

ELSTOW PARISH MAGAZINE



Dear Parishioners,

Over the last couple of weeks, I have been looking at other ways of exploring my faith.

It began when I attended a clergy study day on the Resurrection, and heard for the first time Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*: "A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers" (1971). On the **July 4th**, at **7.30pm**, Elstow Abbey will be welcoming the Bishop of St Albans, Christopher Herbert, to give a lecture on 'The Images of the Resurrection', looking at fifteenth century art. I have heard the lecture before and, just as Bernstein's *Mass* offers a new, if 1960s, slant on the Eucharist, it is a wonderfully different way of looking at the Resurrection.

You are all very welcome to attend and, I hope, enjoy this lecture, together with refreshments and an opportunity to speak to Bishop Christopher.

Before I hand over my pen to the Editors, who have something to say to you this month, I would like to commend to you so epoch-marking and thought-provoking a work of music and theology. Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) was, as I am sure you know, the composer of the music for *West Side Story*. But he was far more than just a Musical or Hollywood lyricist. Not only was he the best-known American musician of the 20th century, he was also a very politically and socially committed person.

Bernstein's *Mass*, was commissioned by Jackie Kennedy Onassis for the opening of the Kennedy Center in Washington. The *Mass* itself, couched in the modern musical idiom, is a revealing, if not frightening, portrayal of the stress which can afflict a Celebrant. The story within the "*Mass*" is that of an exploration of personal faith in modern times. *An article on Bernstein and his music can be found on page 7 of this magazine.*

I found the Bernstein *Mass* as comforting as I found it difficult. You, I think, if you are like me, will find Bishop Christopher's lecture merely comforting.

With best wishes

Jeremy

Far East Prisoners of War

In this issue you will find a book review and an article relating to the Far East Prisoners of War (FEPOWs). The review gives *Bookworm's* reaction to the very recent publication of Brian MacArthur's "Surviving the Sword" and the article places the whole subject within the context of Elstow Abbey.



As you will read, there are to be no more FEPOW gatherings, at Elstow or anywhere else. We therefore feel it appropriate to write something as a preface to this magazine so as to mark the end of an era.

The official Ministry of Defence website states: "*The treatment of prisoners of war was governed at that time by the 1929 Geneva Convention. Japan had not ratified the convention but did say it would, in general, recognise its provisions. However, it did not do so.*" In other words, instead of there being a possibility of the accepted and age-old tension between Law and Justice, a situation was created whereby there was Lawlessness and Injustice with the conquering Japanese army eschewing any recognition of even the most basic of human rights. The rejection by the Nazis of human rights has been well and widely documented so far as the ethnic cleansing of the holocaust was concerned; but they treated their Western prisoners of war, however badly (and it WAS badly), with some small measure of attention to that 1929 Geneva Convention. We have seen on our screens the horrific events in Rwanda (chillingly related by Lt-General Dallaire, commander of the UN forces, in his shocked and polemic book "Shake Hands with the Devil"); we know of the atrocities perpetrated elsewhere in so many countries in our so-called modern and enlightened world.

Bookworm offers us a quotation: "*We had learned to hate with such a hatred that there could be no fitting punishment for the acts that had bred this hatred.*" We are, perhaps, more touched by this wholly understandable attitude even than by the appalling physical abuse meted out by the sadistic Japanese.

So, where does this leave us as Christians? Not being in a pulpit, we leave this to you to think about as the time comes to cease to remember specifically one of the greatest horrors that world history can relate.

The Editors

The Bishop of St Albans: Presidential Address Prayer

Diocesan Synod: 11 June 2005



And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. [Matthew 6:5-8]

In approximately 120 words, Jesus summarises how we are to pray. It's a remarkable couple of paragraphs, followed immediately by the Lord's Prayer. Apart from the prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane ('My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want'), that's all the teaching that there is in Mathew's gospel about prayer.

I compare the reticent teaching of Jesus on the subject with the fact that I have two entire bookshelves devoted to books about prayer. I have all those books because I suppose that I never really feel that I have deepened my life enough in Christ - and I look for help from others to help me do so - everyone, from St Augustine and St Anselm, Lady Julian of Norwich and the *Cloud of Unknowing*, through to our own generation and the writings of people like Austin Farrer, Michel, Quoist and Michael Rainsey, and Mother Teresa.

One of the questions that needs to be asked, is why we pray at all. Let me offer you something from Austin Fairer:

The Creator of the world is not to be compared with those bad novelists who make up the plot of their story first, and force the characters to carry it out, all against the grain of their natures. He is like the good novelist who has the wit to get a satisfying story out of the natural behaviour of the characters he conceives. And how does he do it? By identifying himself with them and living them from within.

One of the reasons we pray is to associate ourselves with what God, the good novelist is trying to achieve. We place ourselves within the story that He continues to write in our world, asking that He may so live within us that we may play our part in His will for that world. Our self-offering to Him is a tiny mirror image of His self-offering to us, and what we seek is that that mirror image might not be distorted by anything ungodly.

Well, if God is the good novelist, if the story told in Jesus continues to unfold, then as followers of Christ, our task is to try to discern the pattern of the story and allow God to make and remake us. In that sense, prayer is based on yearning, a profound and unutterable longing to become part of God's purpose, part of God's very self

If I can change the metaphor of the novel for a moment, prayer is like the water of a hillside stream, which bubbles and dances its way to the ocean. The spiritual yearning of the soul is as lively and inevitable as that, and is, to continue the analogy, as varied as the moods of a stream and river. There are times for the headlong rush down the waterfall, times of gentleness, times when there seems to be no movement at all, and times when we can begin to smell the salt of the ocean and we know that we have not much longer to wait.

Let me return to the novel metaphor. In the prayer written for *Vision in Action*, you will see that the very first invocation is that God should open our eyes to see Him at work in the world. John V. Taylor put it like this:

Since God's reign, in the teaching of Jesus, is an eschatological hope, the kingdom is not something Christians have to 'extend', but something they have to announce. They are not asked to be the kingdom but to receive it. They are no more called to build the kingdom than the wedding guests were invited to prepare the feast. They need to watch their language, especially in the hymns they sing.

If we are called to announce, and to receive, then we need to be able to discern God; to see Him; to get glimpses of His glory and mercy and love. Once we have asked in the prayer for sight and insight, we then seek His help:

Grant us wisdom is using our gifts

Wisdom and insight are deeply and inextricably linked but the wisdom we seek is an acknowledgement that none of us are wise. We are only on the way to wisdom - towards the *logos* of God.

... grace to enliven our churches

And what do we mean by that? Well, that word 'grace' is the key; if we are to do God's will, then grace poured upon us by God is the only way in which fulfilling His will is likely to be achieved. Grace implies a recognition that we alone simply do not have the ability, mentally or spiritually; it implies that we are not self-sufficient. And it's a necessary reminder, that it's all too easy and seductive to mistake our own egos for God's will. We pray then for grace that our churches will be enlivened, made vigorous by grace.

The prayer then moves outwards, asking God that we may be used by Him to transform our communities (it's back to the notion of the kingdom of God). You will know as well as I do the levels of unhappiness and stress, injustice and greed and envy that mark all of us and all of our communities. The need for transformation is blindingly obvious.

The first half of the prayer is thus an acknowledgement that we need grace, wisdom and courage; but even more than that, we are empty without God and only with His strength and love within us can we be part of the story being written by Him. We want to be, we yearn to be, caught up in the script - and that yearning expresses itself by seeking the energy of the Holy Spirit which will equip, excite and empower us for the future.

There is not time to say more, except that running through this prayer is the desire to follow God's vision, to see it, to be changed by it, to be drawn by it into the years ahead. The prayer ends, as all prayer should, by returning to the source and origin of the yearning: The glory of God in Jesus Christ, who, we claim, is our Saviour and mighty Redeemer. We claim it not out of wishfulness but because we know it to be true.

The *Vision for Action* prayer underlies all that we are trying to undertake as a diocese over the next few years. It is at the very heart of our endeavours, and in it we have tried to express our longing, our heartfelt, heartbreaking, heart-renewing longing that we may do God's will.

You will recall that I began this address by talking of those two or three verses in Matthew which are about prayer. There is one sentence in the Garden of Gethsemane prayer which I find very, very moving. It is this:

And going a little farther, he threw himself to the ground and prayed: 'My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.'

It is that act of Jesus, throwing himself on the ground, that I find so telling and it is coupled with his absolute self-surrender to the will of God.

None of us can know or predict what will happen to us individually or corporately as we begin to use the *Vision for Action* prayer. We are saying our 'Yes' to God's future. I hope very, very much - in fact, I **urge** each one of you, as an act of solidarity with each other, to use this prayer daily. Keep it in your pocket, by your bedside, in your Bible, in your prayer book. It really is at the heart of all we are trying to do. We are offering ourselves, our churches, our diocese, to God - knowing that out of that, if it be God's will, will come joy and abundance of life.

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Elstow Abbey and FEPOW & COFEPOW

Far East Prisoners of War & Children of Far East Prisoners of War

You will find, elsewhere in the Magazine, *Bookworm's* review of Brian MacArthur's "Surviving the Sword".

You may not, though, be aware of the history which intimately binds Elstow Abbey with those who suffered so horribly as prisoners of the Japanese in the Far East between 1941 and 1945. Further, you may not have read the earlier Parish Magazines in which articles appeared about this.

Now that FEPOW has decided to close down as a national entity on 15 August this year for the sole and very good reason that there are now so few of their members still alive and easily able to travel, I wish to "turn the page" on this and to make a few points.

FEPOW has been closing down regionally over the past few years (the last London service, at St Martin's in the Field, was held in the Spring of 2002) and the Bedfordshire branch took the decision reluctantly to follow suit earlier this year.

There is, for the first time since 1947, to be no service at the Abbey this year to perform the annual Act of Remembrance for these disgracefully unsung victims, both alive and dead. COFEPOW (website: www.cofepow.org.uk) and the lively "offspring" of FEPOW (www.fepow-community.org.uk) has decided that there simply aren't enough people with sufficient lack of frailty willing or able to travel from all parts of East Anglia to attend a service at Elstow.

So, why Elstow?

Well, you may not be aware that our Vicar, from 1953 to 1976, was one Canon Peter Hartley. As sergeant Hartley of the Beds and Herts Regiment (most of the troops captured in the Far East were from East Anglia), he was caught by the Japanese in a sampan in 1941 escaping from Singapore towards Sumatra and was interned for three and a half years. There is a copy of his book about this¹ in the back of the church, should you wish to read it. Peter took holy orders after the war and, following the customary obligatory curacy, came to Elstow and turned it into a major centre for the Far East Prisoners of War Association.

Have you looked closely at the chapel to the south of the choir? Under the great Bunyan window (and *he* was a prisoner in Bedford gaol for 12 years), there is the altar dedicated to the Far East Prisoners of War. The dedication reads: "*In memory of those who died in prison camps in the Far East 1941-1945 and in thanksgiving for those who returned...*". To the left, we read: "*My marks and scars I carry with me to be a witness for me that I have fought his battle who now will be my rewarder*". To the right, we read: "*So he passed over and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.*"

You know, of course, that our Reader, Doug Gautrey, was a prisoner out there (and to him I am most grateful for his input towards this article). You may also know that he was licensed and admitted as a Reader by the bishop of St Alban's in 1967. This was under the influence of Peter Hartley himself, while Peter was honorary chaplain to RAF Cardington at the time that Doug was serving at RAF Henlow. Now that Doug and Bay are perforce spending more and more of their retirement time in Great Barford, we see less of them than before. But they remain, like all others who suffered both abroad and at home, as much in our hearts and minds at Elstow as ever.

"We will always remember, every day, every month – not just in November."

TJE

¹ "Escape to Captivity" – The Temple Press, Letchworth, 1952

2. FEPOW website: <http://www.fepow.org.uk>

TUNES OF GLORY

This month we sing the hymn *For those we love within the veil* by the Rev. William Charter Piggott, 1872-1943, which in fact is not in our hymn book. Nonetheless the hymn has connections with Elstow, being written for the Elstow's Bunyan Meeting Church. Some years ago I worked with the late Ken Martell, a Methodist Lay Preacher, on a Service that we called "The Local Hymn Writers", and over time it was conducted in a number of churches of various denominations, in Harrold, Yardley Hastings, Christchurch, Bedford, Oakley, Olney, and others. It gave an insight into our local hymnody, and of course included hymns by John Bunyan, John Newton, and William Cowper.

It is interesting that Dr John Brown was of the opinion that the Old Meeting in Bedford should begin a preaching meeting at Elstow, in 1812, Thomas Green, Benjamin Kilpin, and Mr Manning met in a cottage in Elstow, and decided to begin a Sunday School. In 1817 it moved to the old Market House on the Green, now known as the Moot Hall. From the early days of the Bunyan Meeting at Elstow, Sunday services were held in the upper room of the Moot Hall.

In the 1870s, an appeal was launched for a Bunyan Memorial Church at Elstow. In 1880, During the Rev. W Charter Piggott's ministry, Samuel Whitbread presented a site, and plans were made for the Church to be used for Sunday Services and Sunday School, instead of the Moot Hall. On May 19th, 1910, the foundation stone was laid, and on October 27th, the Hall was opened. Dr John Brown, Mr Piggott, R H Poynter, and E P Rose being present. In November, 1915, the 25th anniversary of R H Poynter's association with Elstow was celebrated, and in 1920 the vicar of Elstow, the Rev. Stanley Hartley, preached at the Harvest Festival services. The Church was improved, and in 1929 several people received Long Service Diplomas from the National Sunday School Union, including Mr W A Cirket (for 46 years), and John Wells (for 25 years). The Elstow Bunyan Meeting owed much to the devotion of families such as the Poynters, Cirkets, Pestells, Wells, and Steels.

Therefore we will sing this hymn by William Charter Piggott of Elstow, and it is to a melody from Meyer's Seefenfreund of 1692.

John Crookall

For those we love within the veil

1. For those we love within the veil,
Who once were comrades of our way,
We thank Thee, Lord; for they have won
To cloudless day.

2. And life for them is life indeed,
The splendid goal of earth's strait race;
And where no shadows intervene
They see Thy face.

3. Not as we knew them any more,
Toilworn, and sad with burdened care:
Erect, clear-eyed, upon their brows
Thy name they bear.

4. Free from the fret of mortal years,
And knowing now Thy perfect will,
With quickened sense and heightened joy,
They serve Thee still.

5. O fuller, sweeter is that life,
And larger, ampler is the air:
Eye cannot see nor heart conceive
The glory there;

6. Nor know to what high purpose Thou
Dost yet employ their ripened powers,
Nor how at Thy behest they touch
This life of ours.

7. There are no tears within their eyes;
With love they keep perpetual tryst;
And praise and work and rest are one
With Thee, O Christ.

William Charter Piggott, 1872-1943

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) - Composer, Conductor and Performer

A gifted scholar, Bernstein took his first piano lessons at the age of ten and continued to study the instrument when he enrolled at Harvard university and at the Curtis institute, emerging as a star pupil in Fritz Reiner's conducting class. Bernstein made front-page news on 13 November 1943 when he deputised for Bruno Walter as conductor of the New York Philharmonic, achieving instant critical success. His progress as a conductor was rapid, and in 1958 he was appointed Music Director and Chief Conductor of the New York Philharmonic, in the same year he launched a series of televised children's concerts. Bernstein was also active as a writer and regular broadcaster, although he managed to find time to create a large output of works.

Although opinions on his posthumous reputation are divided, it could be reasonably argued that his work as a composer, performer and educator have had a greater influence on current trends in contemporary music than, for example, the avant-garde compositions of Stockhausen or Boulez. Bernstein kept faith with the aesthetic ideals and artistic concerns of composers from an earlier age, reaching audiences with powerful, often dramatic scores and Grafting memorable, heart-on-sleeve melodies. Bernstein's personal views on the arid and cerebral in music, often unprintable, concealed the compositional skills employed in works such as *Candida*, his Second symphony and *West Side Story*. Essentially, he composed music that was approachable without being banal, sentimental without being mawkish. Above all, he knew how to write a good tune. *West Side Story*, written for Broadway in 1957 and later adapted for Hollywood, achieves a rare mix of flamboyantly popular numbers, such as 'Tonight' and 'I Feel Pretty', and melodies that could take their place in a recital of operatic arias.

Leonard Bernstein had been a personal friend of John F Kennedy, so when a new performing arts complex in Washington was planned to honour the late President's memory, Bernstein was the obvious choice to compose a work for its inauguration. Mass opened the Kennedy Center's new opera house on 8 September 1971. It was a time of widespread public unrest and civil disobedience: young people were preoccupied by drugs and dissent; indeed the USA was a nation close to tearing itself apart: not since the Civil War a century earlier had there been such divisive issues as racial integration and America's intervention in Vietnam. The 1960s had also been a decade of unparalleled personal violence: the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 was followed by the equally traumatic killings of his brother, Senator Robert Kennedy, and the Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King.

Bernstein, composer of four musicals and three symphonies, was also the foremost American conductor of his time and had only recently retired from his prestigious but time-consuming post as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Now in his fifties, he was determined to return to full-time composition after a decade in which only two works had seen the light of day, the *Third Symphony* of 1963 and the *Psalms* of 1965. Now, fourteen years after the ground-breaking *West Side Story*, he was returning to the world of music theatre, gladly accepting the challenge to compose something grand for a significant occasion, a work which would reflect upon the political and spiritual crises of his times and empower audiences to think for themselves. 'Above all', writes Theodore Chapin, whose father Schuyler worked on the production, 'he wanted them to feel. Once they could feel, then and only then could they understand the need for the spiritual life to guide, to help, to see them through'.

The decision to compose a setting of the Latin text of the Roman Catholic Mass was influenced by the late President's personal faith and also by the many performances of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* that Bernstein had recently been conducting; he knew every line of the sacred text and enjoyed comparing it with the *Kaddish*, the Hebrew prayer for the dead which he had set in his *Third Symphony*. For Washington, his daring concept was for a theatrical work that would stretch the new house to its limits, both technically and artistically. The Latin Mass provides the spine but Bernstein wove around it an intriguing collage of texts. Some were also in Latin and connected with the Mass ritual; others were written by himself and Stephen

Schwartz, the young librettist he invited to collaborate with him after attending a performance of Schwartz's brilliant off-Broadway biblical musical *Godspell*. Their lyrics, in colloquial American, racy and youthful serve to question and to contradict the Mass's conventional statements of faith, much as the Speaker in Bernstein's 'Kaddish' Symphony has an acrimonious dispute with God himself. He labelled these interpolations 'tropes', a term used since mediaeval times for vocal music that comments on the basic liturgy. *Mass: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers*, is a 100 minute 'total experience', the dramatised story of how a man loses his faith but eventually has it restored - through love and a belief in the brotherhood of man. (Schiller's Ode to Joy, set to music by Beethoven, was another work Bernstein had recently been conducting in Vienna and Israel.) Reacting to its use of rock rhythm, blaring electric guitars and ecstatic gospel singers, one harsh critic labelled it 'Mass - The Musical', but paradoxical as it may seem, I prefer to describe *Mass* in Wagnerian terms since it employs all the arts in the service of a theatrical experience. To be specific, *Mass* is concerned with the meaning of holy communion. It is full of exuberance, mood-swings and foot-tapping vitality of a Bernstein's work. Despite early protestations of blasphemy and outrage from a conservative cardinal, the Vatican has since allowed several *Mass* performances to be given in the Holy City itself.

In the original 1971 programme note the composer said very little about his artistic aims, revealing only that 'the intention of *Mass* is to communicate, as directly and universally as I can, a reaffirmation of faith'. For the revival at New York's Metropolitan Opera House the following year he added a broad description of the work: 'The ritual is conducted by a young man of mysterious simplicity (called the Celebrant) who ... [during the course of]... the drama is invested by his acolytes with increasingly ornate robes and symbols which connote both an increase in the superficial formalism of his obligation and the burden that he bears. There is a parallel increase in the resistance of his Congregants - in the sharpness of their reactions - and in the deterioration of his own faith. At the climax of Communion, all ceremony breaks down and the *Mass* is shattered.' This most shocking moment for Catholics sees the Celebrant engulfed by the crazed congregation. They shout for action at the top of their voices: the din when the tutti is complete is quite terrifying. Already in the grip of the madness that is to overwhelm him in the most powerful scene of the drama, the Celebrant attacks the altar, hurls to the ground the monstrance and the chalice which symbolise the cross of the crucifixion and the container of Christ's blood. He slowly strips himself of his robes and goes mad before our eyes, collapsing into a halting incoherence that mingles and mangles Latin and English. (If there is a model for this moment it is surely the mad scene in Britten's *Peter Grimes*.) But such a down-beat conclusion would not satisfy the humanist in Bernstein. 'It then remains', his annotation concluded, 'for each individual on the stage to find a new seed of faith within himself through painful Meditation, enabling each individual to pass on the embrace of peace (Pax) to his neighbour. The chain of embrace grows and threads through the entire stage, ultimately with the audience and hopefully into the world outside'. For a nation wracked by strife in 1971 the prayer for peace, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, provided a catharsis that is just as meaningful today as we ponder the fate of post-war Iraq or the survivors of the famine of Darfur.

Leonard Bernstein always intended *Mass* to be a community experience in which amateurs and professionals could perform side by side. The enormous cast-list calls for marching bands and school children playing kazoos, blues and rock singers, (including an Elvis sound-alike) and a preacher straight out of *Porgy and Bess*. The role of the Celebrant, however, is one of the most challenging creations of the 20th century. Alan Titus, who created the role in 1971, went on to have a major international career as a Wagnerian baritone.

An extract from the programme notes.

© Humphrey Burton.

JRC



Christian Aid Week (May 25th – 21st 2005) house-to-house collections in Elstow.

Many thanks to all those who gave their time to do the house-to-house collections in Elstow during Christian Aid Week this year. We raised £891 in total. Elstow Bunyan Christian Fellowship also took part and raised over £200. If you would like further information about the on-going work of Christian Aid around the world, please visit the CA website. <http://www.christianaid.org.uk>

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Thank you again.

Sheila Batiuk

ELSTOW PARISH COUNCIL

Planning issues are continuing to cause concern in the village. In response to residents' complaints, the Parish Council has notified the Borough about the construction of an electricity sub-station on the Public Open Space adjacent to the Allotment Site development. This was not in any of the plans and the Planning Department has consequently issued a Planning Contravention Notice. We are awaiting a response from the developers.

We hope that residents found the Cemex exhibition about the gravel pit application useful. The deadline for comments to the County Council has been extended to 15th July, so if residents wish to make their views known please contact Vicky Davis before that date. So far, 61 letters and postcards have been sent and letters based on the Parish Council's objections are available from the Clerk. (Telephone: **376256**).

At the recent meeting, the Parish Council discussed putting additional wooden seats around the village. The Public Open Space is one area where we would like to site new seats but if residents have any other suggestions, please let the Clerk or one of the councillors know. The scheme to plant trees at the entrance to Abbeyfields has been put on hold, as we understand that residents would prefer to re-build the walls. We look forward to receiving their proposals in due course.

Finally, the Parish Council has received a letter from the Mayor indicating that he would like to attend a meeting and would be happy to answer questions from residents. We have arranged for him to attend the meeting on 19th July and we hope that residents will come and air their views. If anyone has any specific questions they would like to ask please let me know by 11th July. I can be contacted by phone or by e-mail to maea@paice31.fsnet.co.uk

Ann Paice, Clerk, Elstow Parish Council

BELL-RINGING NEWS

Bedfordshire Association – Elstow Beds - Abbey Church of SS Mary and Helena
Sunday 22nd May 2005
A Quarter Peal of 1320 Double Oxford Minor

Treble Peter Blunt
2. Dorothy Kirby
3. Ann Desics
4. Andrew Dennison
5. Jenny Thompson
Tenor Richard Entwistle (Conductor)

The bells were rung for the Annual Service of the Friends of Elstow Abbey. The Ringers were from St. Mary's Goldington and St. Peter de Merton, Bedford

Ann Desics & Steve Stanford

BOOK REVIEW

“Surviving the Sword” by Brian MacArthur (Time Warner £20.00)

*As we that are left grow old with the years
Remembering the heartache, the pain and the tears
Hoping and praying that never again
Will man sink to such sorrow and shame
The price that was paid – we will always remember
Every day, every month – not just in November.*

The “FEPOW” prayer

Brian MacArthur’s objective is to ensure that future generations do not, ever, forget the appalling circumstances under which the Japanese kept their prisoners of war. The book is an unforgiving narration of the horrors in the Far East, starting with the nightmare of the building, and, later, maintenance, of the Burma Railway. The book then moves on to an assessment of the different elements that came together to inform life in captivity (books, religion, entertainment and so on) and concludes with a wider-cast net touching on other and equally horrific events both in Malaya and elsewhere (Hakuru, Sandakan, Japan, Taiwan) in the Far East.

I will spare you this harrowing compilation of witness accounts beyond offering a few quotations from the book. One Edgar Snow commented: *“Nowhere in the world was sadism practised with greater efficiency than in the Japanese army”*. We read of *“Remorseless, lecherous, treacherous, kindless villainy.....”* An Australian officer (Lt Robin Fletcher) wrote: *“greater love had no man than that he should give up his meal for another.”* A “meal” consisted of a few grains of rotten and crawling rice consumed by men who were reduced to abject physical degradation by brutality, starvation and disease. The miracle is that that degradation was not generally spiritual, even though there were, as always, a few prisoners who failed, mostly for very good reason, to return home with their reputations or their self-esteem intact.

Anyway, as 2nd Lt David Piper wrote: “*Politely they (American rescuers on the USS Santee) asked us what it had been like, and we could not tell them....*” Pte Whitecross dispels any lingering doubts: “*We had learned to hate with such a hatred that there could be no fitting punishment for the acts that had bred this hatred.*” L/Cpl James Home wrote of men “*murdered by inhuman indifference*”.

As was recited over all-too-many a burial (and as we hear every year on Remembrance Day), I quote Laurence Binyon’s words from his 1914 poem “For the Fallen”.

*They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

All this, of course, has a special relevance to Elstow.

I cannot recommend to you a book which so unremittingly reawakens memories in such terrible detail. Its merit is that it probably achieves the author’s objective. It’s failure as a book, to me, lies in the ghastly and relentless fullness of the quoted reports. What has happened is that MacArthur, for whatever reason, has chosen not to conform to the well-known fact that one may recount a horrific scenario, but one must, if wishing to engage the reader’s heart and mind, take care not to cross the dividing line which turns such writing into an unbearable catalogue of horror from which the reader recoils in sheer anguish. You may well choose to read, but: *caveat emptor – buyer beware*.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Pork Tagalog

Cut a pork tenderloin into slices about 1cm thick, and put them to marinade with a little thinly sliced onion, 2 tbsp soy sauce, 3 tbsp lime juice (lemon juice will do if that is what you have to hand), 1 tbsp soft brown sugar and some black pepper.

Leave them for at least an hour, turning occasionally.

Then drain the meat and fry it in oil with 2 thinly sliced onions. Remove all this from the pan and keep it warm. Pour the remains of the marinade into the pan with 2 or 3 tbsp water and heat up, scraping any bits off the pan into the sauce. Pour it over the pork and onions and serve.

JMCE

ENGLISH HISTORICAL MYTHS – An Occasional Series

ROLAND (AND OLIVER)

There I was, in that draughty Iona library, with perhaps the only surviving copy of “**FAMOUS LITTLE-KNOWN PERSONAGES**” by *Spurius Historicus* open upon the small oak table in front of me. I had read, and have shared with you, **Historicus**’ take on such famous figures as John Bull, Ivanhoe, Lady Godiva and others. Now I was looking at a chapter entitled “Roland and Oliver”. I could hardly wait to find out more.

In what follows, I paraphrase **Historicus**’ text.

Roland, according to our royal author, was French. His inclusion surprised me because **Historicus** was as anti-French (see “Hereward the Wake”) as he was anti-Welsh (see “Old King Cole”). But Roland was a great European hero. *Mit his friend Oliver, he the terrible heathen Saracens hopelessly widersteht* [“withstands”] *and his horn for help to blow refuses until the very end. Ach, what a tapfer* [“brave”] *warrior was he.* This courageous and selfless (“*selbstlos*”) knight preferred to die rather than to take Oliver’s advice and seek help from his iconically virtuous overlord and commander-in-chief, the Christian paragon Charlemagne, who was leading the French troops out of Spain through the Pass of Roncesvalles over the Pyrenees after a successful crusade against the infidel Moors. Roland had been left in charge of the rearguard and *he his schuldigkeit* [“duty”] *knew*, as **Historicus** primly puts it.

It is grossly unfair to criticise **Historicus** for writing things which he could not have known to be wrong; but he *could* have known that there was something fishy about the story. Roncesvalles, for a start: it’s in the wrong place. I wish therefore to bring some light to bear on the topic.

The facts – but when did **Historicus** ever pay serious attention to such minor matters? – are as follows. Roland was Frankish, that is Germanic, rewarded by Charlemagne with properties and responsibilities in Brittany. He was a thorough-going thug, a man after Charlemagne’s own violent and acquisitive heart. Charlemagne, in 778, had, purely for personal gain, invaded Spain at the invitation of the Moorish ruler in Catalonia to help him drive back his fellow Moors from Granada who were being objectionable. The job done, Charlemagne had swung westwards along the southern flank of the Pyrenees and plundered everywhere in sight, most particularly the capital of the Basque nation, Pamplona. Hotly pursued by the justifiably irate (and Christian) locals, he had guiltily done a rapid bunk sharply northwards, via Roncesvalles, back to France, leaving Roland to cover his hasty retreat. He didn’t even have time to make it to the much easier Atlantic coast route up past Irún. **Historicus** could and should have known as much.

This rearguard action must have been especially notable for it to have been written down, around 1098, as a fully worked out poem, the Song of Roland. One of the greatest epics in European literature, it “demonstrates profound psychological truths” – (thank you, *Bookworm*).

But this is also where things start getting complicated and where **Historicus** could not have known what modern historical research has in recent decades revealed.

Let’s take Oliver: he didn’t exist until well into the 11th century. Church records prove this, as well as a contemporary late 8th century source. He was invented to counteract the rash and insensitive personality of Roland. His modesty and wisdom, added to Roland’s abrasive pig-headedness, created the perfect personality, rather in the way that a Venn diagram operates.

Then that horn: Roland was in fact only too eager to blow it. The problem was that his father-in-law, Ganelon, travelling quickly northwards to safety with Charlemagne as they looked anxiously over their shoulders, loathed him and persuaded Charlemagne that he was hearing things. It took at least a second blast to bring Charlemagne scurrying back. Too late.....

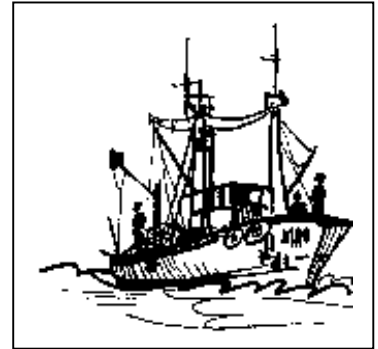
There are many more awkward facts available, but I almost prefer **Historicus**’ traditional story.

Elstow Timewatch

Sea Sunday (July 10th)

Sea Sunday has an extra significance as this year is SeaBritain 2005, a national celebration of our maritime heritage, and also the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar which will be the highlight of the festivities.

In Richard's Bay, South Africa, The Mission to Seafarers chaplain Jaco Dryer remembers the night a seafarer walked into the seafarers' centre chapel and poured out his pain and anger. "We ministered to him, prayed with him and cried with him," said Jaco. "He walked out that night uplifted with new hope in his heart. When I saw him the next day on his ship he couldn't stop thanking us for being there for him."



In Dunkerque, Phil Hiscock (chaplain) was asked by a ship's master if he could buy a church candle. "I was happy to give him one of ours," said Phil, "even more so when he explained about the regular prayers at 1800 hours on Sundays and Wednesdays that he held on board. I arranged to visit and it was good to have prayer and fellowship with him."

For 34 days, sometimes twice a day, the Mission's Bahrain chaplain Victor Salve visited a seafarer in hospital as he recovered from heart surgery. He kept the seafarers' family, who were not able to be with him, assured of his progress and well-being before and after surgery.

These stories are examples of how The Mission to Seafarers shows God's love to seafarers in a ministry supported by the prayers of parishes in the UK and overseas.

On Sea Sunday, July 10th, congregations can give thanks for the contribution that seafarers make in all our lives by remembering and praying for seafarers, their families and those who serve them.

Sea Sunday is jointly organised by The Mission to Seafarers and its kindred societies, the Apostleship of the Sea (Roman Catholic) and the British & International Sailors' Society (interdenominational).

The Mission to Seafarers (formerly The Missions to Seamen) is a missionary society of the Anglican Church. It cares for the practical and spiritual welfare of seafarers of all races and creeds in 230 ports throughout the world. Working through a network of chaplains and staff, on average each year it makes 71,400 ship visits and welcomes 602,000 seafarers to its centres, visits 900 seafarers in hospital and helps in around 1,000 justice and welfare cases.

For more details: www.missiontoseafarers.org

BEDFORD PROMS IN THE PARK

Bedford Choral Society & London Gala Orchestra

Saturday, August 6th 2005

An evening of popular and traditional classics - with spectacular firework and laser displays. Guest soloists this year will include Aled Jones

Tickets: Adults: £26 Children: £12 (under 5 years, free) 24-hour ticket line: 0870-0130645 or online at www.esterbreeze.co.uk

(Gates open at 6pm for performance at 8pm)

MUSIC AT ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, BEDFORD

Come and sing the Fauré Requiem on Saturday 15th October 2005

Conductor: Ian Smith - Head of Music and Performing Arts at Wootton School

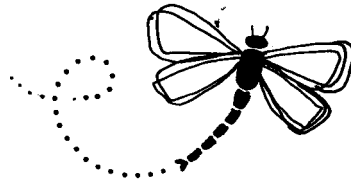
Organ: Joseph Middleton, Director of Music at St Andrew's

4 pm - 6 pm - Rehearsal

6 pm - 7 pm - Light refreshments

7.30 pm - Public performance

Tickets £5 . Further information will be available in July from St Andrew's Church Office: (01234 216881).



CALENDAR FOR JULY 2005

Saturday 2nd

10-4pm Puppets in the Church Hall
2.00pm Wedding of Kevin Ellis and Clare Dear (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
2-4pm Cardington Summer Fete at Home Farm
4.00pm Wedding Blessing of Ervine and Andrene Robinson (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)

Sunday 3rd - St. Thomas the Apostle

9.30am Family Communion with Children's Group's and the Baptism of Karl Payne (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
11.00am Morning Prayer (Mattins Group)
6.30pm Evensong (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)

Monday 4th

7.00pm Prayer Group meet in the Summerhouse
7.30pm The Bible Study 'A Journey into Faith' concludes with Images of the Resurrection led by the Bishop of St Albans.
7.30pm - Refreshments in the Church Hall. 8pm - presentation and questions in the Abbey. All welcome.

Tuesday 5th

7.00pm Choir Outing

Wednesday 6th

3.00pm Afternoon tea at the Rectory. All welcome.

Thursday 7th

11.00am Holy Communion (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
7.45pm South Beds Council of Churches AGM

Saturday 9th

1.00pm Wedding of David Blanchard and Andrea Wiggett (Rev. Steven Smith)

Sunday 10th Pentecost 8

11.00am Parish Communion (Rev. Ysmena Pentilow)
6.30pm Evensong. (Mr. Peter Moss)
7.45pm Brass Band concert at St Mary's Cardington

Monday 11th

7.00pm Prayer Group meet in the Summerhouse

Thursday 14th

11.00am Holy Communion. (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
8.00pm Finance and Standing at the Hinsons

Saturday 16th

1.00pm Elstow Abbey Summer Fête

Sunday 17th Pentecost 9

9.30am Family Communion with Children's Groups (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
11.00am Morning Prayer (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
3.00pm Baptism of Nathan and Natori Aulsberry (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)

		Crocker)
	3.45pm	Baptism of William Cook (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
	4.30pm	Baptism of Ethan Means (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
	6.30pm	Team Evensong with refreshments afterwards with guest preacher The Rt Rev. Christopher Foster, Bishop of Hertford
Monday 18 th		
	7.00pm	Prayer Group meet in the Summerhouse
Tuesday 19 th		
	8.00pm	Youth Discussion
Thursday 21 st		
	11.00am	Holy Communion (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
	6.30pm	Wedding Rehearsal
	7.30pm	Meeting of the Parochial Church Council in the Church Hall
Saturday 23 rd		
	2.00pm	Children's Workshop
	4.00pm	Wedding Blessing of Gary Kefford and Sarah Barker (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
Sunday 24 th	Pentecost 10	
	9.30am	Young People's Service (Team)
	11.00am	Morning Prayer (Mattins Group)
	Noon	The Parish Holiday begins, coach leaves Elstow Abbey
	6.30pm	Holy Communion with Healing and the laying on of hands with the Rev. Richard Howlett
Monday 25 th		
	7.00pm	Prayer Group meet in the Summerhouse
Wednesday 27 th		
	6.30pm	Choir Practice
	7.45pm	Wedding Rehearsal for Simon Litchfield and Tracey Hedley (Canon Nigel Morrell)
Thursday 28 th		
	11.00am	Holy Communion (Rev. Len Moore)
Friday 29 th		
	3.00pm	Wedding of Simon Litchfield and Tracey Hedley (Canon Nigel Morrell)
Saturday 30 th		
	12.30pm	Wedding of Magnus Witheat and Louise Martin (Canon Nigel Morrell)
	2.00pm	Wedding of Jonathan Noakes and Victoria Maddocks (Canon John Tibbs)
Sunday 31 st	Pentecost 11	
	9.30am	Parish Communion (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
	6.30pm	Evensong (Rev. Peter Littleford)
Monday 1 st		
	7.00pm	Prayer Group meet in the Summerhouse
Tuesday 2 nd		
	7.00pm	Joint Wardens Meeting at the Rectory

Thursday 4th

11.00am
7.00pm

Holy Communion. (Rev. Jeremy Crocker)
Wedding Rehearsal

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptism

May 29th 2005:

Michael Richard Abbott,
Ryan David Clark,
Jenna Ellen Ann Abbott

Marriage:

June 18th 2005

Nathaniel Abbey and Emma Stephens

Burial:

May 24th 2005

Dorothy May Thompson (ashes)

May 26th 2005

William Reginald Roberts

