

# St John's Church

*serving Stanborough, Lemsford, Cromer Hyde*



*April / May 2026*

**£1**



# Photos from Mothering Sunday



### ***It doesn't feel like anything is happening...***

As I write this, my arms are feeling a bit shaky. Not because I'm nervous or excited, but because I've just come back from a spot of weight training.

Weights are something I've successfully avoided for the last 52 years, largely because they've always slightly terrified me. But I keep reading that if I want to stay strong as I get older, I need to take action now. So, a couple of times a week, I find myself turning up at the gym and paying good money to pick up heavy things and put them down again. Repeatedly.

The slightly frustrating thing is that it doesn't feel like anything is happening. You do the exercises, you go home, you might feel a bit achy the next day... and that's about it. No dramatic transformation. No sudden surge of strength. No rippling biceps. Just the quiet sense that I've done something that might, eventually, make a difference.



And when you think about it, quite a lot of life is like that.

We tend to want positive change to happen quickly. Big moments. Clear breakthroughs. Instant results. But most of the time, that's not how it works. More often, change comes through small, repeated choices. Turning up. Trying again. Letting go of something, bit by bit. The kind of

*(Continued on page 2)*

### **Opposite - Photos from our Mothers Day Service:**

Flowers, biscuits, Bible drama, amazing post-service cake – and lots of laughter, love and care.

**Cover Photo:** One of the impressive windows in the Brocket Chapel at St John's Church

## Vicar's Message - *continued*

*(Continued from page 1)*

change you barely notice while it's happening.

Which brings me to Easter.

At its heart, Easter is the claim that love is stronger than death — not just as a comforting idea, but as something that actually happened. Jesus, who was crucified and buried, rose again. Not resuscitated, not a ghost, but alive in a new way that changed everything for those who encountered him.

That is a big claim. And for those of us who believe it, it means that this new life is not just something in the past — it is at work in us now. But not always in a thunderbolt kind of way. If you look at the stories that

follow the resurrection, the people around Jesus don't suddenly become fearless or certain. They are still confused. Still working it out. Still, in many ways, the same people — just slowly becoming something more. The biggest thing Christians believe ever happened begins more quietly than you'd expect.

So, perhaps that is the invitation this Easter. Not to look for something dramatic, but to notice where life might already be stirring, however faintly. And simply be open to God meeting - and strengthening us - there.

*Happy Easter!*

*Kathryn*

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## Andy Chapman of Lemsford Local History Group Continues with cartooning

Andy has been very busy with cartoons again this month and this time brings us: From Stephen to Lord Mount Stephen—Stephen’s Rise to Power!

It’s a really impressive thing - see the inside back cover. Also read about Lord Mount Stephen in the Lemsford Local History Group Article

## LEMSFORD FETE

Monday May 4th\* 2026  
12-4pm

Ticket prices:  
Adults: £2  
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Children free

Free parking



Sorry, only guide and assistance dogs allowed.  
No smoking or vaping.

\*Star Wars fancy dress encouraged

Lemsford Village AL9 7TR      www.lemsfordfete.co.uk

## May 4th be with you!

This year early May Bank Holiday falls on May 4th and you know what that means: Our Lemsford Fete has a strong Star Wars Theme running throughout. See Fete Chair, Paul Butler’s Article on Page 7.

## Stop Press: Next Bishop of St Albans Announced

Downing Street has announced that the Rt Revd Dr Andrew Rumsey, currently Bishop of Ramsbury in the Diocese of Salisbury, is to be the next Bishop of St Albans. Bishop Andrew returns to the Diocese in which he was born and baptised, describing the appointment as “a homecoming” and saying he is thrilled to be joining a “fine team”.





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## The Church Gardens by Mary Douglas

Have you noticed the flowers in the church gardens so far this year? Firstly we had snowdrops, mostly self-seeded although there are a few named varieties that the gardeners have added.

We then cheered up the winter wetness with polyanthus (on special offer from Aylett Nurseries). They will flower again in later years.

We bought a sackful of daffodils two years ago and others have been added as gifts. They have really flourished and are covering the bank well.

Hyacinths along the front walkway are mainly ones we have replanted from tributes in the Garden of Remembrance once they had finished flowering. We have some shrubs, Irises and Roses for later in the year. However, our gardens are quite extensive and the gardeners would welcome any offerings that parishioners might give us.

The garden is a place for quiet reflection and there are plenty of benches on which to settle. We welcome everyone to enjoy it and also to weed it! As a regular event the gardeners meet on Monday mornings between 9.30-11.30 but some gardeners have a small patch that they care for and some offer us spare plants. If you would like to join us or have plants suitable for our plant stall at the Fete, please do make contact.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers who are: Doreen W, Michael W, Geoff W, Emma L, Jo P, John B, Gus E, and Andy G...and with gratitude to our neighbourly farmer Julian Sherriff.

*Mary D.*





## The Lemsford Fete! – Monday 4th May 2026

As we prep for this year's Fete it is worth noting that it will be a special date with an added dimension to the fun. For those of you who know your Star Wars folklore the 4th May is known as Star Wars Day or May the 4th (check out the BBC news article link below).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/56977270>

As such we'll have a few linkages to the legendary film series, so don't miss the chance to don any outfit you might have yourself and join in the fun.

Alongside the futuristic link this year our classic coconut shy, archery and crockery smash will be back along with the traditional maypole dancing and brass band. You'll also get a chance to meet local members of the galactic Herts Fire Service during the afternoon if you want to clamber over a fire engine or try on the kit.

For those of you with thrill seeking teddy bears who want to go interstellar bring them along and give them a treat of a ride on our teddy bear zip wire from the church tower.

Our musical programme for the afternoon will have a very strong jedi in training vibe with a number of performances whether music or gymnastics from talented local youth and school groups alongside our more seasoned legacy performers.

In addition to our usual Pimms and local real ale tent we will be trialling cream teas alongside the usual cakes. We'll also be moving the food stalls around a bit so that the playground area should feel a bit less hectic and you can sit and enjoy your food and the main arena performances. The BBQ will be moving out to the field, as will the Bar.

Our commitment to environmental awareness and responsibility continues as we reduce more of the single use products and increase the use of recyclable materials. As previous years we'll not be selling water in single use plastic bottles, so please bring along a water bottle and we will happily top these up.

With the increasing enthusiasm to make card payments many of our stall will accept either contactless payments or the use of QR codes to enable



*(Continued on page 10)*



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# Holy Week & Easter 2026

22<sup>nd</sup> March (Sunday)

3pm - St John's@3 Easter Journey (all age)\*

29th March (Palm Sunday)

8am - Quiet Communion

11am - Parish Holy Communion

1st April (Holy Wednesday)

7 pm - Night prayer

3rd April (Good Friday)

2 pm - An hour at the cross with readings,  
reflections & music

5<sup>th</sup> April (Easter Sunday)

8am - Quiet Communion

11am - 'All Together' Holy Communion  
with Easter egg hunt!\*

\*Children are always welcome at all our services, but these services are particularly suitable for young people!

## ***The Lemsford Fete! – Concluded***

*(Continued from page 7)*

you to pay. We will still be accepting cash if you wish (No £50 notes - sorry), but to help us all please have a mix of coins and lower value bank notes as that will help us all.

Whilst you can bring your favourite teddy bear, **please DO NOT bring your dog unless they are a registered guide or assistance dog** as the school grounds are a no dog's zone.

The fete is completely run by volunteers from the school and church communities of St John's Lemsford and all proceeds go to the school and church, so please come along and support us. We hope you will come and enjoy an afternoon of great food, drink, music and games. For a complete insight to the event, timings, and attractions check out our website:

[www.lemsfordfete.co.uk](http://www.lemsfordfete.co.uk)

***Paul Butler, Fete Chair***



# **SUNDAY CLUB**

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**For children of all ages  
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and snacks!**

**Every 2nd Sunday of the month  
during the 11am service**

## Children and Young People at St John's by Jo Brooks

Do you have a favourite movie? Are you perhaps a sci-fi fan? What about Star Wars? You: Sure, who isn't? But what's that got to do with anything?

This year our amazing Lemsford fete falls on National Star Wars Day, May 4th. And in case this is news to you, Star Wars Day is so called from the 'blessing' that the Jedi and rebels (the goodies) speak to each other as they step into battle against the evil Empire (baddies). 'May the Force be with you' runs as a golden thread throughout the films.



You: OK, but still not sure where you are going with this? Me: Stick with it!

Many Christian writers see echoes of God's story of love and salvation in the Star Wars story. Both centre on a battle between good and evil, on sacrifice, and ultimately on rescue and redemption. And maybe in that Jedi 'blessing' there's an echo too of the Holy Spirit, the helper sent to us by God to guide, comfort, strengthen and make us ready for life as a follower of Jesus.

You: Still wondering...anything to do with kids and families at St John's?  
Me: Yes!

April begins with **Easter** and we'll be meeting together at church to celebrate again God's great rescue, and his never-ending, death-defying, life-giving love for every one of us, through his Son Jesus.



Join us on **Easter Sunday, 5th April** at 11am for **All Together worship and a delicious Easter Egg hunt.**

May is busy too with **St John's @ 3 Wild Worship for Spring on May 17th**, there'll be food, activities, time to pray and explore together, from 3pm (obvs). The **All Together service for Pentecost is on May 24th**, and we'll be celebrating the arrival of the Holy Spirit – expect a party atmosphere for the birthday of the church!

*(Continued on page 15)*



Photos from - St John's School

As we approach the end of a relatively short term it is good opportunity to see how much we have been able to fit in since the beginning of January. Here are a few of the highlights:

## **RE Enrichment Day**

At the start March the children took part in one of our RE Enrichment Days. This term the focus was Spirituality with the children working in their classes and house teams. During the morning the children thought about looking up, looking in and looking out in order to find those reflective ways of connecting with themselves, with others and with God. In class during the morning the children reflected on a set of age-related questions relating to spirituality. We were very impressed with their quality of thought and depth of thinking. During the afternoon in house teams they thought about the times and places spirituality is evident at St John's. These included, "making good choices," "in RE lessons" "in church," "reading my book," "being together." New displays in the hall capture some of the learning coming from this special day.

## **Science Week**

We have just come to the end of this year's Science week, the national theme which has been 'What is your question?' To start the week our year 6 children presented resources and explanations relating to a number of



topics including magnetism, space, microscopes and rocks. Each year group visited the hall to find out about these and other topics from our year 6 scientists before then producing their own questions to explore during the week in class. During the week topics included magnets, earth and space, rocks, light, and electricity.

## **World Book Day**

This year, children were invited to come to school on World Book Day with their favourite teddy bear and favourite book. It has become a St John's tradition to celebrate World Book Day by sharing one book across the whole school and responding to it in lots of different ways. The chosen book this year was 'Abdullah's Bear Needs A Name' by Yasmin Hanif and Sophie Benmouyal. The children enjoyed this heartwarming story together in which Abdullah receives a

*(Continued on page 15)*

## Services

### April 2026

<b>1st</b>	<b>Holy Wednesday</b>	7 pm	Compline (Night Prayer)
<b>3rd</b>	<b>Good Friday</b>	2 pm	An Hour at the Cross with reflections readings and music
<b>5th</b>	<b>Easter Sunday</b>	8 am	Quiet Communion (BCP)
		11 am	All Together Holy Communion followed by Easter Egg Hunt*
<b>6th</b>	<b>Easter Monday</b>	TBC	Pilgrimage to St Albans Abbey
<b>12th</b>	<b>Easter 2</b>	11 am	Holy Communion with Sunday Club*
<b>19th</b>	<b>Easter 3</b>	8am	Quiet Communion (BCP)
		11am	Reflective Worship
<b>26th</b>	<b>Easter 4</b>	11am	Holy Communion with Baptism

### May 2026

<b>3rd</b>	<b>Easter 5</b>	8 am	Quiet Communion (CW)
		11 am	Holy Communion - Exploring Faith Together
<b>10th</b>	<b>Easter 6</b>	11 am	Holy Communion with Sunday Club*
<b>17th</b>	<b>Easter 7</b>	8 am	Quiet Communion (BCP)
		11 am	Reflective Worship
		3 pm	St John's@3 Wild Spring*
<b>24th</b>	<b>Pentecost (Whit Sunday)</b>	11 am	All Together Holy Communion for Pentecost*
<b>31st</b>	<b>Trinity Sunday</b>	11 am	Healing Service
		4 pm	Thanksgiving and Remembering Service

## Children and Young People – Concluded

*(Continued from page 11)*

In between, **Sunday Club will be meeting on Sunday 12th April and Sunday 10th May** at 11 am during the morning service. There'll be crafts, games, stories and snacks. Chat to me, or another Sunday Clubber if you want to know more.

And **finally**, yes, we'll be at the **Fete** as usual on **Monday May 4th** and this year with **Star Wars themed crafts, plus prizes** for any children who complete the treasure hunt, or who come in Star Wars costume – find us between school and church opposite the teddy zip wire!

Me: May the Lord be with you, this April, May and always! You: Amen!

Contact: [joholifield@gmail.com](mailto:joholifield@gmail.com) | [revkathrynalford@gmail.com](mailto:revkathrynalford@gmail.com)

## News from St John's School - Feb 2026 - Concluded

*(Continued from page 13)*

teddy bear for Eid – it's particularly special as it used to belong to his Abba (his father). The story is centred on Abdullah's search for just the right name for his teddy bear.

We will be soon holding our school Easter service at St John's. The service will be on Thursday 26th March and will consist of readings, hymns and prayers, followed by an Easter Egg hunt once we return to school!

We wish you and your family a very Happy Easter once it arrives,

Best wishes,

*Mrs Boylan*

*\* Children are welcome at all our services, but these services and events are especially suitable for families and children (as well as people of all other ages!). BCP Book of Common Prayer; CW Common Worship. NB Kathryn's day off is Friday each week*

# Help us 'Fuel' this Rocket - see opposite



# St John's on a Mission for a New Playground

For over fifteen years, the wooden play equipment at St John's School has been a backdrop to the laughter and physical growth of our local children. From the first days of Reception to the final summer of Year 6, this equipment has served generations of the "St John's family".

For those of you that visit the school may have noticed, time and the British weather have taken their toll. Our playground is now reaching the end of its usable life. To ensure our children continue to have a safe, engaging, and adventurous outdoor space, the Lemsford School Association (LSA) launched an ambitious fundraising mission back in September called: Mission 26-26.

## Our Vision

To fully refresh the playground with modern, durable equipment, we require a total investment of over £40,000. This is about more than just "play"; it is about providing a space where every child develops the physical confidence and social skills that will serve them for a lifetime.

Our specific target for this campaign is to raise **£26,000 in 2026**.

## A Fantastic Start: £9,400 Raised!

We are absolutely delighted that we have already raised over £9,000, thanks to the incredible energy of our parents and recent school events. From cake sales to discos, our fundraising efforts are in full swing! We are especially proud of our families who recently completed a massive sponsored feat, clocking up 2626 miles between them to help bring our new playground one step closer to reality. This is a wonderful milestone, but it means we still have a mountain to climb.

## How Our Community Can Help

We are reaching out to our neighbours, local businesses, and former pupils and families who have passed through the gates of St John's to help us bridge the final gap.

If you have ideas, business connections, or would like to make a donation, please contact Faye and the LSA at [stjohnslemsfordlsa@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnslemsfordlsa@gmail.com) or speak to me directly.

Thank you for helping us give our children the wonderful play space they deserve.

*Faye*

In the last edition I started the History of The Great North Road - now enjoy part 2.

### **Part 2: Last of the Romans to Queen Victoria (1840)**

In 1100 to 1600s Hertfordshire's main routes were not paved highways but rather ancient, unpaved ridgeways and Roman roads used for walking, horse riding, and cart transport. Traffic consisted of pedestrians, knights, pilgrims, cattle drovers, and merchants. Extra information was sent to me by Jack Brown.

*'The main roads were called Drovers Road and would be used to transport Cattle, Sheep and even Geese to Smithfields. If you look on early Ordnance survey maps you can find parallel hedges about forty feet apart which indicates a drover's road.'*

Jack is a great friend of the Lemsford Local History Group and is also known as H.J. Brown, Historian (more information below).

The Post Office which originated from 16th-century royal courier networks, formally becoming a public service in the UK in 1635 and a state monopoly in 1660 made great use of the GNR. This traffic encouraged more pubs and inns to be built.

### **The Era of Post-Boys and Horses (1516–1784)**

Mail was carried by "post-boys"—messengers on horseback—who rode between "post houses" or inns placed about 10–15 miles apart. Simple, often unprotected horse-drawn carts were used alongside riders. Roads were poor, and post-boys were vulnerable to robbery, making the service slow for nearly 150 years.

### **The Mail Coach Era (1784–1850s)**

In 1784, John Palmer introduced specialised mail coaches to replace post-boys, significantly increasing speed and security. Improved, durable coaches were painted red for visibility and operated by contractors. These coaches operated on major **turnpike roads** between London and major provincial cities. The armed guard, the only Post Office employee on board, carried pistols and a blunderbuss to protect the mail. In the next edition I will talk more about the inns and turnpike roads in this area during this period.

*(Continued on page 19)*

*(Continued from page 18)*

*'Jack is over 100 and lives in Hull but was a North London boy. His grandfather was Lord Mount Stephens head game keeper who lived in 'Gamekeepers Cottage' in Cromer Hyde. The following article about Lord Mount Stephens includes a photo of the Lord and George V shooting at Brocket Hall. One of the boy beaters is Jack's father. Jack wrote an article 'A Victorian Gamekeeper' - go to [www.hjbrownhistorian.co.uk](http://www.hjbrownhistorian.co.uk) to read it. The site includes many memories and is a must-read website.'*

On 22 January 2026 I enjoyed the annual senior residents New Year Lunch at the Terranova restaurant. Owner Vince and his wonderful staff provided its usual excellent fayre as well as a friendly atmosphere and great service. The Terranova is one of the gems of Lemsford Parish. Another gem is the lady who makes this possible, Carol Hicks. Her hard work, organisational skills and imagination make this annual event, along with her days out in the summer, legendary. If you ever wondered how her involvement in this organisation started, below is the answer in her own words.

*'Jean Dance, due to ill health, felt she couldn't run the welfare club anymore so Carole Payne and I became Secretary CP and Treasurer CH on 20.8.2014. First Christmas lunch was at the Stanborough on 9 December 2014. The first trips Maidenhead and Windsor 19 May 2015 and Southend 15 September 2015.*

*Part of the money that paid for these trips came from 'The Lord Mount Stephen Fund' set up January 1947 after the sale by the Charity Commissioners of the Leasehold property known as the **Lemsford Nurses Home (now Gosmore)** proceeds were invested in War Stock and later M&G Charibond Charities Fixed Interest Fund. The Charibond closed in June 2025 and The Trustees of the Fund were:*

*Arthur Ronald Nall, Baron Brocket  
Geoffrey Lindsay Sherriff  
Reverend Mitchell  
Bernard Wallis  
Joyce Hattie*

*(Continued on page 21)*

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## Lemsford Local History Group - Continued

*(Continued from page 19)*

*The first meeting of the Trustees was August 1952 and was for the benefit of sick poor persons resident in the Lemsford area. The grant of money so as to enable recipients to obtain special food and medicines, medical comforts, extra bedding, fuel and medical surgical appliances. This carried on each year with different Trustees. Mrs Jean Dance became a Trustee in 1985, a name many will remember.*

*In 2001 it was agreed to end individual gifts and give all funds to Lemsford Old Peoples Welfare now known as Lemsford, Stanborough and Cromer Hyde Senior Residents. Bruce Sherriff and Jean Dance with different vicars carried on as Trustees of the fund. Jean Dance passed away in June 2017. Bruce invited Carole Payne and Carol Hicks to a meeting and drinks not much was discussed about becoming Trustees until he asked us to sign the book. BUT that was Bruce's way. Annual meetings continued until Bruce Sherriff died in February 2020. Carole Payne and Carol Hicks received files from Bruce's estate and with the closure of the Charibond Fund we decided to close the Trust and money was distributed to various groups in the village.'*

Carol's article talks about the Mount Stephens Trust and how he left the nursing home to fund the trust. How the Home was built is an interesting story.

*'The Wagon & Horses' (or Waggoners) was located opposite St John's Church at the site now occupied by Gosmore House. It was owned by a member of the Slight family who was a waggoner by trade. When he decided to open his house to the public for the sale of ale the choice of name was obvious! In 1882 the owner was Charles Higby Lattimore. The occupants were George and Lydia Hill.*



*George was a watercress man. Eventually however, Lord Mount Stephen and the vicar, the Rev F. Coggin, prevailed upon the brewers*

*(Continued on page 23)*



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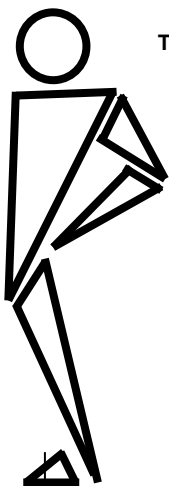
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*to close the pub down because of its proximity to the church and the lewd behaviour of the customers when the congregation came out the church on a Sunday. It was closed circa 1890 and demolished. It was replaced in 1900 by a house for a resident nurse to serve Lemsford & Ayot Green/Ayot St Peter areas and was later described as a Nursing*



*Home - all funded by Lord and Lady Mount Stephens. One source has called the Inn 'The Star' another 'The Church Gate'. It is thought that the latter name, however, may have been used merely as a description of the inn's location.'*

AI generated image of what the scene might have looked like

George Stephen, 1st Baron Mount Stephen, Bt GCVO (5 June 1829 – 29 November 1921). Stephen was born in 1829 at Dufftown, Banffshire, in a cottage built by his grandfather. He was the son of William Stephen (b. 1801), a carpenter, and Elspet, daughter of a crofter. He was educated at the parish school, leaving at the age of fourteen to work variously as a stable boy, shepherd and in a local hotel. The following year he was apprenticed to a draper and silk mercer at Aberdeen, before moving to London in 1848 - first working for a draper and then at a wholesale dry goods house.

The Stephen family came to Montreal in 1847, and George joined them in 1850. For the next twelve years George worked for his cousin, who left him the business after his death in 1862. In 1866, after a myriad of ventures which made them both a fortune. By the late 1860s, Stephen had become one of the foremost financiers in Montreal. By 1873, he had become a director of the Bank of Montreal, and three years later he was elected president. He remained as president until 1881, resigning to turn his full attention to running the company that would build the Canadian Pacific Railway. He was

*(Continued on page 25)*

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## Lemsford Local History Group - *Continued*

*(Continued from page 23)*

elected to the Montreal Board of Trade in July 1864. Stephen had begun investing in railways and formed the Canada Rolling Stock Company in 1870.

In 1879, the syndicate purchased the struggling Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad for \$5.5 million. In 1885, they sold the railroad for \$25 million. Stephen became the first president of Canadian Pacific Railway and held the position till 1888. The Last Spike of the CPR, On 7 November 1885, at Craigellachie, British Columbia, Donald Smith famously hammered home the last spike in the railroad. Stephen remained a director of the CPR until 1893.

From the mid-1880s, Stephen began to spend an increasing amount of time in England. Tired of the business and politics that surrounded his life in Montreal, when he retired from the CPR in 1888, he settled permanently in England. The Stephens kept a London residence at 17 Carlton House Terrace and from 1893 leased Brocket Hall near Hatfield, Hertfordshire. He was good friends with King George V and enjoyed shooting weekends at his home in England, Brocket Hall. A tireless worker, in private life Stephen was retiring with only one real passion – salmon fishing

Though best remembered today for the Royal Vic, he reserved the bulk of his fortune for the Prince of Wales Hospital Fund in London. Stephen worked closely with the future George V in creating its endowment fund and was its most important benefactor, having made gifts to the amount of £1,315,000. Lord Mount Stephen had been created a baronet in 1886, and in 1891, he had the honour of being the first Canadian to be elevated to the Peerage of the United Kingdom. He was created Baron Mount Stephen of Mount Stephen in the Province of British Columbia. Lord Mount Stephen was appointed a Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order in 1905. He married his first wife, Annie Charlotte Kane (1830–1896) in London, on 8 April 1853. Charlotte was the first Lady Mount Stephen. She died in London on 10 April 1896 and was buried in Lemsford churchyard. The couple had no biological children, but had adopted a young woman in Montreal, Alice Brooke, purportedly the daughter of a Vermont clergyman.

*(Continued on page 26)*

## Lemsford Local History Group - *Concluded*

*(Continued from page 25)*

In 1897, after the death of his first wife, Mount Stephen remarried Georgiana Mary (known as Gian) Tufnell (1864–1933). Gian Mount Stephen had a stillborn daughter in March 1900, and there were no other children of the marriage.

Gian, Lady Mount Stephen gave Queen Mary a diamond riviere

necklace, which was later given to Princess Margaret, who wore it on her wedding day. Lady Mount Stephen died in 1933 at Cuckfield, Sussex, and is also buried in Lemsford church graveyard.



When Lord Mount Stephen died in 1921, after providing for his wife, stepdaughter and charities, he left £1,414,319 to be divided between nineteen relatives, which worked out at about £75,000 each. Though hardly an inconsequential sum, he gave substantially more to charity than he left to his individual heirs. These included Lemsford school and church. The Life of Lord Mount Stephen is in comic form on the inside back cover.

If you have any questions about Lemsford parish history or want to share Memories email us at [info@lemsfordhistory.co.uk](mailto:info@lemsfordhistory.co.uk) or go to the website [www.lemsfordhistory.co.uk](http://www.lemsfordhistory.co.uk)

### 100 Club January & February Results

Thanks to everyone, parishioners and friends, who are supporting the '100 Club'. If you'd like to join contact Nigel Johnson - see directory

Month	1st Prize	2nd Prize	3rd Prize
January	No. 63 - £90.90	No. 12 - £54.54	No. 34 - £36.36
February	No. 87 - £92.70	No. 118 - £55.62	No. 62 - £37.08

## Judas Iscariot: A Balanced Scorecard Perspective

You know how at the nativity you got cast as a shepherd, or perhaps worse, a sheep, when really you wanted the part of Joseph, or Mary.

Similarly, when it comes to the Easter story, the part you really don't want is Judas Iscariot, and that's the character I got.

But Judas is not a pantomime baddie, he's actually a complex character. Here's my 'balanced scorecard' [bet you never thought you'd see that phrase in this magazine!] look at him. And, why am I doing this? Well it's all Faye's fault actually, because to fit in her excellent playground appeal (see page 7) I had to add 4 more pages to this magazine. I hope you find it as interesting to read as I have to research.

Few people in history have a reputation quite like Judas Iscariot, and if I'm honest, he's probably the one character most of us are quietly relieved not to be associated with. His name has basically become shorthand for betrayal, hasn't it? But as I started digging into his story a bit more—partly out of happenstance, as you've just read—I found myself thinking he's actually a lot more complicated than we tend to give him credit for.

The thing that really struck me first is that Judas wasn't some fringe figure hanging around on the edge

of events. He was right there in the inner circle, one of the twelve closest followers of Jesus Christ. And not just present, but trusted. I mean, he was given responsibility for the group's money, which tells you something straight away. You don't hand over the purse strings unless you think someone's dependable, so at some point, Judas must have been seen that way by the others.

And yet, somewhere along the line, things start to slip. The Gospel accounts hint that he wasn't entirely careful—or entirely honest—with that responsibility, and then of course you get to the moment we all know about: the thirty pieces of silver. It's easy to jump straight to condemnation there, and fair enough, but I found myself wondering how you get from being trusted with the finances to making a decision like that. It probably didn't happen overnight.

What really stays with me, though, is the relational side of it. This isn't just a bad decision in a vacuum; this is someone turning against a teacher he's followed closely for years, someone he's eaten with, travelled with, listened to day in and day out. And it's not just about Jesus either—you can imagine the effect on the rest of the group. If you were one of the other disciples,

*(Continued on page 30)*



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Oak trees have a powerful image; they are regarded as long lasting, solid, and generally admirable. This is not just an English thing, notwithstanding Nelson's famed use of oak in his ships. About 2,700 years ago Isaiah wrote (in chapter 61) that he had been sent to proclaim a year of the Lord's favour when the broken hearted, and captives, and those who mourned or grieved, would be lifted up so that: "They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour."



It was therefore a profound shock when driving into Welwyn Garden City recently to see a large oak tree completely detached from its roots and lying on the ground. The previous day there had been high winds which had proved too much for this particular tree although a surrounding grove of even larger oaks were unscathed. Why was this one singled out for destruction?

On looking into this puzzle, I discovered that the state of our oaks is worrying. Because they live so long they can be attacked by pests, diseases, and climate changes, sometimes all three at the same time. In 2008 researchers identified what they called Acute Oak Decline (AOD), a worsening of the condition of oaks through multiple factors.

In response a Government-funded

programme was set up christened Action Oak which commissions research and issues Annual reports. Its vision is that our native oak trees are protected and flourish, both now and in the future.

Something else I learned is that our native oaks are not really native at all. After the last Ice age about 9,500 years ago there was a repopulation of oak trees spreading from Spain and southern Europe. Around 6,000 years ago, people migrated from mainland Europe into Britain, bringing new farming practices that quickly replaced the hunter-gatherer way of life. This shift transformed the landscape: oak trees were felled for building homes, fuelling fires, and clearing land for crops. From that moment on, oak became woven into Britain's history and culture.

Let us hope that Action Oak succeeds.

*You can read all Geoffrey's Nature Notes at [geoffreyhollis.com/nature-notes](http://geoffreyhollis.com/nature-notes)*

## Judas Iscariot: A Balanced Scorecard Perspective

*(Continued from page 27)*

how would you feel after that? It must have shaken everything.

Now, I know there are some alternative perspectives on Judas, and I think it's worth at least acknowledging them. Some people suggest he might have been trying to force Jesus' hand, almost pushing events to a point where Jesus would reveal who he really was in a dramatic way. Personally, I'm not entirely convinced, but even if that were the case, the way Judas goes about it—quiet deals, slipping off to speak to the authorities, keeping it all hidden—still feels like a pretty major breakdown in trust. It's that going-behind-people's-backs bit that really hits you hard.

And if I'm being honest, that's the part I recognise most easily, because it's surprisingly human. Not necessarily the scale of what Judas did, but the pattern of it. You know how it is when something's bothering you, or you're not quite on board with what's going on, and instead of talking it through, you just keep it to yourself and let it grow? I can definitely see how that kind of thing, left unchecked, can drift into decisions you wouldn't have imagined making earlier on.

What complicates things even more is what happens afterwards.

Matthew's Gospel tells us that Judas feels remorse—real remorse—and even tries to give the money back. So we're not looking at someone who just shrugs and walks away. There's an awareness there, a recognition that something has gone badly wrong. It's just that by that point, it's too late to undo it.

And I think that's where the story stops being just about Judas and starts nudging a bit closer to home. Because if you strip away the scale of it—the history, the theology, the enormity of the consequences—you're left with something quite familiar: someone who was trusted, who lost their way, who made a decision in the wrong place and at the wrong time, and who only fully grasped the impact afterwards.

So yes, Judas has gone down in history as the ultimate betrayer, and that label isn't going away. But the more I've looked at it, the less he feels like a cardboard villain and the more he feels uncomfortably real. In fact, if I'm honest—and you might not like this bit any more than I do—there are ways in which Judas isn't as far removed from us as we'd like to think.

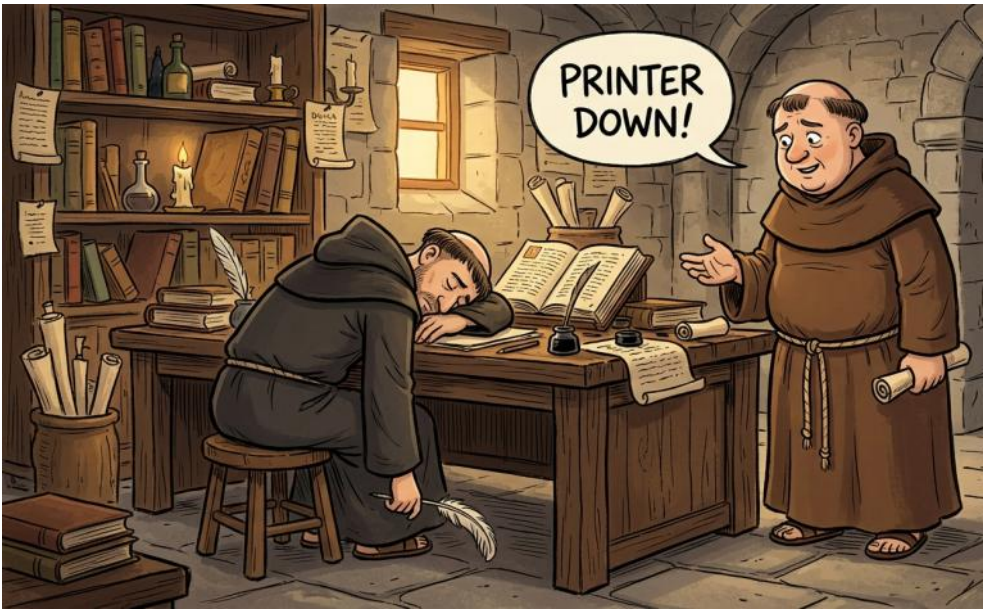
- *Ed.*

## Prayer for Peace

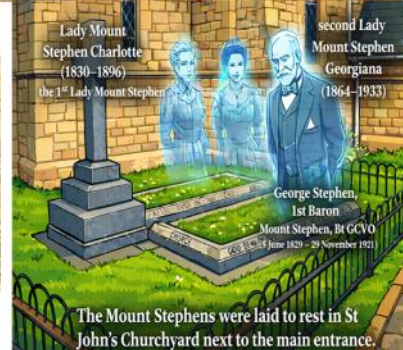
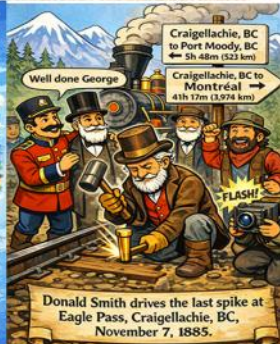
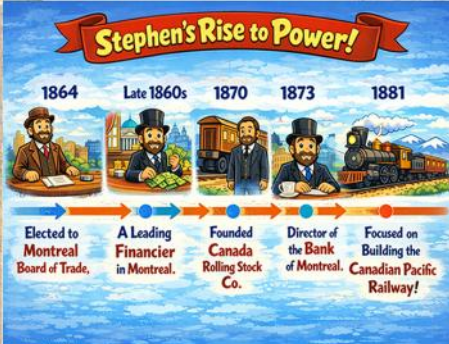
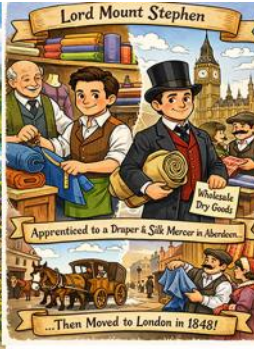
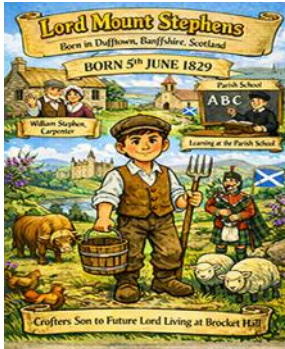
**We pray for an end to warfare across the planet. May the leaders of nations come to see that war should only be a last resort against evil, not the first choice for resolving disputes.**

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah 2:4, KJV.

*And finally... Nothing new under the sun.*



# From Stephen to Lord Mount Stephen



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