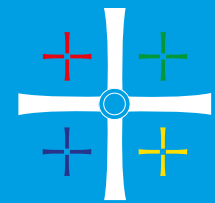


Free for All



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

NOVEMBER 2017



BISHOP ALAN, BISHOP OF THETFORD, SAYS GOODBYE TO STOKE HOLY CROSS

We have really enjoyed our time living in Stoke Holy Cross. Highlights would be the quietness and night skies with no street lights, giving us a view of the splendour of the stars. Walking to the bottom of the garden and watching the barn owls hunting along the Tas Valley. We had a few cold winters when we first came, and the frozen flooded meadows were beautiful. And the sunsets.



As the picture shows, one member of the family will really miss the garden and the view, and the excitement of a passing muntjac or pheasant.

It has also been a treat to live near to Caistor Roman Town, and to be able to enjoy the wonderful walks there, along with so many friendly local walkers and dog-walkers.

It has been strange living in a village that we regret we have not been able to get to know well as my role has taken me to 275 churches all over south and east Norfolk. We are grateful, however, for the welcome we always received from those of you we have met, and we will miss Stoke Holy Cross.

The move to Wymondham will bring some practical advantages including a rather better laid-out house for the work of a Bishop. It will be a more accessible place for those who have to visit me, particularly for users of public transport.

We leave with many happy memories, and wish you all in this lovely community God's richest blessings.

Alan and Pippa, Tasha and Belle

Some of our local birds photographed by Liz Dack

See Liz's article on page 5

ARMINGHALL, CAISTOR ST EDMUND, STOKE HOLY CROSS with DUNSTON

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Praying for real

Is God there? Does he care about what's going on? Is he going to do anything? Why does he let people get away with those things?

These are questions that lots of us might ask from time to time. Some of us ask them very often. They are the sort of questions that can make us worry if it's ok to ask them. They are the sort of questions that people who have followed Jesus for a long time often ask, and really worry if it's ok to ask them.

For about 2500 years, people have been using the words of the Psalms as they talk to God, both together and on their own. They are the prayer book of the Bible. Given that Jesus knew them so well, and mentions so many of them in the gospels, we might even say that they are God's prayer book.

We spent a long period through the summer months this year reflecting on the Psalms in our churches, and we were reminded again of something that some of us knew already, but perhaps all of us found surprising again. We discovered that the sort of questions which I asked at the beginning, and which feel a little dangerous for our faith, are exactly the sort of questions that people ask in the Psalms over and over again. We discovered that while the writers of the Psalms often find in the course

of their praying that God is there, and does care, and is acting, and won't let people get away with it forever, that they are still allowed to ask those questions.

As I have thought about this a little more, I have realised that this shows us something important about what God is like. If I were God – always a dangerous way to start a sentence – I would probably not tolerate that sort of questioning. If you have made the world, if you have put up with all of people's failings and weaknesses and loved them just the same, and shown that most of all by giving up your son for them, your only son, then the least you can expect of people is a few less difficult questions. Isn't it?

But I am constantly grateful that God is not like me, and always allows time and space for questions of this kind, even if he might ultimately want us to see the ways in which he is working in our lives, and in the world. Most of all, he does not ever want us to feel that these questions get between us and our relationship with him. If Jesus, who knows his Father better than any of us ever will, can cry out to him on the cross, asking him why he has forsaken him, then I think we can ask questions of God too. I hope so, because I do all the time.

VICAR OF THE VENTA GROUP

Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston, Arminghall and Caistor St Edmund
Rob Baker, The Vicarage, Mill Road, Stoke Holy Cross, NR14 8PA
rob@venta-group.org 01508 492305

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

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or call Rob on 01508 492305

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Lyn@venta-group.org 01508 493422

www.venta-group.org

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CHURCHWARDENS

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Arminghall

Pat (492622) & Annie (495580)

Caistor St Edmund

Jani (493572) & Graham (493430)

ST GEORGE'S HALL BOOKINGS:

Joyce Williams 492143

STOKE CHURCH HALL BOOKINGS:

Viv Carrington 493438

STOKE HOLY CROSS PAVILION BOOKINGS:

Barbara Cattermole (Parish clerk)
530739

FROM THE REGISTERS

BAPTISM

Alba Culling
1st October,
Stoke Holy Cross

FUNERALS

Margaret Goose
18th October,
St Faith's Crematorium

Dorothy Wilson
27th October,
Tharston

We continue to pray for all those who have lost loved ones recently, or are remembering someone particularly at this time of year.

We are always happy to record the names of anyone from the villages whose funeral has been held recently, even if it wasn't taken by a member of our ministry team.

NEXT EDITION

Items for the next month's magazine
please send by email to
Henry and Eostre Caswell
by email to

ventafree4all@outlook.com

By 10th of this month please.

The 10th of the month will be the
deadline for all copy for the next
magazine for the time being.



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This lovely picture is a Little Owl sitting on a gravestone in Stoke Holy Cross churchyard with its prey.

I live in Stoke Holy Cross, I am passionate about wildlife and nature and have been asked if I would share something with you the readers of the Free for All. We are so lucky to live in South Norfolk as it's a wildlife haven for plants, fungi, invertebrates, mammals and birds.

Not only do we have the River Tas running alongside the meadows near Dunston, Caistor and Stoke Holy Cross churches, opposite Caistor Church, High Ash, farmed by Chris and Daniel Skinner, has over 100 acres of pollen and nectar mix planted to help attract bees, moths and butterflies.

Over the past few years I have combined my love of nature with my hobby of photography and have been photographing the local flora and fauna. Churchyards are wonderful places to see and find many plants often some which are rarities.

Stoke and Caistor Churchyards are home to Little Owls and Barn Owls. Although mainly nocturnal, Little Owls are often seen during the day. They are found in a range of habitats including farmland and woodland. They feed on insects, earthworms and other invertebrates and small vertebrates. I took a photograph of one with a small rat sitting on a gravestone in Stoke Church yard. They have also been called burrowing owls as they sometimes nest in old rabbit burrows. Males hold territories which they

defend against intruders. They look short and dumpy when sitting on a post. Once you spot them, there is no mistaking those big round yellow eyes.

Barn Owls are often spotted flying along the River Tas low over the meadows hunting for food, especially after a wet or windy night which hinders their hunting. With heart-shaped face, buff back and wings and pure white underparts, the Barn Owl is a distinctive and much-loved countryside bird. Because of their call sometimes they are called screeches. They are nocturnal birds but in the springtime if they have young both parents will be seen hunting daytime to feed their young.

Around Stoke Mill, the River Tas and Poringland Lakes, slightly further a field at Shotesham Ford, you may be lucky and spot a Kingfisher. If you see them for the first time, you will be surprised how small they are. A fast flash of electric blue shooting down the river with a peep sound as they go will help you to spot them before they fly past you. Scan the Reed Mace and reeds as they often sit on them to fish. Look carefully at the bill. If it is all black it is a male. If the bottom of the bill is red, it is a female. The easy way to remember this is the ladies wear lipstick!!

Elizabeth Dack

We would love to feature your village organisation
IN A FUTURE MAGAZINE WITH AN ARTICLE OF THIS KIND
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SERVICES FOR NOVEMBER IN THE VENTA GROUP OF CHURCHES

5th Nov	All Saints Day
9.00 am	Traditional Holy Communion <i>Caistor St Edmund Church</i>
10.30 am	All Age Holy Communion <i>Stoke Holy Cross Church</i>
7.00 pm	New Wine Celebration Service <i>Mulbarton Church</i>
12th Nov	3rd Before Advent
9.00 am	Traditional Holy Communion <i>Arminghall Church</i>
10.30 am	Café Church <i>Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall</i>
10.45 am	Venta Group Remembrance Service <i>Caistor St Edmund Church</i>
19th Nov	2nd Before Advent
9.30 am	Family Service <i>Caistor St Edmund Church</i>
11.00 am	Traditional Holy Communion <i>Stoke Holy Cross Church</i>
26th Nov	Christ the King
9.00 am	Traditional Holy Communion <i>Caistor St Edmund Church</i>
10.30 am	Sunday 4 Everyone <i>Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall</i>
4.00 pm	Evening Service <i>Arminghall Church</i>

We always do our best to come and say hello to new people moving into the villages where possible, and are happy to come and visit if you would like us to pray God's blessing over your new home, for example. Please be in touch with Rob or the churchwardens if you would like us to come and see you...

POPPY COLLECTION and REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

There will be the usual House to House Collection in Caistor St Edmund for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

The Service for Remembrance Sunday, (12th November) will be at Caistor Church commencing at 10-45 am in the church, then processing to the War Memorial for the wreath laying, reading of the names of the fallen from Caistor St Edmund, Stoke Holy Cross and Dunston, followed by the two minutes silence at 11 o'clock.

As is our custom the offertory at that service will be donated to The RBL Poppy Appeal.

STOKE HOLY CROSS TUESDAY GROUP

As the evenings close in and we face the prospect of winter, we would like to invite you to come to our Tuesday Group meeting on November 21st, at 7 30 pm in the Church Hall. Despite the Group's having been in existence for over 50 years, we still manage to find new topics and new speakers....in November Frances Middleton will talk on the subject of India, and there will be a trade stall with goods from the sub-continent.

From time to time we hold social evenings which include an excellent meal, at a cost of £12 per head. They represent very good value, and will be mentioned in 'Free 4 All' in due course. Profits from these events help to support the Group's chosen charity for the year. During our September meeting, a cheque for £700 was given to Nelson's Journey, a local charity which helps children and young people who have been bereaved, and, following on from our support of this inspirational organisation, in 2018 we shall give our help to the local Dementia Café, which meets at St. George's Hall in Upper Stoke. If you enjoy supporting a very local cause, when our meals are mentioned in this magazine, why not ring us to book a meal?

Kate Smith Telephone 01508 558182



Caistor Church Queen Anne Hatchment

Panels like this should not be confused with funerary hatchments. Instead, the display of the royal arms, became a required part of church furnishings under Henry VIII. The aim was to proclaim to all and sundry that Henry, not Rome, held ultimate jurisdiction over each parish church. It was up to the Churchwardens to find the money to fulfil the royal will, there is the feeling that not everybody complied, unless firmly prodded by Henry's Church Commissioners.

Many of the original Henrician panels were then removed under Mary Tudor only to be renewed again under Elizabeth. Some were also removed during the Civil War yet some parishes chose to replace them with arms of the English and Welsh Commonwealth so as to make their Cromwellian loyalties explicit.

With the Restoration of the Monarchy, these panels became a legal requirement again, this is why there are many with Charles II's arms.

The arms of Queen Anne here at Caistor are quite unusual, as they may have been made to replace an earlier, decaying panel, perhaps one dating all the way back to the Reformation. Interestingly the one at Caistor was made in the year of Anne's death, August 1714. The project was already probably under way the previous year and although she was in ill health, her death was not widely anticipated at that point in time, even if there had been rumours of it late 1713.

It is worth noting that these coat of arms are that of Anne as Queen of Great Britain, a new title that followed from the Union of Crowns in 1707. This shows that the parishioners of Caistor were fully aware of current political developments and took pains to get a painter who would get the panel just right.

We are very grateful for the help from Margit Thofner in compiling this information and also the generous anonymous donation from a local family enabling the Hatchment to be restored in 2017.

Donations given at the "COME for COFFEE" mornings held at CAISTOR St EDMUND church during September came to £180.00. This has been sent to the Save the Children emergency appeal: Food Crisis in East Africa. We are told that more than 5.1 million children across all four countries are expected to need treatment for malnutrition this year. Thank you to everyone who came and supported the Come for Coffee in September.

We look forward to see you and many more people when Come for Coffee commences again next May.



POST OFFICE
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Venta Group Harvest Supper

A great time was had by all at the recent Venta Group Harvest Supper held in St George's Hall. It was an evening of socialising with church members from Arminghall, Caistor St Edmund, Dunston and Stoke Holy Cross – a lovely time to catch up with old friends and make some new ones.

Musical entertainment was provided by Stewart Hull, who sang an absolute wealth of songs from the 50s, 60s and 70s. There was also a great deal of fun and laughter as we tried to work out the answers to the musical quiz questions set by Stewart.

The hall looked really welcoming and delicious food was provided by many different people. A huge thanks to Jani Wymer for coordinating everything and also to the team of workers who set the hall up and also packed everything away afterwards.

No charge was made for the evening but £235 was raised for charity.

St George's Hall Dementia Support Cafe

A comfortable, caring and supportive social setting for people living with dementia and their carers meeting on 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month (not Bank Holidays) from 10am till 12 noon at St George's Hall, Long Lane, Upper Stoke Holy Cross, NR14 8ND.



We run occasional subsidised excursions. Also included is a separate carers' meeting place providing an adjoining space to relax and useful for sharing of ideas, practical support and advice. The Café is run by a team of dedicated and caring volunteers, and funded entirely by donations, grants and fund-raising activities. The dementia support group cafe is continuing to be well supported. A great time was had by all on 25th of September when we screened the film "Singing in the Rain". A great classic with lots of singing, dancing and comedy.

Meetings for November are 13th and on 27th when, after the normal cafe, we shall all be going to The Old Feathers Framingham Pigot for lunch.

Newcomers are always very welcome to simply drop in to the Café (or ring one of the above numbers before to learn more if you wish). And we are naturally delighted to welcome any new volunteers, even if you can't come every time.

www.stgeorges-dementia-support-group.btck.co.uk

CAISTOR ST EDMUND FUEL ALLOTMENT CHARITY

Registered Charity No 209105

The purpose of this Charitable Trust is to make grants for financial assistance to families or individuals who have been living in the parishes of Caistor St Edmund or Markshall for at least a year, who are in need or distress. Grants are made annually and the Trustees welcome applications from anyone who thinks they might qualify for help.

Application forms may be obtained from the Clerk to the Trustees (call 01508 494198). These should be completed and returned to the Clerk before 15 November 2017.

Thank you to everyone who brought gifts for the CAISTOR Harvest Festival on the 24th September. Unfortunately the young people from Elizabeth House (formerly Grange Road) Beccles, could not be with us at the service to receive the gifts. However all the gifts, and there was a large selection, were taken to them after the service and were well received and appreciated, especially the chocolate biscuits!!! Letters of thanks have been received and are on display in the church.

STOKE HOLY CROSS THURSDAY CLUB

We hold our next meeting at St. Georges Hall Upper Stoke Holy Cross 1.30 for 2pm on Thursday 2nd November, 2017. Please come along and join us for a friendly afternoon of tea, chat and general socializing. You will be made very welcome. We have a tabletop sale and raffle each club day.

**Saturday 11th November, 2017 is
our November Fayre 1pm - 3pm**

This is our annual fundraiser for the club and is always very successful. We have a grand draw, tombola, cakes and pickles, nearly new, puzzles, books, bric-a-brac, guess the weight of the cake and much more. Come along and pick up a bargain.

Bingo - Our dates for November are the 8th and 22nd - 1.45pm start

Carpet Bowls - Our dates for November are the 1st, 15th and 29th - 1.30pm start. Cost for this is £2

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Dates for your Diary

Poringland Community Cinema

Friday 12th January

Friday 9th February

Friday 9th March

Buena Vista Social Club

Friday 5th January

Friday 2nd February

Friday 2nd March

ALPINGTON & YELVERTON HISTORY SOCIETY

Village Hall, Church Road,
Alpington NR14 7NU

Our last talk on finds at Caister St Edmunds and other parts of East Anglia was very well attended.

Our next talk will be by Jason Raper on the History of the Theatre Royal on Tuesday 14 November.

Refreshments will be served. Guest fee £3.00.

For further details Contact Mary Fewster (Chairman) 01508 492059.

Next meeting Tuesday 9 January 2018
'Kill or Cure' Mardle evening.

Adam's Topical Tips November

As we move into November there is still much which can be harvested from the vegetable garden. You may have a range of brassicas, including cabbage, sprouts and kale, although this may be better left until later in the season. Spinach trickles on and the season for parsnips and leeks is well upon us.

Even though it is November there is still plenty of time to plant broad beans to give the plants a head start over spring sown crops. Early in the month is still not too late for planting garlic.

Whilst most flower bulbs are happy being planted during October, Tulips are far better left for November planting. Never forget to plant any bulb to a depth at least twice its own height to prevent bulbs drying out too early after flowering, which will discourage them from building up reserves for next year.

The season for pruning starts now; Cane fruit, fruit bushes such as Gooseberries, Currants and Blueberries and top fruit such as Apples and Pears (but not Plums which are best pruned in summer). Other trees such as Acers, Cherries, Birches and Magnolias are best pruned from now on when the sap is down, otherwise they tend to bleed.

At this time of year April can be seen raking leaves to put into her wire mesh leaf mould container as opposed to putting them on her compost heap. This is because leaves break down in a different way, mainly by fungal activity. This is best left for at least a year. It's worth making some leaf mould so that in the spring it can be mixed with sand/soil/sieved garden compost to make a potting mixture.

Adam meanwhile, can be seen insulating his herbaceous perennials, with either their own foliage cut off and placed over the plants, for example Gunnera, or covering them with a layer of straw. He is also potting some of his growing herbs and bringing them in, on window sills, for some early winter growth. And whilst on the subject of frost protection, now is the time to bring tender container plants into a cold greenhouse or similar.

November's Recipe

Since November is the month of Guy Fawkes and you may have plenty of pumpkin either growing or left over from Halloween the recipe this month is Pumpkin Soup. Don't worry too much about the precise measurements for this soup. (April was highly commended for this soup when she was 18!)

1kg pumpkin	3 medium potatoes	3 tomatoes	2 pints of stock (or water)
15 grams butter	75 mls cream	Small crispy croutons to serve	

Peel and cut up the pumpkin and the potatoes. Quarter the tomatoes and remove the pips. Put these vegetables in a pan with the stock, add salt and pepper and cook until tender. This will depend on the size of your vegetable pieces but 20 minutes should be the maximum. When the vegetables are cooked cool a little and then liquidise (or sieve). Return to the pan; add the butter and the cream. Check the seasoning. The soup should be a creamy consistency and a rich golden colour. Serve with the crouton.

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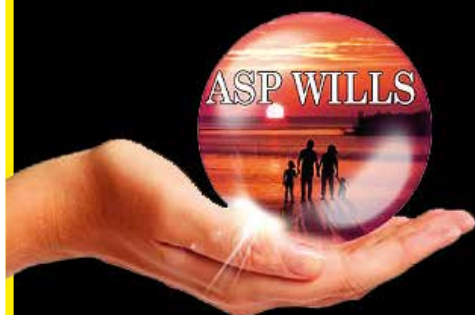
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