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EDGEWAYS

Sacred Heart Parish Magazine

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Citizens' Assembly (*back cover*)**



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The land flowing with milk and honey

A few years ago, I accompanied Fr Paul Okora to his British citizenship ceremony in the Archbishop's Palace in Maidstone. The ceremony was quite brief, and it was followed – somewhat stereotypically, one might think – by a cup of tea and a piece of cake. Each new citizen was also given a pot of Kentish honey.

In the early church, new Christians, after their Baptism at Easter, were given a meal of milk and honey, signifying that they were now citizens of a new country – or, in St Augustine's phrase, were now part of the City of God.

The Biblical origin of this is, of course, the Israelites – the People of God – entering the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey, after their forty years' pilgrimage through the wilderness (see Exodus 3:8).

After our forty days in the wilderness in the season of Lent, we enter into the joyous fifty-day season of Easter, the season of celebration of our Lord's Resurrection. This year, we might feel there is little to celebrate, what with the fighting in Ukraine and the Middle East, increasingly aggressive secularisation which is opposed to Catholic education, the increasing cost of living crisis we hear so much about, and the family, financial, and health problems we inevitably face in our own families and places of work.

But we must not give way to despair and depression, because by virtue of our baptism, we are citizens of the City of God, incorporated into Christ ('christened'), and we are members of the new People of God. Most significantly of all, we know that by His death and Resurrection, Christ has once and for all



conquered sin and death. We know that evil and wickedness will never win.

As St Paul puts it (see also Hebrews 10):



'I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.' (Romans 8:18)

So we are confident that, in the words of Mother Julian of Norwich, 'all shall be well'. This does not mean that we go around with a goofy grin all the time, blithely ignoring the difficulties and problems. We do have to engage with the various issues around at the moment. But it does mean that we have a serene, unshakable certainty that Christ has defeated sin and death and that where He has gone, we shall follow. His destiny is our destiny, if we remain faithful to Christ. With this Christian hope of eternal life, we can face up to, and face down, all the current problems.

Milk and honey might be a bit sickly; I suspect most of us will eat chocolate Easter eggs this Easter. As we do so, let us remember that on the one hand, we are citizens of this world, submitting to its laws and regulations as long as they do not conflict with the commands of God. But on the other hand, and more importantly, we are citizens of the Kingdom of God, which we can only enter by being born again (that is by baptism; see John 3:3) and this will enable us to celebrate Christ's Resurrection with untrammelled joy.

Let me end with a quote from St Augustine's *City of God*:

“

'This joy in God is not like any pleasure found in physical or intellectual satisfaction. Nor is it such as a friend experiences in the presence of a friend. But, if we are to use any such analogy, it is more like the eye rejoicing in light.'

Canon David

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School to join Catholic Academy Trust



Archbishop John Wilson has asked all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Southwark to join one of the recently-formed Catholic Academy Trusts (CATs).

For Merton, this Trust is called Sancta Familia (Holy Family). Current members include primary schools St John Fisher, St Cecilia's (Sutton), Regina Coeli (Croydon), St Aidan's (Coulsdon) and St Elphege's (Wallington), and the secondary Ursuline High School.

The Governors at our parish's primary school have agreed to move forward with this process. A consultation with parents and staff is taking place, running until Friday 17 April. The Governors are excited about the possibility of joining the Trust and the benefits this will bring.

‘Sledgeways!’

A year ago this month, I suggested relaunching your parish magazine by giving it a satirical slant, more like the ‘Private Eye of SW19’, and renaming it ... ‘Edgy Ways’.

One parishioner, who shall remain nameless, accosted me after Mass on the Sunday of publication and proclaimed that the title, *Edgeways*, was sacred and must not be messed around with. I calmly asked her if she knew when I was proposing to implement the change. She said, ‘April the ... first’ and the penny dropped.

So this year, NOT as an April Fool (but, then again ... !), but as guardian editor of the parish magazine, I am proposing a new monthly column, *Sledgeways*.

Sports lovers will know that the term ‘sledging’ is of Australian origin and refers to putting batsmen off by insulting them at key moments. The most famous ‘sledge’ took place in the 1980s when, during an Ashes Test match downunder, Shane Warne tried to upset batsman Ian Botham by saying, ‘Why are you so fat?’ – to which Beefy replied (and I paraphrase here): ‘Because whenever I make love to your wife, she gives me a biscuit!’

I am inviting readers to send in their memories or sayings about our clergy, parish, or services which are both curious and printable – and this will launch the column ‘Sledgeways’.

Let me kick off this month’s column:



One Jesuit priest summed up the affluent profile of Sacred Heart parishioners by saying cheekily that they are made up of ‘the haves ... and the have-yachts!’

Another priest, also a Jesuit, was preaching his sermon shortly after the parish’s handover from the Society of Jesus to the Archdiocese of Southwark in 2013. A parishioner spoke to him after Mass and complimented him, saying that it was so much better than when the Jesuits were here – to which he, most tactfully, replied, ‘I’m sure they were doing their best!’



... at the same time of handover, one of the Jesuits was overheard to quip: ‘Now, let’s see how the professionals run it!’



At the impressive handover service in the church, after Archbishop Peter Smith received the symbolic ‘key to the door’, he opened his address rather disingenuously with: ‘At last – we’ve got it!’

Over to you ... please do contribute to ‘Sledgeways’!
Please send your contributions to wimbletonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk.

... ok, back to business.

This month, after Canon David's perceptive **Easter reflection** (pp.2-3), we celebrate 30 years of **Bob Rathbone** as our Director of Music, with reminiscences of his time with the parish (pp.6-7). Aren't we lucky!

Turning to our young people, we report that the governors of **Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School** have proposed that the school join the Sancta Familia Academy Trust (p.3). Meanwhile, your editor joined students at Wimbledon College and Ursuline High School at the unveiling of the newly-restored **Hanbury Fountain** in Wimbledon Village (pp.8-9).

We also thank Simon Potter for an article evidencing his belief in a **religious revival** among the next generation, the 'Gen Z'. Wassat, I say! (pp.10-11)

Graham Kennedy reports progress on our parish's **Be Well Hub** (p.13) and our parish's resident psychologist, Anthony Lee, offers an interesting and revealing anonymous case study to encourage us all to **'be positive for better mental health'** (pp.14-15). Thank you, Anthony!

Those 'Mad Hatters' at the parish's **Friendship Group** were entertained at their monthly gathering by boys from the nearby 'Squirrels' pre-prep school, all wearing homemade hats, who sang their hearts out ... and all this before tea! (p.12)

The **Wimbledon Arts Society** has hosted illustrated talks in the Upper Hall for many years, and we learn about their expert lectures, tours, and visits, with details of how to become a member (p.22).



We have two guest contributions: Jane Healey tells us about **historic buildings in Wimbledon Village** (pp.16-17) and Vishna Shah-Little reflects on the **United Nations' International Day of Education** (pp.18-19). Both of these were recent talks given to the Walk & Talk group on Wimbledon Common, a free event open to all, always with a themed talk and starting from the Village War Memorial at 10.30am each Saturday morning – rain or shine. Now, that really is something worth getting out of bed for on a Saturday!

Finally, as the parish lead for **Merton Citizens**, I encourage as many as possibly can to come to Wimbledon College at 6.30pm on Thursday 27 April for the Merton Citizens' pre-election Assembly, at which candidates for Leader of the Council in the local elections on Thursday 7 May will answer questions on key issues (back cover).

Go read ... !

David Hurst

We welcome your letters, feedback, and article suggestions! Please email the editor at wimbletonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk.

Production credits: David Hurst (Editor, wimbletonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk) and Matteo Baccaglini (design and layout).

Celebrating 30 years of Bob Rathbone's musical direction



Piano and 'energy' refreshments! Photograph by Alison Lobo.

Bob Rathbone *reminisces on 30 rich years as Director of Music at Sacred Heart Wimbledon.*

Before I was appointed as Director of Music in December 1995, the parish had organised a meeting to discuss the qualities they were looking for in a candidate to succeed Martyn Parry, who had left in October that year.

One of the matters up for discussion was the title of the post: there was a move to call it 'Coordinator of Music within the Parish of Sacred Heart Wimbledon'. That was very quickly changed back to simply 'Director of Music', but it was intended 'to emphasise the need for a successful candidate to be able to draw together all

the varied musical groups within the parish to work together to enhance the liturgy and provide an aid to worship'.

I very much hope that is still the case, and I want to thank all the groups who provide music for Masses each and every Sunday, so ably led by Rachel and John Marshall (10.00am Mass) and by Bruce Mackett (5.00pm Mass). We are indeed very blessed.

In December 1995, I was still Organist and Choirmaster at St Matthew's Church in Durham Road, which is why my first Sunday was 18 February 1996. I was also Director of Music at Wimbledon College – I well remember then-Headmaster Fr

Michael Holman SJ congratulating me but wondering whether I'd taken on too much.

There were times when I agreed with him. Those early days were quite difficult as I found my feet with many conflicting interests within the various groups and the Parish Priest, Fr Frank Walsh SJ, was certainly never one to mince his words!

I have often taken inspiration from the photograph in the choir rehearsal room of Fr John Driscoll SJ (Choirmaster from 1901 to 1940), who glares down in confident pose, expecting – and hopefully getting – nothing less than the best from his choristers.

Fr Driscoll had a profound effect on the young George Malcolm, a pupil at Wimbledon College who became Choirmaster at Westminster Cathedral. In my school job and at the Sacred Heart, George was a constant source of enlightenment. He was, however, known to make audible comments about the clergy's singing during Mass; here, I would like to thank our wonderfully supportive clergy team – Canon David, Fr Edwin and Fr Frank – and assure them that I have no need to do the same!

Finally, I could not do my job without the support and friendship of David Gammie, soon to celebrate 25 years in the post of organist, and the amazing group of people who gather week in, week out, to 'make a cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob' at the 12 noon Mass.

On behalf of all Edgeways readers, we congratulate and thank Bob for his thirty years of dedicated ministry. Do approach Bob with any applications to join the choir, or with any queries or suggestions!

“

'Bob has steered us through some amazingly varied repertoire with expertise and a sense of humour. He has rarely missed our Wednesday evening and Sunday morning practice sessions or conducting the 12 noon Sung Mass each Sunday. This shows his strong commitment, as he drives from Leatherhead every time.

Not only do we enjoy singing 'standard' repertoire, but recently, we sang two newly-commissioned motets which were quite challenging and rather long! The composers were very pleased and impressed with our efforts.

Bob and his wife, Ola, have also hosted an annual choir party in their spacious garden for several years.

We are all very grateful for all Bob's dedicated hard work, and hope he will continue to direct us for many more years!

– Maggie Box
Choir member since 1978

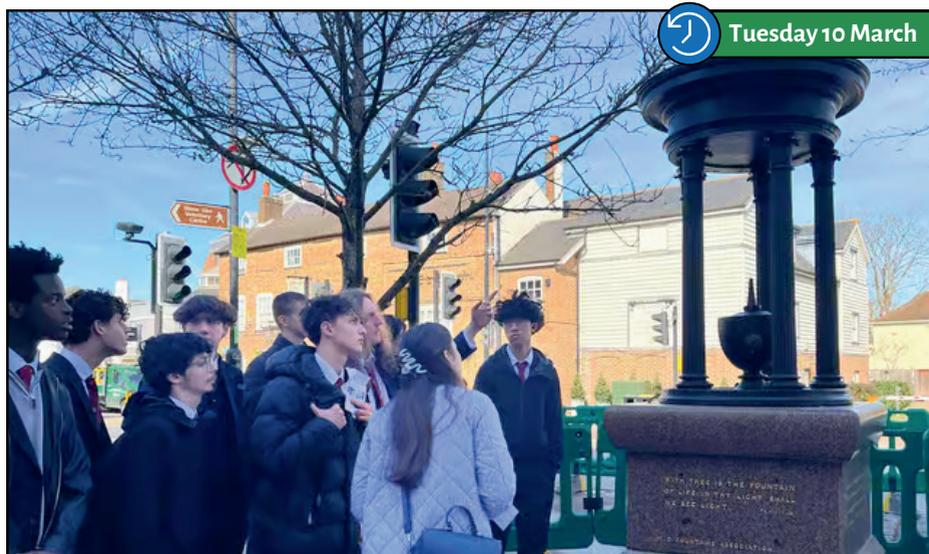
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'It's hard to believe I've been in the choir since the late nineties, but I'm far from unique in terms of longevity. It's been a real privilege to sing with Bob for all that time and to be introduced to such a huge range of (mostly) fabulous music.

He manages to get the best out of a very diverse group, with hugely varying experience, week after week. It's a tribute to him that we turn out every Wednesday evening, come rain or shine, to rehearse for the next Mass. We and the parish are very lucky to have him.'

– Julie Leadbeater

History pupils celebrate Village restoration



On Tuesday 10 March, pupils from Wimbledon College and Ursuline High School attended the unveiling of the **Hanbury Drinking Fountain** on Wimbledon Village's High Street, opposite the Rose and Crown pub.

The ceremony followed a major restoration led by Heritage of London Trust, in partnership with Merton Council and the Wimbledon Society. Over 100 young people in school history clubs, including those from our parish's schools, have been involved with the restoration through the Proud Places programme.

The Victorian fountain – now conserved, gilded, and returned to working order – stands as a striking example of Britain's nineteenth-century fascination with Greek Revival architecture, shaping the country's public monuments and civic spaces. The

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'This drinking fountain represents the ability to bring more to locals. It's a necessity for all of us: even though some of us here may not be from an English heritage, we all need water to survive. With projects like this, we can come together as a community and a culture to do something good for everyone.'

– Ben, Year 12 History student at Wimbledon College

fountain is modelled on the fourth-century BC Choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens, popularised in Britain after the publication of *Antiquities of Athens* (1762), which sparked a national appetite for Greek forms.

The fountain was originally presented to the public as a gift by Robert William Hanbury, MP and President of the Board of Agriculture. It first opened in 1860 on the Strand before being relocated to Wimbledon Common, near Hanbury's home. As part of the restoration, the fountain has been relocated from the Common to the bustling High Street to serve more passers-by.



'Soon, this will be available for loads of people to use when they're walking by. I also find it quite cool that it's been in three different locations, and the person who put it there, he lived in Wimbledon for a lot of his life'

— Emma, 12-year-old pupil
at Ursuline High School

A recent site impact survey conducted following the works highlights the positive response from local residents and visitors, underlining the importance of restoring well-loved civic landmarks.



'I'm really excited to be able to use it and experience being there for the launch. It makes me feel proud of where I live.'

— Veronica, 12-year-old pupil
at Ursuline High School

As well as young people from Wimbledon College and Ursuline High School, the unveiling event was attended by the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Martin Whelton, and brought together representatives from Heritage of London Trust, the Wimbledon Society, and the local community. The project was made



Historic fountains like Hanbury are small in scale but huge in presence. They anchor a landscape and remind us that public generosity once shaped our streets and commons. Restoring it means giving Wimbledon back a piece of its civic story, and reconnecting it to the wider classical tradition that once captivated Britain.'

— Dr Nicola Stacey,
Director of Heritage of London Trust

possible thanks to the support of the Jones Day Foundation, with delivery in partnership with Merton Council and the Wimbledon Society.

Heritage of London Trust has now restored 19 historic drinking fountains across London. In 2023, the Trust worked with Merton Council to restore the Toynbee Fountain in Wimbledon Village.



'The fountain has long been a quiet landmark on the Common. Seeing it restored to full working order is a moment of real pride for the local community. It is a reminder that heritage belongs to everyone and that collaboration makes these projects possible.'

— Asif Malik,
Chairman of the Wimbledon Society

This article and photograph have been adapted from the original by Francesca Baker-Brooker at London World: londonworld.com/your-world/victorian-drinking-fountain-restored-and-unveiled-on-wimbledon-high-street-5629801.

Gen Z religious revival?



Jesuit Young Adult Ministries, now in its 23rd year, runs popular Young Adult Masses at Farm Street Church. *Photograph: Jesuits in Britain.*

Some striking phenomena have prompted commentators to wonder if a religious revival of the sort seen in the Victorian age might be in the making.

The 'Baby Boomer' generation (born between 1945 and 1967), imbued with the spirit of the 'free-love sixties', began a drift away from regular church attendance. Their children, the Millennials (born between 1982 and 1996), have, by and large, taken no interest in religion because their parents have not done so – although they are highly engaged with self-help literature for mental health and wellbeing issues, often related to problematic relationships.

It is those coming along later, a few of whom are the young offspring of Millennials, who seem different.

YouGov studies have found that churchgoing among Gen Zs (aged 19 to 30) rose from 7% in 2018 to 23% in 2024. In 2018, 28% of young people said they believed in a 'higher power, like God'. Six years later, that figure had risen to nearly 50%.

Articles in online newspapers, particularly *The Guardian*, offer explanations and other interesting statistics. Social media has had a significant effect, particularly in families where parents have never touched on the spiritual life or religious matters. It is thought that the COVID-19 pandemic, financial uncertainties, the cost of living, the state of world politics, climate change, and the hovering strangeness of artificial intelligence have also made a difference.

Young people need answers. The newspapers differentiate between Islamic households, where children are much more exposed to the religious life, and British and European white families, where they are not. One young British woman, the press reported, had 1.3 million views of the video of her adult baptism. There are over 25 million videos on TikTok tagged '#ChristianTikTok'.

This was a topic at a lunch I recently gave for ex-Wimbledon College teacher Dr Maurice Whitehead, currently Emeritus Professor at Swansea University. For many years, he was the chief researcher and archivist of medieval documents at the Venerable English College in Rome

about the Jesuit's St Omer Foundation – work for which he has just received an MBE. He told us that there was great interest in his published theories from younger Catholics. Gen Z Italians thronged Masses in Rome – both men and women, he said – and formed lay religious communities. One such exists, of course, in a house occupied by young adult Catholics on Edge Hill today.

Very striking was the Poets and Prophets evening at the Sacred Heart. I was due to read a couple of poems from my book *Dark Lines* and wondered what the attendance would be like. I imagined that the punters would be in their seventies or more – as are those attending Wendy Tansey's poetry readings at the parish's Friendship Group each September.

I drew up and saw only seven other cars in the car park. Gosh! – an audience of a dozen at most. When I went into the Upper Hall, I was astonished to see that it was full! Eighty or ninety were there, all in their twenties or very early thirties. This was Gen Z in bulk, and not driving the CO₂-emitting cars so indispensable to Boomers such as I, but walking, cycling, or coming by bus! Hence the empty car park. An eye-opener!

The esteemed editor of *Edgeways* told me that Canon David, struck by massive attendance at Christmas Masses, had commented wryly: 'We need a bigger church!' It is noticeable when seeing livestreamed Mass online that many of those going up to Communion are Gen Z.

Gen Z Old Wimbledonians are happy to sing in the College Choir at the annual carol service (see February *Edgeways*, pp.12–13); many are active in parishes around South London, running drama groups, discussion groups, spiritual discussions, and evenings of sacred music.

Younger Catholic boys may be on the same path, if what I witnessed recently at the College gates has staying power. I had agreed to meet a pupil of mine from the early '80s and show him round the school, which he hadn't seen for over forty years. As I stood in Edge Hill, hoping he would recognise me, the College boys began pouring out at 3.15pm. There is a statue of the Sacred Heart just in from the pedestrian gate, and virtually every child touched the hem or the hand of Jesus as he passed, and then made the Sign of the Cross. My old pupil, who arrived at that moment, was amazed. 'None of us would have done that,' he gasped.

So – is society about to witness something not seen since the startled, frightened reaction to the steam engine, the 'dark Satanic mills' of William Blake, the enormous growth of London and other cities, the industrialisation of work, the march of Empire and its wars, the surge in learning after the mid-century education acts, the appearance of newspapers, magazines and novels rolled off the new high-speed steam presses and distributed by the world's first chain-store, W.H. Smith, at railway stations – and in the distance: talk of flight and the petrol engined motorcar?

Where frightening, unpredictable change seems imminent, people – particularly the young – seem to need the reassurance of religious faith.

Simon Potter

Simon joined the staff of Wimbledon College in 1972. He was Head of English from 1981 to 2002, and produced the College's plays and musicals from 1972 to 2022. Simon is still there part-time, preparing pupils for OxBridge applications and facilitating A-level English Literature revision sessions.

Mad Hatter's Tea Party

At the March Friendship Group, we enjoyed a Mad Hatter's Tea Party before which we were royally entertained by a singing 'scurry' (or is it a 'dray?') of squirrels – that is, six- and seven-year-old boys all in uniform and wearing home-made Alice in Wonderland hats from the pre-school at the top of Edge Hill, known locally as 'Squirrels' because of their grey blazers.

Thanks to Angela, Terry, Chris, and all for the preparations. Photos of the youngsters were not allowed, but you really should have been there ... !

The Friendship Group meets monthly on Friday afternoons for social activities with tea and cakes. All welcome! Please see the parish's weekly newsletter for upcoming events.



Friday 6 March

'... and why not?', you may well ask!!

Could you help the Memory Lane Club?

The Memory Lane Club is a friendly, lively, informal drop-in space, welcoming those in the local community affected by memory loss or dementia and their carers. We meet from 10.30am to 12.30pm on Wednesdays in the Lounge.

Recommended by GPs right from its opening, this popular club has gone from strength to strength since it first opened its doors in March 2015. Run by volunteers, there is coffee, cake, chat, fun, laughter, and a varied programme of activities. Carers get the opportunity to meet and share experiences with other carers and volunteers, many of whom themselves have had personal experience of looking after a loved one with dementia.

Many of our dedicated volunteers have been with us for much of the past twelve years, and we are looking for new able-bodied volunteers who can help out. We are a friendly, welcoming group that gives and receives a lot from the work that we do. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Madeleine on 07713 882280 or at wimbledonmemlanec@rcaos.org.uk.

be well New programme of health and wellbeing talks

Graham Kennedy, *parish Be Well Hub Co-ordinator*, provides an update on the initiative.

We now have fourteen parish staff and volunteers approved to operate as Be Well Champions, with five others in the pipeline.

Training parish staff is proving particularly beneficial: the team feels better equipped to discuss wellbeing at critical times in parishioners' life, such as when booking funerals, and parish clergy are signposting services. Fr Edwin and Rob Hitchcock, our Faith Minister, will be trained this month.

For example, after a conversation with a parish Be Well Champion, a fractured family relationship is being repaired.

Be Well Champions continue to make themselves available at the monthly Continental Breakfasts after the 8.00am and 10.00am Masses, and at the Café after the 10.00am Mass on other Sundays.

Be Well volunteers have now organised a monthly programme of health and wellbeing talks, which will be hosted in the Lower Hall or Parish Lounge (please see the parish newsletter). Refreshments will be served. Please do come along and invite others to do the same:

7.30pm Tuesday ... Topic and speaker

- ... 9 June **Managing wellbeing during lifechanging events**
David Hurst – based on a similar event at St Peter & Paul, Mitcham
- ... 7 July **Using listening to improve relationships**
Elisabeth Roger – a qualified psychotherapist
- ... 22 September **Be well through being positive**
Anthony Lee – our parish counsellor and qualified psychotherapist
- ... 27 October **The mental health spectrum**
Phil Hopley – a consultant psychiatrist
- ... 24 November **Maintaining mental wellbeing balance**
Tim Tweedy – a service delivery leader on Community Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services

We are planning to celebrate and promote what the parish is doing as a recognised Be Well Hub at the garden party celebrations for the Sacred Heart Feast Day on Sunday 14 June – so watch out for more news!

A big 'thank you' to all the volunteers who are giving up their time on this important service, which the CEO of South West London St Geroge's Mental Health Trust recognises may help to reduce pressures on the limited resources of the NHS.

Be well through being positive

Many people quietly carry a painful question through their lives: 'Am I a bad person?'

It is a question that rarely comes from wrongdoing. More often, it grows out of long years of self-criticism, difficult life experiences, and unresolved shame.

As a therapist working with individuals and families, I frequently meet people who believe that something is fundamentally wrong with them. They are not 'bad' – they are burdened.

'I am sad. I am bad.'

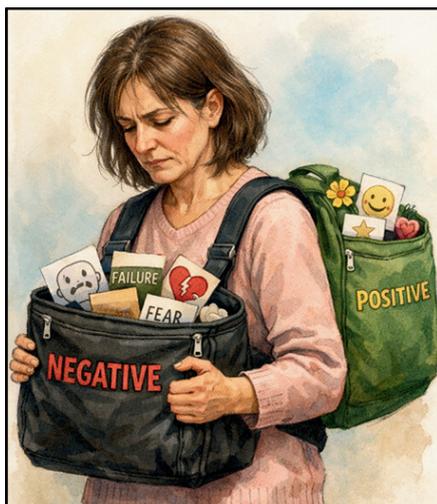
One woman in her sixties came to her first therapy session visibly distressed. Her opening words were simple but heartbreaking: 'I am sad. I am bad.'

She had prepared a list of what she believed were her personal failings: a constant fear of being a bad person, intrusive thoughts, deep shame, harsh self-talk, difficulty maintaining friendships, and a persistent worry that bad things would happen. She felt misunderstood by others and exhausted by life.

What stood out was not moral failure but overwhelming self-blame.

Carrying the weight of the past

As we spoke, her life story began to unfold. When she was five, her father's business collapsed. At school, she was labelled a 'troublemaker' and later diagnosed with ADHD. She was bullied, struggled at work, and eventually lost her job during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Over time, she came to believe that she herself was the cause of misfortune – in her family, her workplace, and her relationships. 'I am tired of carrying the past,' she said, 'but I still want to stand up and move forward.'

Many people can relate to this feeling. When difficult experiences pile up, it is easy to turn pain into a story about personal defect: 'It happened because I am bad.'

Learning to see the whole self

In therapy, we tried a simple image. I invited her to imagine that she was carrying two bags.

The first bag, hanging in front of her, was filled with past mistakes, losses, disappointments, and harsh self-judgements. It was heavy and constantly in her line of sight.

The second bag, carried quietly on her back, held her strengths: perseverance, kindness, survival skills and moments of courage. She had carried this bag for decades — but rarely looked at it.

For the first time, she paused and asked: ‘Why have I only been looking at the front bag?’

Small steps, real change

Gradually, she began to practise noticing the present rather than reliving the past. She started a daily journal to record small positives – not dramatic achievements, just ordinary moments.

She felt a sense of relief when she arrived home safely. She offered her seat to an elderly passenger on the Underground. She practised breathing exercises before going to sleep. At night, she imagined gently setting down her worries instead of carrying them to bed. ‘Small is beautiful,’ she told me one day, smiling.

Over time, she learned to respond differently to intrusive thoughts – not by fighting them, but by redirecting her attention to something kind, grounding, or meaningful in the moment.

Making peace with the past

By our later sessions, she had reached an important realisation: her past had shaped her, but it did not have to define her. The painful experiences still mattered. They contained lessons and meaning. However, she no longer needed to sit with the negative bag in front of her, blocking her view of the present and future.

‘I have turned the positive bag to the front,’ she said, ‘acknowledging my vulnerability is not a weakness. Turning negatives into positives is the beginning.’

Being positive is not denial

This story is not about pretending life is easy or that pain never happened. Being positive does not mean ignoring suffering. It means choosing again and again to meet life with compassion, awareness, and openness to growth.

When we learn to treat ourselves with kindness rather than condemnation, we make space for healing. When we allow the past to inform us rather than imprison us, we begin to move forward.

Wellbeing does not arrive all at once. Often, it starts with something very small: a moment of kindness, a breath, or a new way of seeing ourselves.

Furthermore, sometimes, the most powerful change begins with letting go of one simple but painful belief: ‘I am bad.’

So, embrace the present; look forward to the future; small is beautiful.

Anthony Lee

Anthony provides free counselling and psychological services to parishioners. All services are strictly confidential and adhere to the codes of ethics set by professional regulatory bodies. To make an appointment, please contact Thelma in the Parish Office: call 020 8946 0305 or email wimbledon@rcaos.org.uk.

**be
well**

Did you know that our parish is a Be Well Hub?

To learn more about how the parish can support your mental wellbeing and the mental wellbeing of the community, please contact Graham Kennedy at wimbledonbwhc@rcaos.org.uk.

Wimbledon Village buildings, past and present

Jane Healey offered this interesting talk on local history at the Walk & Talk on Saturday 21 February.

The two lions of Wimbledon Lodge

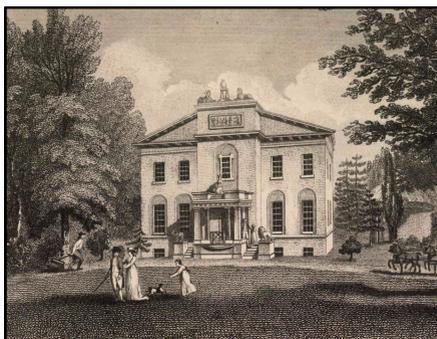
Murray Road was developed on the grounds of the former Wimbledon Lodge, a grand mansion built around 1792 for Gerard de Visme, the son of a French Huguenot. The Lodge was famous for its Greek Revival style and for two Coade stone lions that flanked its entrance. These lions still reside outside a veterinary surgery on the High Street in Wimbledon Village. Go and check them out!

Gerard died in 1798, at the age of 71, and was buried at St Mary's Church. He never married, so Wimbledon Lodge was left to his illegitimate daughter, Emily, and her husband.

Born in Portugal, Emily was brought to England in 1791, aged 4. She was naturalised by a Private Act of Parliament that received Royal Assent in 1798. In 1810, she married Major-General Sir Henry Murray, son of the Earl of Mansfield. Sir Henry fought against Napoleon in Egypt and Spain and rode his horse, St Patrick, in a heroic charge at Waterloo in 1815.

With his military career behind him, Sir Henry became a notable figure in local affairs. He was active in the Vestry, the local authority of the day in Morden. In 1840, he strongly opposed the banning of Wimbledon's annual Easter fair, calling it one of the few festivals that 'the labouring classes have the opportunity of enjoying'.

Emily and Henry had five children. One son, Arthur, was killed fighting the Boers in South Africa in 1848.



'Wimbledon Villa, the Seat of Gerard de Visme Esq.', in a 1806 engraving. Note the lions on the plinths, which survive today.

After Sir Henry's death in 1860, the family donated heavily to the new St John's Church in St John's Road when it was built in the 1870s. Emily and Henry's daughter, Gertrude, died in 1904 at the age of 90. Wimbledon Lodge was then pulled down and the grounds sold for development, with lots auctioned at the Dog and Fox.

St John the Baptist

St John the Baptist is a Grade II-listed Victorian High Gothic Anglican church.

In the mid-19th century, the railway's arrival in Wimbledon and the consequent expansion of housing south of the Ridgway created a demand for a new church. The land was acquired for £20 in 1867, and architects submitted their plans, which were to cost no more than £6,000. Insufficient funds were raised, and a temporary 'iron church' was purchased from St John's, Battersea, for £1,200. Made of corrugated iron on brick foundations and seating 500, it came complete with altar, font, and illuminated texts all over the windows and two seraphs to each entrance.

The foundation of the permanent brick church was laid on 24 June, 1873, on the Feast of St John the Baptist. It was consecrated on All Souls' Day 1875 – just two years before the birth of the Jesuit mission in Wimbledon.

The church was designed by architect Sir Thomas Jackson, one of the most distinguished architects of his generation and famous for the 'Bridge of Sighs' at Hertford College, Oxford.



The church interior, ready for a concert.
Photograph: St John the Baptist.

St John the Baptist is noted for its Italianate mosaic floor and its high, pointed barrel roof, which provides excellent acoustics most suitable for hosting the concerts that continue to this day. It features the 'decorated' Gothic style and is known for descending into the nave, symbolising the waters of baptism.

Jackson's initial plan for St John's included a tower and spire, but various underground streams in the area made them too dangerous to build. The Sacred Heart suffered from similar problems that prevented the construction of two towers.

Celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2025, St John's continues to serve the local community through worship, concerts, and social support.

Other local Sir Thomas Jackson gems

Between 1885 and 1887, Sir Thomas bought and restored the Jacobean mansion Eagle House in Wimbledon Village and lived there.

As well as designing St John the Baptist's (1875) and St Luke's (1909), Sir Thomas restored St Mary's (1920) and designed the Wimbledon War Memorial (1921). He also designed several buildings in Oxford and Cambridge, as well as at several schools across the country.

Curiously, St Thomas was responsible for preventing Winchester Cathedral from collapsing by sending a diver down into the marshy ground to strengthen the foundations, which were sinking into the peat.

Walk & Talk is a free community walk that meets at 10.30am every Saturday by the Wimbledon War Memorial. Started in lockdown by local resident Andy Yates, and now expanded nationally, the initiative invites walkers of all ages to join a local group and follow a different route each week, lasting about 50 minutes, with a different leader and theme. It ends with tea, coffee, and talk, usually at a different location. There is no need to register – simply turn up!



Wimbledon: War Memorial.
Dr Neil Clifton via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Education as a human right

Vishna Shah-Little, *Director for Child Rights Advocacy and Campaign at Save the Children International*, tells us about the universal importance of education.

Education is a human right, protected under Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). It also supports Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education for All by 2030.

In 2019, the United Nations proclaimed 24 January as the International Day of Education, to be celebrated annually as a key driver of peace, development and equality.

Each year's International Day of Education has a theme, often focusing on issues like equity, inclusion, digital learning, or education in emergencies. 2026's theme was 'The power of youth in co-creating education', highlighting the role of young people as active partners in shaping education systems.



The importance of education

According to the Global Partnership for Education, every \$1 invested worldwide in education generates about \$10 in economic growth over a lifetime. Girls' education transforms communities: every additional year of schooling for girls can increase future earnings by 10–20%.

The brain develops fastest in the first five years of life, making early learning crucial. Early learning pays off: according to the OECD, quality early childhood education can increase lifetime earnings by up to 25%. As part of the Best Start in Life strategy, the UK government is set to provide a record £9.5 billion for early years entitlements in 2026–27, more than doubling the commitment since 2023–24. This includes expanded funded childcare hours and higher funding rates for providers.

Education in Greater London

Pupils in Greater London generally achieve better academic outcomes than the national average at both primary (Key Stage 2) and secondary levels.

Around 68% of London pupils meet expected standards in reading, writing, and maths at Key Stage 2, compared with 59% nationally.

London pupils often outperform expectations relative to their starting points.

Sudan: my firsthand account

Education also plays a critical role in protecting children in crisis and conflict settings.

On a recent visit to Sudan, I saw and heard firsthand the ongoing impact of the country's education crisis.

Schools have been damaged, used as a shelter for the millions of displaced people. Chairs and desks are used as firewood.

Half of the country's school-aged children are out-of-school. I heard countless stories of children talking about how much they wanted to return to school. Out-of-school children are at risk of recruitment into worrying groups; girls are at heightened risk of early marriage; and other abuses, such as child labour, which is on the rise.

In Darfur, schools are open on average in 28% of areas, but in some areas of North Darfur, only 3% are open.

All children deserve to go to school. There is more we can do collectively to ensure that who gets educated is not a lottery of birth.



A local educator: Sister Nivedita

Sister Nivedita (*pictured above*), born Margaret Elizabeth Noble, was an educationalist and campaigner for Indian independence. In 1891, she and her family moved to 21A High Street, Wimbledon Village. From here, she began her professional life as a schoolteacher, running her own kindergarten, the Ruskin School. She went on to found a girls' school in Kolkata that promoted women's education at a time when it was rare.

In 2017, on the 150th anniversary of her birth, English Heritage installed a blue plaque to recognise her significant legacy in education and social campaigning, particularly for women's education and Indian independence. A golden statue now stands at the junction of Lake and Leopold Roads.



A reflective classroom poem – often attributed to educators

A teacher plants the seeds of dreams
in minds that grow and seek and try.
And, though the paths are yet unseen,
those seeds take root and reach the sky.

A Warm Welcome Awaits at Your Local Care Homes

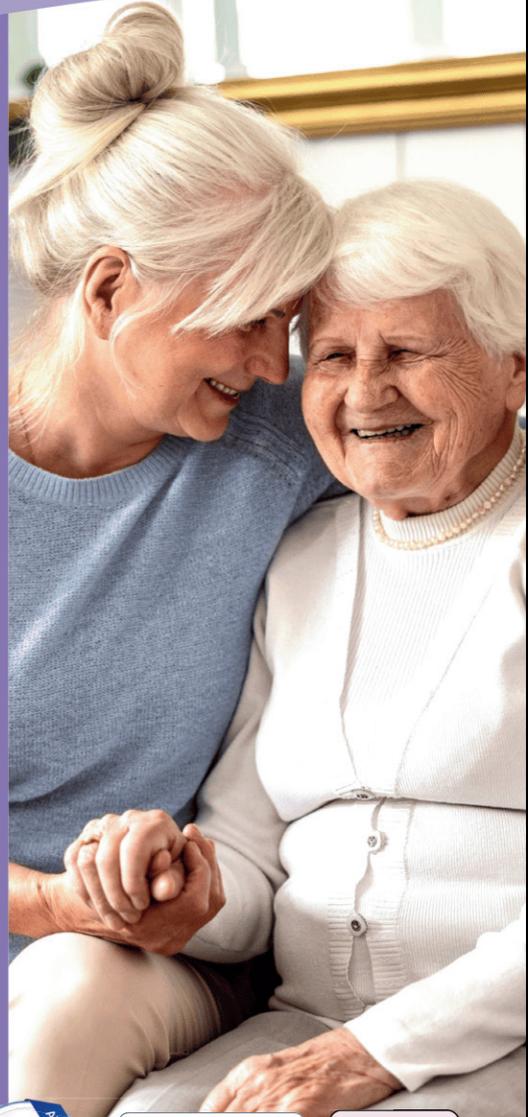
At Carter House Care Home and Link House Care & Nursing Home in Raynes Park, we provide high-quality residential, nursing and dementia care in safe, comfortable surroundings, with compassion at the heart of everything we do.

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6.30pm – 8.30pm Monday 27 April Local Election Assembly

Join us at Wimbledon College as we put Merton Citizens' Community Manifesto to candidates for Leader of Merton Council ahead of the local elections on Thursday 7 May.

The Community Manifesto contains key 'asks' on housing, living wages, digital exclusion, and mental health. These asks were developed through a year of listening, conversations, meetings, and workshops.

The evening will also feature songs, performances and testimony from Merton Citizens members.

Please support this important public event, which is not a hustling. Don't miss out on the chance to celebrate community power and be part of something meaningful! Please register at tinyurl.com/yty7ymxm, or scan the QR code on the back cover.

Our parish has been a founding member of Merton Citizens, a local alliance of civic society institutions to build power and take action for the common good in Merton, since April 2018.

Other members include: Wimbledon College; Mitcham Salvation Army; Raynes Park Community Church; Wimbledon Salvation Army; Mitcham Parish Church; St Barnabas, Mitcham; St Matthew's, Raynes Park; St Mark's, Mitcham; Faith in Action; Trinity United Reformed Church, Wimbledon; Merton Primary Team; YMCA Wimbledon; and the Merton Centre for Independent Living.

To learn more about our significant achievements and possibly share with this work, please contact David at dthurst52@gmail.com.

Could you be our parish's next Merton Winter Night Shelter Coordinator?

Run by Merton Faith in Action, this initiative provides twelve homeless men with food and secure shelter over 16 weeks from November to March. Our parish hosts for one day a week for eight weeks from January to March.

There is a team of dedicated volunteers, and you will receive a lot of support. Some organisational skills and empathy with the homeless are all that is required! You will make many new friends in the parish and get to know and help people who have been driven to homelessness. To discuss this rewarding role, please contact Nandita at sacredheartWNS@caos.org.uk.



The Arts Society Wimbledon meets monthly on a Wednesday evening in the parish's Upper Hall.

The society is a constituent member of the national Arts Society, founded in 1968, whose local societies bring people together through a shared love for the arts. The belief that the arts have the potential to enrich people's lives is at the heart of the organisation.

In Wimbledon, the Arts Society offers a welcoming place to hear expert lecturers share their specialist knowledge in a programme of illustrated live talks, which are streamed simultaneously on Zoom.

Upcoming lectures include:

- 'Cleopatra: Image and Reality' (Wednesday 8 April)
- 'Do we see what they saw? Experiencing Paintings in the Past' (Wednesday 13 May)

In addition, the Arts Society offers tailored group visits to places of interest around London and daytrips further afield. Upcoming visits include a discovery of King's Cross Station and a private tour of Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery.

A bespoke tour in the United Kingdom or abroad is also an annual feature.

New members are welcome with 2026 subscriptions: individual £45, under-30s £25, joint (same address) £85. Members receive the Arts Society Review magazine three times a year.

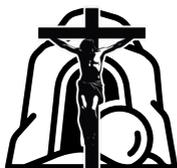
Everyone is welcome to attend lectures, with a suggested £10 donation for each visit.

Learn more about the Arts Society Wimbledon at artsocwim.org.uk. For membership enquiries, please email Beryl Steeden, Membership Secretary, at b.steeden49@btinternet.com.



Would you like to write for Edgeways?

Do you have an article that you think would be a great addition to YOUR parish magazine? We're always open to contributions! Please contact the editor at wimbledonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk.



Holy Week and Easter 2026

For the details of all our services this Holy Week and Easter, please visit the parish website or take home with you a copy of the 'Holy Week and Easter 2026' booklet from the church.

10.30am	Saturday 28 March	Lenten Penitential Service with Confessions
11.30am	Spy Wednesday 1 April	Chrim Mass (at St George's Cathedral)
8.00pm	Maundy Thursday 2 April	Mass of the Lord's Supper
10.00am	Good Friday 3 April	CTWW Walk of Witness (in Raynes Park)
11.00am	Good Friday 3 April	Children's Stations of the Cross
3.00pm	Good Friday 3 April	The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord
6.15pm	Good Friday 3 April	Younger People's Stations of the Cross
7.15pm	Good Friday 3 April	Traditional Stations of the Cross
12 noon	Holy Saturday 4 April	Święconka (Polish blessing of Easter baskets)
8.00pm	Holy Saturday 4 April	The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

*The Edgeways team wishes
you a very happy Easter!*

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

We welcome into the family of the Church those who have recently been baptised:

Olivia Alicia Mary Corea • Benedict John Rayfield • Laurence James Rayfield
Noah Alexander Dimayuga Bunduquin • Ava Isabella Chapman

We congratulate those who have recently been married in our church:

Thomas Patrick Fegan and Rebecca Salvina Mangion
Jonathan Peter Batt and Rhiannon Victoria Welch

We offer sympathies to the families and friends of those who have died recently:

Kathleen Bishop • Sheila Patrick Gallagher • Nicholas Gerard McGough
Patricia Jenkins • Margaret Jean Ethel Tolmie

LOCAL

Merton
citizens

ELECTIONS

ASSEMBLY

Merton Citizens invites you to join our Local Elections Assembly, as we put our manifesto to candidates for leader of Merton Council ahead of the local council elections on May 7th.

27th April 2026

6:30-8:30pm

At Wimbledon College

Edge Hill, SW19 4NS

The venue has step-free access
and an accessible toilet.



*Free entry. Book [HERE](#) or scan QR code →
Contact: kes.gillmartin@citizensuk.org*

