Bishop of Lincoln



The Rt Revd Jean Burgess
Bishop of Grimsby

CHURCH CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER 2026

1st	Thursday	9.30 am 7.30 pm	Holy Communion (said) Church Ladies' Fellowship: Ross Greenwood (Open Meeting)
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2nd	Friday	11.00 am 2.00 pm 6.45 pm 7.30 pm	Welcome Space at the Bell Tavern Crafternoon (for venue 'phone 343860) Choir Practice Ringers' practice
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4th	SUNDAY	TRINITY 18	(Harvest Festival)
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9.00 am	Holy Communion (said)
10.15 am	First Sunday Praise
12 noon	Harvest Lunch
6.00 pm	Choral Evensong

6th	Tuesday	William Tyndale, Translator of the Scriptures, Reformation Martyr 1536	
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7th	Wednesday	1.00 pm 1.00 pm	House Group Funeral in church
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8th	Thursday	9.30 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion (said) Quinquennial architect inspection
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9th	Friday	11.00 am 6.45 pm 7.30 pm	Welcome Space at the Bell Tavern Choir Practice Ringers' Practice
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10th	Saturday	Paulinus, Bishop of York, Missionary, 644	
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11th	SUNDAY	TRINITY 19	
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10.00 am	Holy Communion
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12th	Monday	Wilfrid of Ripon, Bishop, Missionary, 709	
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13th	Tuesday	Edward the Confessor, King of England, 1066	
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14th	Wednesday	1.00 pm 7.30 pm	House Group Worship Committee
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15th	Thursday	Teresa of Avila, Teacher of the Faith, 1582	
		9.30 am	Holy Communion (said)
		11.30 am	Funeral in church
		7.30 pm	Church Ladies' Fellowship: Harvest Auction
16th	Friday	11.00 am	Welcome Space at the Bell Tavern
		2.00 pm	Crafternoon (for venue 'phone 343860)
		6.45 pm	Choir Practice
		7.30 pm	Ringers' practice
17th	Saturday	Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, Martyr, c.107	
18th	SUNDAY	TRINITY 20	Luke the Evangelist
		9.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		10.00 am	Holy Communion (Order 1) with Commisioning of Children's Church Leaders
		10.00 am	Children's Church
		6.00 pm	Churches Together United Service at Open Door
19th	Monday	Henry Martyn, Translator of the Scriptures, Missionary in India and Persia, 1812	
20th	Tuesday	7.30 pm	James Dixon Concert
21st	Wednesday	1.00 pm	House Group
		7.30 pm	PCC meeting (preceded by Communion at 7.00 pm)
22nd	Thursday	9.30 am	Holy Communion (said)
23rd	Friday	Art at The Priory	
		11.00 am	Welcome Space at the Bell Tavern
		6.45 pm	Choir Practice
		7:30 pm	Ringers' practice
24th	Saturday	Art at The Priory	
25th	SUNDAY	LAST AFTER TRINITY (Bible Sunday)	
		<i>British Summer Time ends</i>	
		Art at The Priory	
		10.00 am	Holy Communion & Ministry of Healing
		6.00 pm	Café Church

26th Monday Alfred the Great, King of the West Saxons, Scholar, 899

28th Wednesday Simon and Jude, Apostles

1.00 pm House Group

29th Thursday James Hannington, Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa,
Martyr in Uganda, 1885

9.30 am Holy Communion (said)

30th Friday 11.00 am Welcome Space at the Bell Tavern
2.00 pm Crafternoon (for venue 'phone 343860)
5.30 pm Light Party in the hall garden
6.45 pm Choir Practice
7.30 pm Ringers' practice

31st Saturday 10.00 am Coffee & Cake

November 2026

1st SUNDAY ALL SAINTS DAY

9.00 am Holy Communion (said)
10.15 am First Sunday Praise
12.00 noon Baptism
12.00 noon Prayers at DSJ War Graves
3.00 pm All Souls' Memorial Service
6.00 pm Choral Evensong

2nd Monday Commemoration of the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day)

3rd Tuesday Richard Hooker, Priest, Anglican Apologist, Teacher of the Faith, 1600

4th Wednesday 1.00 pm House Group

The Ministry of Healing

Healing: is it for me ?

On the 4th Sunday of every month, during the 10am service at the time of communion, the ministry of healing is available. What is healing? Healing is the laying of hands by more than one person (this is usually two plus Rev Sonia) while healing prayers are said. How many of us think this is not for me, I have no physical ailment, but you may have pain or worries or know someone who needs some healing prayers. You can have healing for them. Healing is for all, don't feel awkward, embarrassed or self conscious. Why not give it a go and see how you feel afterwards? We all need healing.

Reverend Sonia tells us more:

Healing was a major part of Jesus' ministry on earth; restoring wholeness was a sign of the coming of God's kingdom among men. The gospels include some seventeen accounts of healings carried out through prayer, laying on of hands and anointing. Later books of the Old Testament had begun to challenge a simplistic view that sickness resulted from failings to keep the Law, a challenge that Jesus endorses as suffering can come to both the righteous and unrighteous. At the heart of healing is a response to God's love and grace. Jesus sent his disciples out to proclaim the kingdom and with authority over unclean spirits; they returned having anointed many and cured them. After Jesus' return to the Father and the giving of the Holy Spirit, the apostles continued the work of healing; prayer for the sick with laying on of hands and anointing being urged as the correct procedure in the letter of James.

Ministry to the sick continued to be carried out in the Early Church; the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus included a prayer to be said to bless the oil at the Eucharist and the use of oil was promoted by Cyril of Alexandria and Caesarius of Arles in the early fifth century, the Council of Toledo (399) stipulating that the oil had to be blessed by the bishop. We continue this practice today using oils blessed by our bishop in Holy Week.

A change in practice seems to have occurred when the healing sacraments began to be used in rights of reconciliation when a person was dying; anointing and laying on of hands tended to be delayed to avoid the potential for further sins after reconciliation. As unction (anointing) came to be associated with the deathbed its use as a sacrament of healing was eclipsed. The change was given more impetus when in the reign of Charlemagne prayers for the sick were moved to the supplementary pages for rites for the dying. Further changes replaced prayers for the sick with those speaking of remission of sin and spiritual salvation, unction being now the final act. The transition from a rite of healing for the sick to a rite for the dying was now complete.

In the sixteenth century Reformers mainly rejected laying on of hands and anointing as not being (unlike Baptism and Holy Communion) a sacrament ordained by the Lord. A rite for

anointing had been included in the 1549 Prayer Book but was omitted in 1552 and 1662 (our current Book of Common Prayer), so its use was effectively discontinued. Communion for the Sick was retained but as the reserved sacrament was regarded with suspicion, provision in the Prayer Book was for a live celebration at the bedside of the sick person with emphasis on putting one's affairs in order (the making of a will being suggested by the officiating priest).

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the picture began to change as the Liturgical Movement discovered ancient liturgies and it was seen that ministry to the sick had been separate from rites of penance and those for the dying. Percy Dearmer and others also campaigned for the use of the reserved sacrament in sick visiting. Envisaged in the unissued 1928 Prayer Book, it was finally provided for in the 1983 **Ministry to the Sick**. Further revisions are made in the Common Worship Pastoral Services.

In the Healing Ministry of Laying on of Hands and Anointing we bring our brokenness through frailty of body or mind or spirit to the wholeness and healing power of God, to encounter his love, grace and forgiveness. We offer our experience of suffering to God; sometimes the answer will be in a cure or improvement in our condition, at other times we will be given strength to cope with a situation which is unlikely to change. It is a way that manifests the presence of the Spirit in the life of the Church and a way of sharing in the life of God until sickness and death are finally defeated and God himself is among us.



Sonia

My Flower-arranging Journey

This journey of mine began back in the 1980s when I met Jo Moore, daughter Cheryl and their friend Christine Babb. They had come along with other members of the Peterborough Flower Club to help with a flower festival being organised by a church in Peterborough, the theme being 'All Things Bright and Beautiful.'

I had been asked if I would do a windowsill and, as I was very much a novice, Christine came to help me. It was then I learned all about the Peterborough Flower Club as well as the Deepings Flower Club. I subsequently joined the Peterborough Flower Club as I quickly became quite 'hooked' on flower arranging.



I knew Jo gave classes and I asked for a place to attend. She told me that the next class would be about 'rough and smooth.' Unfortunately I had no idea what she meant and I didn't like

to show my ignorance by asking. Nevertheless I went along to her shop in Bridge Street, which was situated where Maharani's Restaurant is now. I bought a pot which I thought would be suitable and I knew I had a smooth pizza plate at home. I arrived at the class with my pot, plate, foliage and flowers, and Jo came to talk to me, whereupon I started to learn all about rough and smooth, rounds and points, together with the elements and principles of flower arranging.

I joined the Deepings Flower Club a few years later - they held a bi-annual show attracting many artistic and competitive arrangers. I did enter the novice class and came second most of the time – not quite having the skill for a first place, but still enjoyable and good experience.



Then in 1998 I was asked, together with another keen arranger, to represent Peterborough Flower Club at the East of England Show. The theme for all the exhibits was 'A Royal Banquet' and we were given quite a generous cash allowance from the club. When we arrived in the marquee, shock and horror: no table covering! I drove into Peterborough to see if I could get a cloth big enough. I found something but it barely covered the table. Luckily one of the stewards,

who was also a member of the Peterborough Flower Club, came to our rescue and provided a large cloth to cover and drape over the table. Another lesson learned – always read the schedule properly! Anyway, we got on with our three placements, finishing with a platter of fruit. We were reasonably satisfied and left to await the judging. The next day we learned we had gained a 'highly commended' award with a judges critique 'too many rounds on the plate.' Not too bad for a beginner at show work.



Peterborough asked us if we would represent them the following year and we gladly agreed. All the categories in the shows have different titles and on that occasion the title for the Clubs' exhibit was 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow'. The majority of the categories were for individuals to enter but the class for the Clubs class had more space to fill, so two people were allowed to take part. After some thought we decided to do the three placements on flower arranging during different eras. For 'Yesterday' we used a large pitcher with scrunched up chicken wire which would probably have been used before oasis foam was manufactured. For 'Today' we did a more traditional arrangement. For 'Tomorrow' we had to think outside of the box! I can remember wrapping and gluing string around an old piece of carpet tubing, wrapping string around some glass test tubes and tying them around bamboo canes at various intervals to give a more contemporary design. For the flowers we used a single anthurium stem. And a small amount of foliage at the base. We were reasonably pleased with the finished result within the allotted space and time given to us. We went home to



await judging. We were pleased to achieve a Third Place, so, getting better. Other ladies were asked to carry on the good work for the next few years.

Being a member of a flower club gave me the opportunity to go on some trips. In 2002 the World show was being held in Glasgow. Stamford Flower Club was organising a coach and hotel and word went round to other clubs for ladies to join them, so I jumped at the chance together with a friend to share a room. It was a wonderful experience to see some lovely exhibits by very talented people. It was also a golden opportunity to look round Glasgow on a free day from seeing the show. I particularly enjoyed the Hunterian museum where I got quite hooked on some Charles Renee Mackintosh designs.

I didn't get the chance to visit any more world shows until 2014 when the world show was being held in Dublin. By this time I had given up my membership at Peterborough and joined Werrington Flower Club - quite a newish and active club. They were organising a trip to Dublin, so of course, I put my name forward. And again, as well as admiring all the exhibits at the show we had some free time for sightseeing in Dublin, and surrounding area, travelling on the Dart! Particularly queuing to see the Book of Kells, at Trinity College. A very precious book written many hundreds of years ago around AD 800. It is a book of the gospels, written by hand and beautifully illustrated. Our hotel was very close to the show, so we were able to visit a few times, as well as a bit of retail therapy, before flying home.

And then came Barbados in 2017 which was truly a wonderful experience, so many exotic plants. A visit to the show, a trip around the island, and gardens, one of which was Hunt's Garden. One lady in our party managed to get us a visit there after seeing it featured on an episode of Gardeners World. Full of exotic plants to put it mildly, and we were allowed to wander around at our leisure before having a refreshing drink. I'm not very good with names I'm afraid, but I do remember seeing strelitzias (bird of paradise). And the garden was very well laid out with a few paths. The hotel had a pool so we were able to relax. It was an extremely memorable trip.

In 2020 only four of us travelled to India, and on arrival we were met by the rep of a company who were looking after us for the duration of our stay, providing us with a mini coach and driver. We started in Delhi with a two night stay. And visits to a Mosque, tour around New Delhi and Old Delhi, very narrow streets and cables all over the place, people selling their wares from the





pavements! A full-on day sightseeing. Then, next day an early start on to Jaipur where the show was being held. We had a few days in Jaipur to visit the show, meeting up with friends we knew from other clubs. More sightseeing, visiting a Mosque, also a Temple and a Fort which was built quite high up. We went up in a jeep on one road, but we also noted that there was another road up on the other side and visitors were going up on elephants. Apparently the elephants only worked until 11am before it got too hot for them, but it was quite a sight. And the Palace was also situated near the Fort. We also had the chance for more retail therapy.

Finally, completing our trip to Aggra to see the Taj Mahal, we had timed tickets as it could get quite busy. Quite spectacular! and I'm glad we had the chance to see it in all its glory. On our last day we visited the Red Fort, which was built on quite a large scale, and the walls seemed to go on forever! After which, a quick snack and back to Delhi for our last night before boarding our flight back to the UK the next morning, arriving back just before lockdown. We were lucky we had the trip when we did! Covid put paid to the gallivanting overseas, although I had already decided I wouldn't be going to any more World shows.. They were a wonderful experience but very tiring.



The majority of flower clubs are members of The National Association who are based in London and there is a National Show held at various venues around the country, usually every other year, and we managed to arrange a trip to most of them. They were always great fun and a wonderful opportunity to see some great exhibits done by some really talented flower arrangers. On one occasion just four of us drove to Torquay – two of us sharing the driving. We were able to meet up with other friends at the hotel. Whilst in Torquay we had a day off from the show, and took the opportunity to visit the Eden Project which wasn't too far away for the drive.

Werrington and a few other clubs in this area are members of the East of England area, so we are able to visit area shows, which are also good to see. Usually a talk in the morning, a break for lunch, then a demonstration in the afternoon. A lovely day out. The East of England Area is the largest in the country, so it is broken down into groups, and we are members of the King's Lynn group, so, we also have group meetings. Never a dull moment!

When I joined the congregation at the Priory Church, Joan Dyke and Ann Bennett were in charge of flowers. They had a good team of arrangers but I did offer my services. After a while I was given a space. When Joan and Ann decided they had had enough Pauline



Brooksbank and I were approached to take over the organisation of the Church flowers and we have been a good partnership for a number of years and work well together. I took on the weekend rota and Pauline organised the flowers for the special occasions. Joan and Ann still did the choir pew flowers until that got too much for them. Pauline isn't too mobile any more but we still work as a team and keep in regular contact with each other. She still likes to do the flowers for all the church festivals and I am there to help.

I don't enter shows any more, but the ones I did enter were a good experience and I did have some success. In 2018 Bury St Edmunds were organising a Flower Festival to commemorate the end of World War 1, and Werrington were asked to take part. We were given quite a large space, and it was decided that our title would be Flanders Fields. It proved quite an emotional scene to do. There were a lot of members taking part, but it was very rewarding. I have been a member of Werrington Flower Club for quite a number of years now, and as well as having a programme of demonstrators, they also have members' evenings. A recent one I attended was to make a button hole. It wasn't easy, quite fiddly, in fact. But I thought it would be a good idea for a Church Ladies Fellowship evening. Most ladies had a go and it proved to be a fun evening. As I don't enter competitions any more I do take part in the occasional workshop to keep my hand in. These days, arrangements are very structural and contemporary. I like some of them, but I am very much a traditionalist. I still love flower arranging and when I am arranging flowers, nothing else matters! Also, visiting shows when the opportunity arises and along the way, whether it be at the Club, for the Church, or visiting a show, it is always, 'Fun, Friendship and Flowers' - and hopefully, I can continue for a little longer.

Finally, thank you Jo, Cheryl and Christine for inspiring me on my journey.



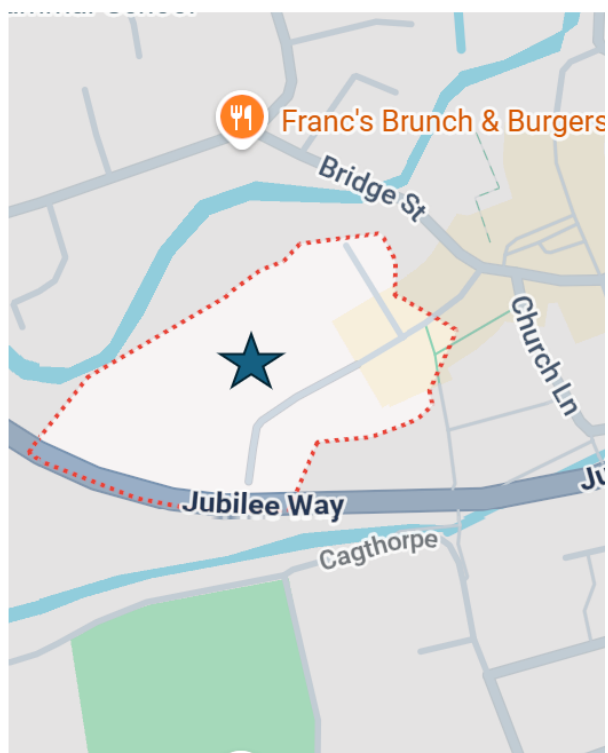
Christine Masters

Wildlife across Lincolnshire (10)

Last month I offered you a double bill of Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (“LWT”) sites. In this age of ever bigger and better – this month I have not one, not two, but three sites to tell you about, ranging from the very local to the practically Yorkshire, from the size of a large garden to huge areas, and from the well-established to the very new.

Reserve: Bannovallum House

Address: Manor House Street, Horncastle, LN9 5HF



Bannovallum House is the headquarters of the LWT, situated between the Jubilee Way footpath and the River Bain. The name “Bannovallum” is of Romano-British origin, meaning “Wall on the River Bain” and you can still find the remains of the Roman walls visible around Horncastle. The building is a smart, Grade II listed Georgian building, but it isn’t for the building that I am mentioning this site. As well as acting as the administrative centre of the LWT’s activities, the grounds have been befittingly turned into a small nature reserve including a short walking trail.

The site is only one hectare (2.5

acres) in size but within this small space is a wildlife garden, a walled garden and a stretch of riverbank. And there is so much potential to encourage wildlife into this relatively small area, in the middle of a town. One of the ways that this is achieved is through the creation of different habitat types within a series of raised beds, each with an interpretive panel. The grounds also host a good variety of garden birds, including finches, tits, song thrush and pied wagtail, as well as kingfisher along the river. The planting of over 300 native wild, spring bulbs in the grounds at Bannovallum House earlier this year also means





that next Spring you should be able to enjoy an early display of colour from crocuses, lesser celandine and winter aconites. Within the last year, the Trust has also taken steps to extend the impact of the reserve through the acquisition of a proposed wetland in Horncastle: Harrison's Holme. The land earmarked to make up the wetland is prone to winter flooding, so is unsuitable for grazing or traditional crops. Under the Trust's plans, the land will be remodelled to encourage more natural movement and retention of water on the site, creating a series of microhabitats which will support a diverse range of plants, insects, reptiles, amphibians, as well as small birds and mammals. Surveys, tests and design assessments, including heritage-impact studies, have all been done as a precursor to seeking planning permission (for the desired change of use). It can all take a frustratingly long time, but this is why organisations such as the LWT are so important as they have a longevity and consistency of purpose which matches nature's need for time and stability (and the long lead-times associated with our bureaucratic processes!). This doesn't mean that the work of the Trust is static, but it's definitely a case more of evolution rather than revolution.

Reserve: Bourne North Fen

Address: Bourne North Fen - Access is via Spalding Road (A151) close to the village of Twenty, near Bourne. Turn south onto a grassy farm track to the west of a house (white-rendered house with a red-brown pantile roof).

Access point to the track is at:

Grid reference: **TF 460 2072**

What3Words: **///rotations.broads.fierly**

While the Trust hopes that the planning permission for Harrison's Holme will be granted to allow the work to be undertaken this coming winter, a much longer timescale has been the order of the day with another new LWT reserve: Bourne North Fen. Plans for this site include the restoration of 50 hectares (125 acres) of lost peat-

fenland by regulating water supply and "slowing the flow" of water from the site. The reserve is located between the reserves of Willow Tree Fen and Baston Fen so is well aligned with the ethos of "more, bigger, and more joined up" (the Lawton Principles) which inform LWT's





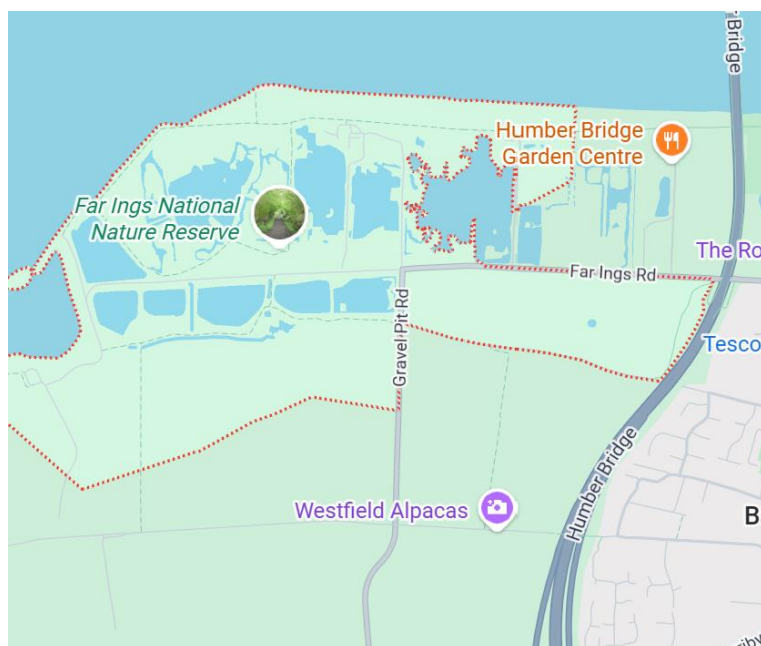
reserves strategy. We only need to think about the Summer that we have just had to know that effective management of water is becoming more and more critical. But it is not just too little water that causes problems (for people and wildlife), so too does flooding and, while South

Lincolnshire is one of the driest areas of the UK, it is also one with a high flood risk. Restoration of this peatland landscape will help to reduce the risk of flooding, ensure the availability of additional water capacity for use in agriculture, and support resilience to climate change by locking carbon in the wetland soils and creating healthy new habitats for wildlife. A new system of reedbeds will also improve the quality of the Bourne Eau river, before it enters the River Glen. The peatland restoration work at Bourne North Fen began in February and is on-going.



Reserve: Far Ings

Address: Far Ings Road, Barton-upon-Humber, North Lincolnshire, DN18 5RG (closest postcode)



While Bourne North Fen is just up the A15, the final LWT site I want to tell you about this month is somewhat further afield. If you want a reminder of what a huge place Lincolnshire is, a visit to Far Ings will do the trick. It is pretty much as far from Deeping as Deeping is from London and yet you don't even go "out of county." It is also next door to Barton-upon-Humber, where a certain Priory Church Director of Music started to learn his craft, on the organ at St. Mary's Church.

Far Ings on the Humber is a 200-acre wetland sanctuary, with the backdrop of the iconic Humber Bridge. The origins of the nature reserve are in industry – clay pits used by the nearby brickworks – which have now been filled with water and given back to nature. Across these pits are two different types of reedbed. On one side the reed banks are classed as dry reed beds meaning that on the larger tides the water floods the reedbed. However, because the land is flat it means that when the tide goes out the water runs out



and the reedbed is once again dry. These locations offer a perfect

habitat for bearded tits. On the other side of the site, the reedbeds are more conventional wet reedbeds – perfect for bitterns, though their shyness and natural camouflage make the extremely difficult to spot. There are three, marked circular walks through the reserve ranging in time from half an hour to two hours.



Another appealing feature of Far Ings is the lovely visitors centre (closed Mondays and Tuesdays) which, as well as offering a café, provides an impressive panorama from its top floor of the bridge across to the Humber estuary and reedbeds. The Viking Way passes right by the visitors' centre so if you decide to walk it, particularly in this, its 50th year, do consider steeling yourself for the journey ahead with some pre-walk refreshment. Only 149 miles until you are within touching distance of home.



Rachel

Sources: Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Wild Lincolnshire: Discovering Lincolnshire wildlife and wild places (2022); and www.lincstrust.org.uk <<http://www.lincstrust.org.uk>> (accessed various dates). Wilder Lincolnshire Podcast 3: Behind the Scenes at Far Ings

Geoff's Journeys –

The Black Country Living History Museum



Yea, I **know** Revd Mark has preached against the dangers of escapism in at least two sermons (see, I **do** listen), but I confess I was led into temptation by a Shaw's coach trip provided as a chance to "leave the 21st Century behind".

The day dawned dull and drizzly; I thought of my old English teacher: use a lot of alliteration and avoid clichés like the plague. I'd purposely attired myself in a Dickies centenary issue (est. 1922) denim work coat and cap, the plan being that I might be mistakenly kept there as an exhibit. After all, how many times have my mates told me I'm making an exhibition of myself?

Our driver for the day had been drafted in after the scheduled one had had a fall. Somewhere amongst the signs pointing to Birmingham we excitedly saw one to the Black Country Museum. Then we saw lots of other signs for lots of other places: a stately home, a zoo, the parks, the public toilets, Paris, several stops along Route 66 and any other place that wasn't a Black Country Museum. Excitement gave way to panic as the driver's sat-nav kept losing the signal. Fortunately, some passengers hadn't entirely left the 21st Century behind and used their own phones to assist him until, some detours and diversions later, our prayers to give us a sign was answered!! (I'd started to wonder if Dudley might be twinned with Norfolk – see my previous article about the joys of trying to get back from Walsingham).



The day continued downhill, but this time downhill led to a shiny new entrance where Shirley Bassey was wailing away on the sound system. Wowsville! Over a 26-acre site is what appears to be a complete small town with all the fun of the fair – literally and some of it steam powered, and populated by costumed re-enactors.

First attraction, the trip down the mine was fully booked, though some of the waiting children didn't look too thrilled at the prospect. I was too early for the next aluminium casting demonstration but expressed my delight at hearing Fats Domino boogieing on the wireless (sic). "Well it is 1959" said the young lady factory worker, though I wasn't sure that young ladies sported nose and tongue piercings in 1959. Older readers please correct me if I am wrong.

A mine worker was coming off shift. "Am I right", I enquired, "that some of the Peaky Blinders (TV series) was filmed here?" "Nah," he replied, "Them's Brummies. We don' 'av nothin' to

do wi' them. We are Black Coontray". (Note: if you haven't watched it, the *Peaky Blinders* were real life Birmingham gangsters whose trademark was to slash their victims with razor blades in the peaks of their caps, and apart from the blinding the show's full of effing, violence and various other vices unprintable in the Priory News. You have been warned.)

Ambling along to a 1950s house I discovered I'd missed my vocation: as the 'owner', peering over his period 'paper told, this was actually his **paid** job. And to think, I'm writing this in my room with Tretchikoff's Green Lady on the wall, a pair of '50s capsule chairs, a fine selection of Elvis Presley LPs (yes, LPs!) and barely two shillings to rub together. I hope to be open to the paying public next summer.

Down a '50's high street a Teddy Boy loitered outside the record shop, probably with intent to nick the Ford Consul parked across the street. I had to congratulate him on the authenticity of his outfit, a true representation of an original 50's Ted as opposed to the garish caricatures many had become by the Showaddywaddy era. However, disappointed to learn it was just one of several characters he portrayed going back to the middle ages, and unlike me and my mates, he didn't actually go home and listen to Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis (but not Showaddywaddy).

And if I'd known that many of the shops were fully functional I needn't have taken some sarnies but could have washed down some fish'n'chips with a beer from one of the **two** pubs (they've got their priorities right!), though doubt if said pint would be at period-correct prices. I was going to take Father a cake but there was too long a queue outside the baker's. Perhaps, I mused, rationing was still enforced.



Next visit I could bring Granny's ration book. Along a cobbled street a rope had been strung across, one end tied to a lamp post, where contemporary kiddies were press-ganged into discovering the prehistoric delight of skipping before graduating to the hoop, before then being sent to the delightfully names St James' School (motto: silence is golden) for a good thrashing. Kids today, they don't know they're born. Me, I daren't enter for fear of meeting the ghost of our old English teacher Miss Ann Thrope.

Finally, I found myself on familiar turf, recognising the site where the canal-side scenes from *Peaky Blinders* were filmed. I must tell you at this point that not a single part of this "town" is real. Well, actually it *is* real but not in its original site. Every single building, from a wartime worker's cottage to the Victorian public library as big as ours, has been painstakingly recorded, dismantled, transported and reconstructed from elsewhere! Hence, I was charmed to learn that the area, previously occupied by the Peakies and now myself, had

originally been a manure dump, to put it politely. With that thought in mind I was feeling peckish for my pickup and wished the nearby bench wasn't occupied by a re-enactor re-enacting a down and out. Then I realised he was actually a visitor in contemporary attire. How standards have slipped. Anyway, he seemed to regain consciousness and staggered away. (Probably been experiencing the nearby Glass and Bottle). So I soothed myself into a tranquil location with a panoramic view overlooking the very spot where Danny Whizzbang seemingly got his brains blown out and his body dumped in a barge for disposal downstream.



A satisfied tummy later I meandered onwards to investigate a blue horse drawn wooden wagon, minus the horse, which was actually a Wesleyan Gospel Caravan and can be seen in the series. Our Methodist brethren are well catered for with a complete chapel of their own elsewhere on the site. Rounding a corner, sparks flew as a blacksmithing demonstration was in full swing, through

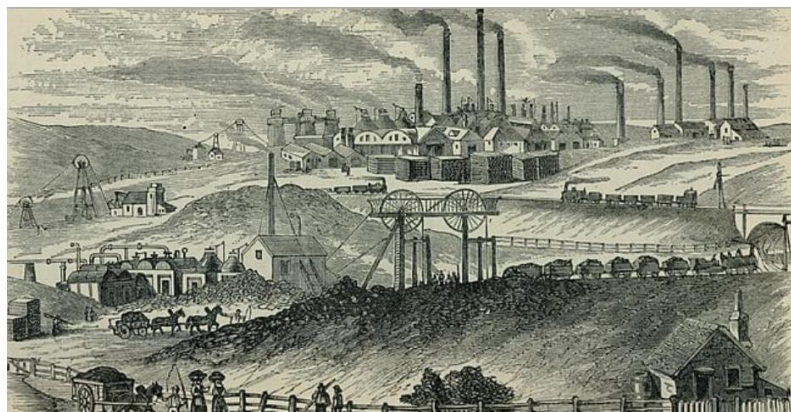
I couldn't help noticing that the apprentice's shoes were fastened with Velcro. Completely ruined my day. Have you seen the price of Velcro? It's a total rip-off.

The next guided tour of the canal-side was at 3.00pm. Our host said it could last about 20 minutes but could go on indefinitely depending on the enthusiasm of the audience. I found myself an hour later surreptitiously checking my watch as I wanted to check out some hats I'd spotted in the souvenir shop on the way in.

Lovely as they were I have enough caps, and the trilbies were a bit naff. After much deliberation I wouldn't resist, among other temptations, a miniature razorblade badge to pin on my Dickies cap.

It was at this point The Plan began to unravel, and I got caught out trying to pose as an exhibit. Security ejected me and I was dragged screaming and kicking to a coach destined "back to the future" (21st Century).

Our driver once again apologized for the delay getting there, gallantly shouldering the blame himself, so I was pleased to be able to inform him when we stopped that all the passengers I'd spoken to were in agreement the lack of signage was to blame. To be certain, he tried to check for signs, or lack of, in his rear-view mirrors. On reflection (see what I did there?) it later occurred to me that the Black Country signs may have been taken down by the Politically Correctness Police for not being "inclusive" enough as they say in the parlance of our times.



The Black Country actually gets its name from the soot and grime deposited everywhere by industry, I kid you not, I'm not the only one who's fallen foul of some people overreacting to perceived racism where none exists!

I could have brought back a souvenir T-shirt of "The Garrison" the Peaky Blinders pub, but after listening to the

Black Country twang all day, decided "Oid rather 'ave a poiylent o' whuskay" so popped into Tesco on the way back, Just wanted to see what one looked like on my new souvenir Black Country coaster, you understand.

Geoff Armstrong

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