



St Mary's
Harrow on the Hill

£1 The Spire

(April 2024)

British Summer Time Edition

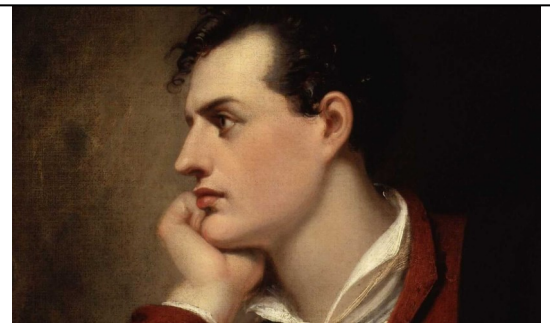
St Mary's Welcomes the Scaffolders!



Literally we go to print on the eve of the Scaffolders' arrival!
Father James tells us more inside!!

Byron Bi-Centenary Events

All sorts will be happening from 19th April as the Community joins together to assess the impact of Harrow's infamous genius poet. See our own poet's tribute inside.



In this issue:

Page 2 -Father James reflects on a stunning Easter, and the plans for the re-leading of the spire and gives details of our April APCM.

Page 5-St Mary's Choir travel to Finchley-amazing article and pictures inside

Page 6- Marian continues her reflections about the different views of St Mary.

Page 8-We circulate the minutes of the Churchfields Friends Meeting in February—the more support the better!

Page 10-Judith shares plans for September Heritage work and reports back on a visit to see a 500 year old print of the spire!

Page 11-We hear from Douglas Dodd and Ellen Bisci on the major fundraising events for May-Christian Aid Week and Ellen's Monday at the Musicals

Advance Notice!!

Sunday 5th May 3.00pm-Annual Bereavement Service

We would like to invite you to the Annual Bereavement Service at St. Mary's on Sunday 5th May at 3pm. There will be light refreshments afterwards and a chance to chat and remember. Everyone is welcome, particularly those who have suffered loss recently.

Saturday 11th May -Spire Café-will be serving up some spring-time magical culinary treats—save the date!!

St Luke's Hospice Annual Walk 2024 The Shropshire Hills Challenge

Once again, Douglas Dodd is highly involved in the St Luke's Annual Hospice Walk..On the St Luke's website they announce—Join our annual long distance walking event from Friday 3 to Tuesday 7 May 2024 for a wonderful walking trip along several long distance trails in Shropshire. Over 5 days you can enjoy some of the finest landscapes the UK has to offer while fundraising for St Luke's Hospice. You will be staying in Church Stretton at HF Holidays' Longmynd House which was once the headquarters of St Dunstan's, a charity for blinded ex-service personnel, and after WWII. supported men and women.to learn new manufacturing skills in the hope of finding employment. A blue plaque commemorating this historic period can be seen at the entrance of Longmynd House. Some of the guest rooms have balconies overlooking the wooded surroundings and beautiful views across the Stretton Valley. Find out more about our 2024 walk in Shropshire by contacting the St Luke's Hospice fundraising team: events@stlukes-hospice.org or **020 8382 8000**.

Dear Friends,

Had it not been a Leap Year, Easter Day would have fallen on April Fools' Day, Lent having started on St Valentine's Day. The last time this happened was in 2018 and it will happen again in 2029. Since the beginning of the last century this has only happened on four other occasions: 1923, 1934, 1945 and 1956. There is something rather satisfying about Easter falling on April Fool's Day! The "Queen of Festivals" ends up making us all look rather foolish and certainly challenges the accepted "ways of the world". Easter challenges almost every preconception we may have had about almost anything! It turned and it turns everything on its head. When Mary Magdalene reaches out to our risen Lord, he responds, "do not hold on to me"; resurrection reveals a new reality, one which takes us forward into the uncharted territory of the kingdom of God. Jesus tells her to look forward, to seek out his followers and speaks of new horizons and realities as he references his ascension. This particular exchange is recorded by St John but the Gospel which forms the focus of our lectionary this year is that of St Mark. His is the most enigmatic of all the resurrection accounts concluding with "So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." It would appear that even the early church found this to be an odd way to conclude the "good news" and so you will find further verses in many versions of Mark's Gospel which are now widely accepted to have not been part of the original. Of course, it could not have been quite true that "they said nothing to anyone", otherwise, you would not be reading this now over two millennia later!!

The true reality of resurrection lifts our eyes, challenging us to see the world differently. In all the Biblical accounts those who first encounter the empty tomb and ultimately the risen Christ himself are compelled to travel on, to tell others, to revisit prior understandings and reshape their outlook.

I have taken liberty of including Bishop Sarah's Easter message in its entirety. It does not shy away from the darkness of the world, yet offers real hope, out of that very darkness. "God's redeeming work took place in darkness. Whilst the scriptures have much to say about God bringing light into the world, and our Easter liturgies beautifully and joyfully celebrate the clarity and truth which light brings, nevertheless, the resurrection happened in darkness." She goes on to write, "God is present as much in the darkness as in the light, which means that the darkness can play host to acts of healing, nurture, transformation, resurrection and love." I hope you may have had the chance to enjoy Jonathan Hutchins' Stations of the Cross during Lent which communicate the darkness of the way of the cross in moving and powerful manner. They will remain during Eastertide heralding a final image which reflects resurrection on which Jonathan is still working.

On Palm Sunday, a first-time visitor to St Mary's made reference to the spire on which he looked daily and which, on this occasion, had beckoned him up the Hill to the church. I have made frequent reference our spire lifting our sights and pointing to another realm; "a-spire to God." You will be familiar that the spire, originally erected by John Byrkhede in 1450, is now in need of significant restoration work. That work begins this month on Monday 8 April. The first task will be to construct a scaffold to enable the work to be carried out. The whole project will last until mid-November so for the greater part of this year the spire will be covered in scaffolding as the work progresses.

While we have raised the bulk of the necessary funds, there is still a shortfall, so fund-raising will continue and indeed, if you felt able to make a further contribution to this exciting project which will ensure the spire continues to raise our sights and those of the many who come after us, then do please do so.

In recent years I have endeavoured to hold our Annual Parish Church Meeting (APCM) as close to St Anselm's Day as possible; this year the APCM takes place on St Anselm' Day – Sunday 21 April. On that day there will be no sermon at 10.30 and the meeting will follow the service in church. All members of the Electoral Roll have a right to vote and everybody is welcome. It is particularly important this year to elect members of the PCC who will have a role in the appointment of new incumbent so do please make the APCM a priority.

With every blessing

Fr James

Father James Announcement to the PCC re commencement of works!!

Dear All,

Following a meeting Pauline and I had with Heather Cerowski, our Quinquennial and Church architect and representatives from Stone Edge Conservation today, I can confirm that the works on the spire will begin on Monday 8 April. The initial task will be to erect the scaffolding which will remain in place until mid-November.

The contractors will do their best to keep disruption to a minimum but there will be some consequences of the work. It will be necessary to clear some of the vegetation from the base of the tower which will include the removal of the holly tree and a number of the shrubs. In addition the footpath at the base of tower will be closed off. Entrance to the tower will be maintained but access will only be possible from the north side of the church.

During weekdays there will some restrictions on parking on Church Hill to facilitate access of the scaffolding lorries.

This is an important and exciting project which will ensure the spire remains in good condition for another century or more. We have a little more fund-raising to complete but I am confident we can rise to that challenge. Thank you for all you have done so far to make sure we can make a start.

THE BISHOP OF LONDON'S EASTER MESSAGE

'As we have journeyed through Lent this year I have found myself thinking a lot about darkness. We often use the language of darkness and night when talking about the difficult times in our lives and the tragedies we witness in our world. There is no shortage of crises in our world right now: events in Gaza, people dying on desperate journeys in the English Channel, the ongoing strife in Ukraine, the contrasts of poverty and plenty in our neighbourhoods, the racial injustice which scars the lives of our communities - to name just a few.

We easily reach for the metaphor of darkness when we want to express how this all feels.

Yet on the morning of the first Easter, in the garden, Mary Magdalene's astounding experience began in the dark. 'Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed.'

The stone had been removed and the body of Jesus had gone. God's redeeming work took place in darkness. Whilst the scriptures have much to say about God bringing light into the world, and our Easter liturgies beautifully and joyfully celebrate the clarity and truth which light brings, nevertheless, the resurrection happened in darkness.

The theologian, Dr Selina Stone, in her beautiful Lent book, *'Tarry Awhile'*, writes about 'God who specialises in working in the darkness'. She says:

'God receives an offering and makes a covenant with Abram in the dark (Genesis 15:12-21). It is in the dark that Jacob wrestles with God and receives a blessing (Genesis 28:10-22). It is at night that Rahab negotiates safety for her whole family and earns her place in the genealogy of Jesus by hiding the spies (Joshua 2). Darkness represents deliverance for the children of Israel, separating them from the Egyptians who pursued them (Joshua 24:7). Deep darkness is one of the marks of God's presence, the place from which God's voice comes forth (Deuteronomy 4:11; 5:22-3). Darkness is the place and space of encounter with God.'

Realising this gives me so much hope, because it reminds me that we don't need to wait for the light before we can know God's presence and power. God's works of transformation do not wait for the dawn. God is present as much in the darkness as in the light, which means that the darkness can play host to acts of healing, nurture, transformation, resurrection and love.

I pray that the hope of Easter may be known in the hardest situations in our world and in each of our lives, and that with Mary we may know the reality of resurrection in the darkness.'

+ Sarah London

Our Choir Travel to Finchley

An article from Alison Smart Fisher, Director of Music at St Mary-at-Finchley.



This year's Young Voices Festival was held in at St Mary-at-Finchley parish church on Saturday 8th March. There were 13 young singers from across the London area and beyond including 7 from St Mary, Harrow on the Hill. What a beautiful sound they made under the sure direction of Tim Smith (St Mary, Harrow on the Hill)! Organist Keith Brown (Our Lady Of the Assumption and St Gregory, Warwick St) played beautifully and this was also an opportunity for young organist Macie Sutherland to observe a choral evensong for the first time.

Music was by Jonathan White, Ghislaine Rees-Trapp, and Simon Lole, with traditional hymns including Crimond with a descant. Prayers and reading were expertly delivered by the choristers and we can assure you that this whole event was a great confidence-boost for all participants. They had prepared the music well in advance. This event was devised by Penny Davison, Keith Brown, Tim Smith and Alison Smart Fisher, under the umbrella of the newly formed email group 'Church Music London'. The event was then also promoted by RSCM. If you would like to be on the emailing list for future events please contact churchmusiclondon@gmail.com


As Mary assumed more importance the variety of information about her increased. Dante was very positive: *“You are the bright torch of charity and amongst mortals a babbling fountain of hope.”* As the Middle Ages advanced, so did the Joys of Mary which varied from five to nine and occasionally more. Seven, a sacred number, was the most common. Traditionally these were taken from the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Purification, finding the missing Jesus discussing scripture in the Temple, the raising of the dead from Hell, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Assumption. There is a carol, *“Seven Joys”*, which differs markedly in that it features Mary taking delight in giving birth and then six actions of her son - seeing Jesus make the lame to go, giving sight to the blind, reading the Bible o’er, bringing the dead to life, upon the crucifix (presuming she knew about redemption and the propitiation of sins), wearing the crown of heaven. Later tasks were added - making the cooked straight and changing the water into wine.

In contrast are her seven sorrows - the words of Simeon at her Purification, the Flight into Egypt, the release of Barabbas not Jesus, meeting her son on his way to Golgotha, the Crucifixion, the Descent from the Cross and the Entombment. A thirteenth century poem tells how she stood and *“beheld her son on the rood that her son was y-pinned on. The mother beheld her child's blood which out of his wounds did run.”*



Mary is often depicted as a rose. The refrain of a Middle English song stresses this: *“of a rose, a lovely rose, of a rose I sing a song”*. In art she is often depicted with roses in a garden. *“Reflections of Mary in gardens sometimes brought to mind the primal scene of Eve’s sin. Mary’s mission appeared early on as the reversal of Eve’s dying”*.* Both were shown together in gardens as early as the 4th century writings of Ephrem the Syriac. The macaronic Hymn to the Virgin dated c. 1300 has a verse which contrasts the sinning Eve with the Christbearing Mary: *“All this world was forlorn, Eva peccatrice, till our Lord was y-born genetrice”*. There are paintings which show Mary holding her offspring with a naked Eve nearby to stress this. Sometimes they are on either

side of the tree of life to indicate how Mary is the counter-balance to Eve. One such work of art has Eve with a skull to represent how she caused death to enter the world and Mary distributes communion hosts to a small congregation to indicate that she was the mother of the one who instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper.



In the thirteenth century the Pieta with Mary nursing Jesus's body in her lap, just as she had at the beginning of his life, was devised as a means of contemplation for religious women. This then developed into images of her fainting whilst at the cross when the body was taken down. Sometimes the focus seems to be on Mary rather than Jesus as they show five swords, one for each wound, piercing her breasts to illustrate that the words of Simeon had come to pass.

Some regard Mary as an intercessor and advocate as in these thirteenth century examples, *“Lady bring us out of woe, of sin, of grief, of sorrows, of sighing, also to bliss that is endless.”* *“Hail Mary! I am sorry, have pity and mercy on me. My lady, to thee I cry.”* *“Maiden mother mild, hear my prayer. Thou art fair and full of sweetness”*. Ephrem the Syriac declared her to be a refuge for sinners and endowed with pity and grace. A Latin motet has the words which translate as *“You are the advocate for sinners. Pray for us. Intercede for us to Jesus Christ our Lord.”* The Hymn to the Virgin pleads, *“I cry to thee, do thou see to me. Lady, pray thy Son for me”*.

Saint Silouan (1866 -1935) wrote about people in front of an icon who wanted information about which Mary was not forthcoming. They asked seven questions: tell us how you loved your son, what your soul experienced when you held your son, how did you raise him, how has your soul suffered, how have you grieved at the betrayal by Judas leading to the crucifixion, what was your joy at the resurrection, about your life with our Lord. However all the answers were kept private *“for you did not want all these to be in the written word. You covered these mysteries with silence.”*

*Miri Rubin: *Mother of God* (2009): page 311.

The other quotations are taken from books and sleeve notes in my collection.

Illumination of the Tree of Life and Death, Berthold Furtmeyer, 1481.

Churchfields Friends Meeting Feb 29th

Feedback from Inaugural Meeting – Cllr Hickman

Flooded Footpaths –

Engineers have investigated - “fast water leak flowing down the footpath within Churchfields heading down to the footpath junction at the northwest corner of the park, indicated on the attached plan.

There appears to be a broken land drain that has flooded under the footpath and coming out through multiple cracks along the footpath”

This water is pooling at the junction of footpaths at the corner of Churchfields. This is the only area that currently can be considered flooded, as the footpath from Roxborough Park to Churchfields was dry and there was no ponding that I could see. The ditch channels on the north side of the path are quite heavily covered with mud and silt.

I advise a slit trench to be excavated to determine the location of the broken land drain to repair, it shouldn't be too deep, under 30cm I would expect, but this would likely need to go across the footpath. There is also a surface water pipe from the school that is discharging onto the footpath and adding to the flooding”

Emerging Issues.

Safety of residents – some discussion of recent offences.

ASB – drug-taking, drinking and dealing on Church Fields.

Litter and flytips.

Meadow-management (community re-seed).

Activities for Children and Families.

Disabled access points.

Historic Points of interest – Lower Church Yard / Air Raid Shelter.

Why have a Friends group?

A Churchfields Friends Group would unite the different community groups who have an interest in the long-term management and maintenance of the space (resident groups, Harrow School, church, local Scouts, dog-walkers, primary schools).

A Churchfields Friends Group would be a strong resident voice to be consulted in the strategic and operational management of the space.

A Churchfields Friends Group will be able to bid for additional funding to improve the space, protect and develop bio-diversity, improve safety and access.

Ian Pearce – Harrow Parks Forum – Why join? The benefits.

Umbrella organisation for 25 Park Groups.

Members have Public Liability Insurance.

Users Group would have a 5-year plan, with targets for YI.

Harrow Parks Forum support in the first year, attends meetings to support and advise.

Good contacts with Council Officers and teams.

Practical support for projects e.g.

Harrow Nature Heroes – nature trail for children.

-Litter picking groups.

-Community planting.

-Crime Survey with advice on what steps to take.

-Funding applications e.g. UKSPF – £5K.

Link to funding opportunities here [Harrow Funding Update / Bulletin](#)

If we wish to constitute a Parks Group, we will need:

Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Community Warden

The founding group would just be responsible for the first year and galvanising support. X4 meetings a year. Ideally, non-partisan once fully established. (Cllr Hickman happy to be founding secretary in the first instance until we are established).

Group had some discussion about whether Churchfields should be a 'Park' Users Group or a 'Conservation' Group. The space is referred to as Churchfields Open Space and perhaps is not a conventional park but equally our ambitions are community-focused.

Conservation groups are run by Harrow Nature Conservation Forum, as the name suggests, are very much focussed on 'green' issues as befits their larger, mostly Green Belt sites. Because of the urban location of most of our parks, Harrow Parks Forum tends to have a broader community view.

Conservation groups are run by Harrow Nature Conservation Forum, as the name suggests, are very much focussed on 'green' issues as befits their larger, mostly Green Belt sites. Because of the urban location of most of our parks, Harrow Parks Forum tends to have a broader community view.

[Harrow Nature Conservation Forum - Maintaining wildlife diversity in our nature reserves in north London \(harrowncf.org\)](#)

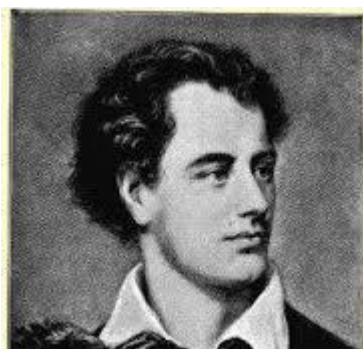
Next Steps. **1. Friends felt there was a benefit to setting up a users / friends group but wanted to know whether we would be best served by Harrow Parks Forum or Harrow Nature Conservation Forum. 2. Cllr Hickman – to contact Harrow Nature Conservation Forum for advice and the possibility of next steps. 3. Next meeting – a decision and constitute a Churchfields Group.**

George Gordon, Lord Byron
1788 - 1824

On the nineteenth of April this year, it will be the two hundredth anniversary of the death of Byron, one of England's greatest romantic poets. He was also a pupil at Harrow School from 1801 to 1805 so it is fitting that we remember and celebrate him this month.

Before I addressed myself to writing a poem about Byron for this page, my poet friend Frank McDonald wrote this for us. It is written in three ottava rima, a favourite verse form of Byron's. Alongside it is one of Byron's most famous and best-loved poems.

Dorothy Pope



Lord Byron

Dear Byron some may say that you were mad
But surely never dangerous to know.
Your many foes would claim that you were bad
But it may be that fools had made you so.
Today you would be called a likely lad
As likeable as sun or Christmas snow.
You gave us poems that sparkle and delight.
Indeed you walked in beauty, like the night.

A Harrow schoolboy who would rise to fame
Fighting for Greece and darling of the Muse.
You cast a spell on men who made their name
In music, art and poetry. You would choose
To favour independence. You became
The Lord of Europe with outrageous views.
Death may have snatched your elegance away
But Byron, you still speak to us today.

Your prisoners, lovers and adventurers
Brought entertainment to your fellow men.
You were the scourge of thieves and plunderers
And critics found you had a lethal pen.
An early pop idol, you had your worshippers.
A poet like you we will not see again.
Two hundred years beyond your final breath
Your literature still storms the gates of death.

Frank McDonald

She Walks in Beauty

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

Lord Byron

Heritage Pages



Plans for September--Judith Shepherd is planning a Routes, Networks and Connections themed walk and talk for the afternoon of Saturday September 14th for the 2024 Heritage Open Day Festival. As you can see from the Heritage days poster above the theme this year is all-encompassing including roadsigns, methods of transport and hidden pathways. We are sure that Harrow can provide all sorts of interesting trivia about transport and transportation. If you are available to help Judith please let her know either in church or via the parish office.



It was actually quite exciting to go into the archives and see the drawing laid out. The dexterity of the drawing is incredible and Richmond Palace must have been quite something. It is a panoramic depiction of the Thames water side in 1550. It was definitely worth a trip out and the Orleans House Gallery is free to visit. It's quite interesting that it used to be the home of the French royal family. It also has a lovely cafe!

500 year old print of St Mary's Spire- --In February Judith Shepherd went to the Orleans House Gallery to see a 500 year old print of the oldest depiction of Saint Mary's Spire. It was drawn by Wyngaerde in about 1550 as part of a portfolio of drawings of all the palaces owned by Mary Tudor. Our local historian (Don Walter) said it's the oldest picture of St Mary's Spire.

Antonis Van der Wyngaerde, Richemont (Richmond Palace from across the Thames), 1562. By permission of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Borough Art Collection, Orleans House Gallery.

News Round Up—May Fundraisers to Look out for



In 2024, Christian Aid Week will take place from 12th to 18th of May.

Christian Aid Week is an annual event across the United Kingdom, in which a door-to-door fundraising drive takes place by the Christian Aid charity. Christian Aid is a charity who work with 700 local organisations across about 50 countries around the world. They help poor communities and enable them to deal with hardships, from climate change to the threat of natural

disasters. Alongside this, Christian Aid also help with the education, sanitation, health, and reconciliation of certain communities

This year, Christian Aid Week will focus on malnourishment and poverty faced by many people around the world. For example in Burundi, here is one woman's experience.

Coming back from the edge isn't easy when food can be scarce, disease prevalent, and jobs hard to come by. If you have a home, chances are there's no electricity or running water, and it may not even survive the next storm. Aline, pushed to the brink, was abused, homeless and hungry. But Aline pushed back. She found a lifeline through Christian Aid funded small business training and she set up as a grocery wholesaler. This meant Aline achieved what had seemed impossible, a vital income for her and her children. You can help ensure more people in Burundi get the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil their hopes and ambitions

If you live in the parish the usual red gift envelopes will be distributed via the Church but people will be offered the chance to donate online to give to the Christian Aid address for donations.

<https://fundraise.christianaid.org.uk/envelope-2024/st-mary-harrow-hill-202>

Ellen Bisci Presents (!) “Monday at the Musicals” 20th May.

Ellen Bisci writes-Last year I organised a charity concert “Monday at the Musicals” in aid of two charities that have supported me. The concert was a huge success with over £6,200 being raised and I even ended up on the BBC London News which was very exciting. Due to last years achievements, I am currently organising my second event which will be on the 20th of May at 7.30pm at St Paul's Church (The Actors Church) in Covent Garden.

As most of you will know, I had cancer twice in my childhood and have now been left with many late effects from the treatment. Over the past few years I have been raising awareness for the late effects of childhood cancer, and have been campaigning for improvements in not just awareness but support and better long term care for individuals like myself. Musical theatre has brought a lot of happiness to my life over the years. Throughout my health issues it's always been a place that I could visit and forget about everything else. So that's why I wanted to organise “Monday at the Musicals” to say thank you to an industry that has brought me so much happiness whilst raise money for the charities that mean so much to me.

This year the concert will be in aid of Trekstock (a charity which supports young adults in their 20s and 30s living with and beyond cancer) and Children with Cancer UK .If you're free on the 20th of May it would be a joy to see you there! Here is the link for tickets:

<https://actorschurch.org/whatson/join-the-stars-of-londons-west-end-as-they-come-together/>

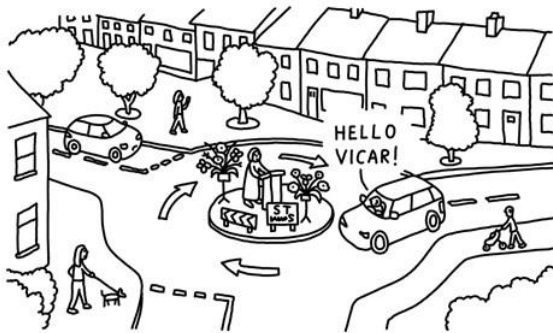
If you cannot make the concert but would like to support the event you can make a donation here:

<https://www.givewheel.com/fundraising/2081/monday-at-the-musicals/>

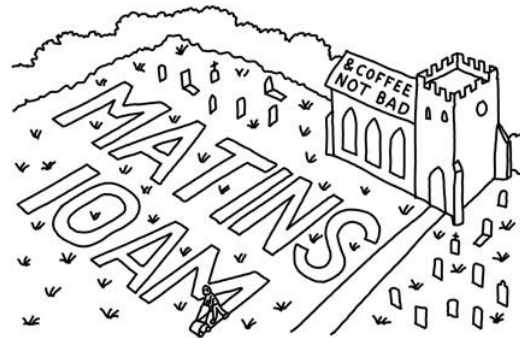
ADVERTISING IN CHURCH!

Another of Dave Walker's "sideways looks" at the church! It had been suggested that we might explore putting advertising hoardings on the scaffolding which will be erected around the spire this month. While we have further fund-raising to do, I think may have been a "step too far", although it is indicative of the fact that we have explored all sorts of ways in which to raise the necessary funds for the restoration work which will now cost £512,231.12.....you can't get more precise than that!! Anyway, here are some advertising suggestions from Dave Walker....

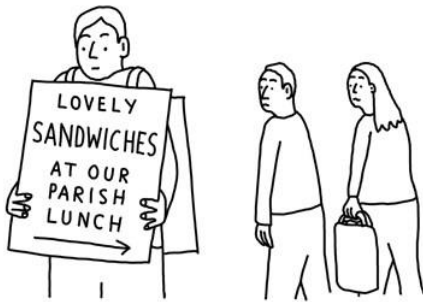
ADVERTISING POSSIBILITIES FOR CHURCHES



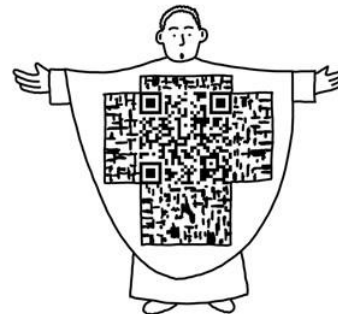
SPONSORING A ROUNDABOUT



A CHURCHYARD MESSAGE



A SANDWICH BOARD



QR-CODE VESTMENTS