



Friends of St Andrew's Church
Stratton, Cornwall
Newsletter Autumn 2021

Volume 13 Issue 2



'Stratton Dreaming'

Original Artwork by Jonathan Howlett MA

Cover photograph courtesy of David Goodwin JP

Dear **Friends of St Andrews**,



On the 10th of October 2021 St Andrews will be hosting a very special celebration.

It is the 600th anniversary of the Blanchminster Trust. The Blanchminster Charity is probably the oldest continual charity in Britain and possibly the world. It was originally set up to provide assistance to persons living in Poughill & Stratton and later Bude was added to its areas of assistance. It had religious objectives alongside helping the needy from the outset.

Although **FoStA** was established in 2008, I'd like us to consider if in fact The Blanchminster Trust (or Charity as it was known then) was our original friend.

St Andrews of course, benefits a great deal from the financial and nurturing support of **FoStA** and you will find details of that elsewhere in this newsletter. However, St Andrews has also benefitted greatly from the support of the Blanchminster Trust. Sir Ralph Blanchminster of Binhamy, Cornwall who died in 1348 bequeathed a sum of money to create the north aisle for the Parish church of St Andrew Stratton – and although the earliest documents of the Blanchminster Trust are dated 1421, it is from the land and funds bequeathed by Sir Ralph that the charity was established. That first bequest also included 48 shillings pa paid to the vicar of Stratton for preaching four sermons on two Sundays in Egloskerry church. And, of course, we have his effigy lying in our north aisle.

Other grants have also been given; the costs involved with the excommunication of the entire parish for refusing to take down the rood screen (1565) – we are a feisty lot, stone for the altar (1557) the bells (1558), the communion cup & plate (1570), a Bible (1569), stocks, pillory & ducking stool (1586) – very feisty, and more recently lighting & staging.

The service will be one of thanksgiving and commemoration and will rightly have local dignitaries, beneficiaries and the Bishop of St Germans, the Right Reverend Hugh Nelson in attendance and will be honoured to have the representative of Her Majesty, The Queen, Mr Sherrard, Deputy Lord-Lieutenant to acknowledge the outstanding achievements of this charity.

But what does this say to us as friends of this ancient church? It is and has been, a very much loved, focal point of our community for many centuries. It is and has been a building that points us to look beyond ourselves and to look upward to God. It is at the heart of our community and it has seen comings and goings, times of austerity and plenty, plagues, wars, peacetime & well-being. Like our lives, as Ecclesiastes 3 puts it, there is a season for everything under the sun. St Andrews has seen it all and stays standing as a testimony to our faith.

In the story of creation, God made us stewards of the whole earth, so we now are stewards of St Andrews; called to take care of it, called to uphold its values, called to make witness that God is good. St Andrews has always needed friends & so I encourage you to continue the great work of your forebears and to celebrate alongside the Blanchminster Trust, the longevity of support that St Andrews has received.

God bless us all,

Reverend Teresa

Val Barker writes:

Dear Friends,

As you will see, this edition of the Newsletter is larger than usual but hopefully it will have been worth the wait. There are some very interesting articles for you to read and I would like to thank all those who have contributed and given of their time, knowledge and skills. I am also grateful to our Webmaster, David Goodwin, who has spent considerable time and effort in restoring and 'manipulating' photographs for my use in this publication.

Thankfully, with the pandemic situation improving locally and nationally, things are getting back to some sort of normality here at St Andrew's. Expectations with regard to safety and common-sense issues are still in place but we are, at long last, able to offer hospitality again and to be able to sing at services is a pure joy. Church life is beginning to get busy.

As you will read, we are having to do considerable work in the churchyard and plans for getting the Chancel roof repaired and re-slatted early next year are well under way. These are all large undertakings and none of it would be possible without your generosity and ongoing support.

Thank you for all you have done and for all you will do to enable us to continue in our care of this very special Parish Church here in Stratton. You all, simply, make the difference and may you be blessed for it.

So, until next time, stay safe and well and keep those letters coming.

With all good wishes from everyone at St Andrew's. *Val*

*We love the place, O God,
wherein thine honour dwells*

Churchyard Renovations and Improvements

Since its inception in 2008 FoStA has helped fund many projects in St Andrew's church and churchyard, both large and small, many of which could not have gone ahead without this source of funding. The last major project to which FoStA contributed funding was the improvements made at the back of the church, including our new kitchen. This project was completed towards the end of 2019, but unfortunately the pandemic has meant that we have not been able to make much use of the new facilities during 2020 and 2021. It is only in the last couple of months that we have once again been able to offer refreshments in the church.

During the pandemic the FoStA Committee has continued to meet via 'Zoom' and to discuss any urgent needs the church may have. Now three significant areas of renovation and improvements are required in the churchyard which will hopefully be carried out over the coming months, and FoStA have offered to help fund these works.

Firstly the stone wall by the path from the Diddies Road gate is in need of work. As they have grown, trees in the adjacent garden have put significant pressure on the wall causing it to lean into the churchyard and a number of cracks have opened up as the wall has distorted. The cracks have been monitored since July 2018 and since then they have widened and extended. The latest Quinquennial, recently completed, has advised that if left unchecked then there is the possibility that the wall could eventually collapse.





Consultation will be needed with both the neighbour and an arboriculturist to discuss how the pressure from the trees might be reduced, following which, advice on the appropriate method for stabilising and repairing the wall will be sought.

Another stone wall damaged by a tree is close to the gate into Sanctuary Lane, but this time the tree was in the churchyard. In recent years it has been necessary to carry out major surgery to the tree as dead branches had been dropping onto the neighbours shed and car. The tree had largely died and there was concern that a major storm could cause the tree to fall causing significant damage.



Approvals were sought and quotations obtained for the removal of the tree and its roots, following which a full assessment can be made of the wall and the repairs required. It is anticipated that a section of around 2 metres will need to be rebuilt.



Related to this issue, an application has been made by the Blanchminster Trust for a sapling from the historic Darley Oak in Bodmin, which they would like to plant in St Andrew's churchyard to commemorate their 600th Anniversary. Only 20 saplings are available and we do not yet know whether this application has been successful, but if it is we would like to plant the sapling in this part of the churchyard, to replace the dead tree, planted an appropriate distance from the wall to avoid future problems.

The final area of work required is to plant new hedging to fill in significant gaps along the western boundary adjoining the Stratton Gardens Hotel. A work party has been arranged to tidy up this section of the boundary and prepare the ground, following which native hedging will be planted, which will fill the gaps and hopefully attract wildlife into the churchyard.



Simon Waring

Churchwarden



In the Spring 2018 edition of the Newsletter we were introduced to Claire Gingell (the niece of one of our members) who wrote movingly of her life and work in Mostar. As I said then, every Sunday and often during the week, we pray for Christians throughout the world in our prayers of intercession and it seemed to me that it would be interesting to be in touch with Claire again and to find out how she had fared during the Covid pandemic, so here she is and in her own words and pictures.



Me – Claire Gingell

About me – I have lived in Mostar for 23 years. I work with Mostar Brankovac Evangelical Church as part of the leadership team. Day to day, aside from lots of general organisation/admin related to the church, I mostly work with children, teens, and young adults (weekly groups for about 50 youngsters); with women; and on practical help for those in need – food, clothes, school books ...



*Harvesting Potatoes
at Church Field*



After church one Sunday

These last eighteen months have been both difficult and strange, throughout the world. However, I think the experience has varied greatly in different parts of the world, due not just to the severity of the pandemic, but also to the response of the governing authorities, and the population in general. As a Brit living in Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina (part of the former Yugoslavia, just about an hour inland from the Croatian coast) I have not been able to visit the UK since August 2019, so I have not experienced the pandemic first-hand in England, but I have tried to keep up with what is going on, and it seems to me that my Mostar experience has been very different.

The government here made a very swift and decisive response to Covid initially, but they did not really give out any scientific information (this has continued to be the case, and I am often seen as the oracle of Covid information by my friends here – as I absorb what I can from the much more information-lead approach in Britain). It seemed that they were just implementing any law that they saw a nearby country implement, and restrictions were drastic. It was effective though, and the “first wave” really was not a wave at all.

Panic-buying was in evidence to some extent. However, it wasn't toilet paper that was missing from the shelves, but 25kg bags of flour (a meal is not a meal without bread, and everyone knows how to make their own,

even if they sometimes shop buy for convenience). Lemons and garlic were also distinctly lacking from supermarkets, as people bought them in bulk to build their immunity.

Schools closed. Borders were then closed completely, returning nationals had to quarantine in very cold, poorly equipped tents at the border itself. Restaurants and cafes closed, as did non-essential shops. Work from home was encouraged, non-essential travel banned – daily exercise wasn't considered a reason to go outside. Public transport was shut down – meaning that essential workers without cars had to walk to work, whatever the distance. As in many situations here, it is clear that the consequences of decisions were not thought through.

No more than 2 people were allowed to meet together outside, no visiting was allowed inside. A curfew from 6pm to 5 am was imposed. Those over 65 and under 18 were not allowed outside at all (until the government realised they needed to let pensioners out to collect their pensions – then they were allowed out Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays until 10am). We had to wear face masks and gloves anywhere outside our own homes, and were encouraged, not just to wash our hands, but to disinfect everything – shops had to have a disinfectant “bath” outside for us to step in on the way in, and dog owners were told to disinfect their pet's feet after every outing.

Many firms were forced to stop working, many people were left without an income, and there was no government assistance. As a church we tried to step in with food parcels where possible. But people's attitude was very stoic “we've known worse” they said (very true for all who had lived through the war) and “health is most important”.

People did not complain about the rules, but many did evade them, and no-one really seemed to disapprove. That is the general attitude to rules here – see how can you get round them! There is not an automatic assumption that rules are for the people's good – there is a general distrust of those in authority.

Then suddenly, at the end of May, all the rules were lifted. Gatherings were limited to 25 inside, 50 outside. Mask wearing and social distance were still compulsory. But apart from that life was pretty much back to normal. The most significant return to normality was cafes reopening – coffee is the way of being social here, and the way of doing business – no cafes was a dead city, once they reopened the life was back. The government never explained why they so drastically reduced the rules – I can only think they realised economic collapse was imminent if they didn't.

From this point onwards the rules have remained the same – with just slight variations in the limits on gatherings. While the weather was good, and life was mostly outside, this worked well. But as the Autumn drew in cases grew rapidly. We had a second wave in the Autumn, and a third wave in the Spring. Numbers were enormous. At one point we had the second highest death rate per confirmed cases in the world. In April we had twice as many deaths as normal.

Yet there was no talk of hospitals being overwhelmed. More doctors and nurses were recruited from the ranks of the unemployed, and those from all other departments did their turns on Covid wards. The actual hospital buildings normally have quite a bit of spare capacity, so it seemed to be possible to find enough beds. Facilities were poor – sometimes there were not enough blankets to go round. But everyone just got on with it.

We do not yet have a blame culture here. Many people caught Covid while in hospital for other ailments, but this is just seen as inevitable given the circumstances – everyone knows the medical staff are doing the best they can, but sometimes infections happen.

One of those to die in such circumstances was Manja – she got baptised in our church just last summer, having come to faith as an adult. She ended up in hospital after a heart attack, and there she caught Covid, and died on Good Friday. I didn't hear anyone question how it was possible she caught Covid while in hospital – it happens.

With the many deaths there was, obviously, huge grief; but death is also accepted – people, while grieving, shrug and say “it happens” or “it was their time”. Living in a country with fewer facilities, more poverty, and poor health post-war, people are very aware of their mortality, death is more part of life. Manja was a diabetic from birth, and she had never expected to see old age. We miss her greatly but are comforted by faith that she is with her Lord and Saviour. Faith for the next life becomes more important when this life is less secure.



So, for this last year we have lived with Covid, wearing masks and keeping our distance, but still going out for coffee, still going to church on Sundays (and allowed to sing in our services), shops and leisure facilities have all been open, and children have still been going to school. We do not have a track and trace system. Testing is sketchy – if you have symptoms you can generally get a test, but not if you have merely been in contact with someone. Sometimes there are not even enough tests even for those with mild symptoms.

This relaxed approach has certainly had a high cost medically, but economically it was probably essential, and psychologically it has probably been a lot easier for us.

There is a general keenness to get vaccinated, but vaccines are not yet widely available. The country paid for vaccines through Covax and the EU mechanism, but delivery has been slow. Government here is very complex (one state, 2 entities, 10 counties, and a unitary authority) – various levels of government have attempted to order vaccines, only to be thwarted by a different level. So currently less than 10% of the population has been vaccinated. People complain about this, but they are not surprised – since the war politics has been in a mess, preventing the country from moving forward.



Importance of Coffee

Unfortunately this means we are expecting a fourth wave as the weather gets worse again in the Autumn. But, I imagine, things will go on much as normal. And, I imagine, people will continue to show resilience, stoicism, ingenuity and acceptance. This, and the high value placed on drinking coffee together, are just some of the things that make it such a joy to live here.

Claire

REMEMBRANCE

*If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England.*

These are the opening lines from a 1914 poem, 'The Soldier', by Rupert Brooke, which he wrote after seeing action at the defence of Antwerp in October of that year. While on his way to fight in Gallipoli the following year, he died of sepsis as a result of an infected mosquito bite. Brooke would later become well-known for his patriotic poetry and the sentiment expressed in this particular poem is one shared by many over the years. However, at the time of writing, Brooke could not have known that his vision of remembrance for the fallen would become reality through the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Originally the Imperial War Graves Commission, it was established by Royal Charter in 1917 thanks to the work of Fabian Ware. He had been too old to fight in WW1 but decided to volunteer with the British Red Cross. While serving with a Red Cross unit on the Western Front he was shocked, not only by the number of fatal casualties, but also by the manner of their 'burial'. Sometimes hastily buried by comrades or left where they fell in no-man's land, there was no system in place to record the dead or their final resting place. Determined that the dead should not be lost or forgotten, Ware's Red Cross unit began recording the graves they found. His work was officially recognised by the War Office and the work incorporated into the Army's Graves Registration Commission.

Ware was convinced that an independent organisation was needed to ensure the commemoration of the fallen and submitted a proposal to the Imperial War Conference. Following unanimous approval the Imperial War Graves Commission was established in 1917. Three of the country's

most eminent architects were chosen to design the war cemeteries and memorials and Rudyard Kipling was asked to recommend suitable inscriptions. It was he who chose the words 'Known Unto God' on the headstones of unknown servicemen. Following their initial work it was decided that the dead would be buried where they fell and a standard headstone used to mark the graves. Those with no known grave would be named on the Memorials to the Missing.

The guiding principle that informed all the decisions of the Commission was equality because the fallen were equal in the sacrifice they had made and all are equal in death. This is best illustrated by the vast graveyards in Northern France and around the world which have row upon row of uniformly-sized headstones. The principle of equality and uniformity is reinforced by what is permitted to appear on the headstones. Thus, only the following appear: name, rank, awards, service number, religious emblem and a brief inscription. Variety is provided by the service or regimental crests at the top of each headstone. The headstones were to be put in ordered rows so as to give the appearance of a battalion on parade. In some countries or sites where headstones cannot be erected the graves are identified by either pedestal or flat markers but again, these are uniform in size with the same limited identification information. Thus, whether individually or, where the person is unknown, collectively on a memorial, the fallen are commemorated equally.

The work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) is funded by six Member Governments and ensures that the men and women who died in the First and Second World Wars will never be forgotten. The principle of equality ensures that there is no differentiation between the fallen on grounds of nationality, religion, or rank. However, in addition to the many 'foreign fields' where the fallen are commemorated, the CWGC also cares for war graves in this country.

At St Andrew's the CWGC is responsible for the maintenance of eight graves, seven of which are war graves, the eighth being that of a serving soldier who did not die in a conflict. Of the seven war graves, three are from WW1 and four from WW2.

28 December 1914, Private J Ham -28 years old

7 February 1917, Private WE Vigg – 21 years old

17 February 1919, Private G Cobbledick – 37 years old

22 May 1941, Barbara ME Medland, WRNS – 28 years old

25 September 1941, Flt Lt B Willoughby – 27 years old

15 December 1943, Gunner LB Jones – 30 years old

22 February 1946, Private WH Colwill – 31 years old

7 May 2010 Corporal S Claydon – 26 years old

Six of the war graves are standard CWGC headstones but the seventh is not. The reason for this is that when the family was contacted by the CWGC they said they were content for her to be remembered in the family plot. Consequently, Barbara Medland's name is carved on the headstone which commemorates other members of her family. The serviceman who did not die in a conflict, Corporal Claydon, is commemorated by a standard CWGC headstone but with the shoulders indented. His name does not appear in the CWGC database because that only holds the names of those who died in the two World Wars. However, because he was a serving soldier at the time of his death, the Ministry of Defence inform the CWGC who contact the family to ask if they would like a military memorial in the form of a CWGC headstone, modified to show it is not a war grave. Nevertheless, the CWGC assumes responsibility for the maintenance of the headstone, along with the other seven headstones in St Andrew's graveyard. In both cases, although in very different circumstances, it is the wishes of the family that remain paramount.



Remembrance takes place for many reasons and occurs at different times and in various ways. However, as we enter into Autumn and look ahead to Advent and Christmas, the focal point for our remembrance is Remembrance Sunday, the day when we join with the rest of the nation in remembering the fallen in past wars and conflicts, as well as those who fought and survived but whose wounds may be unseen. The work of the CWGC is an important part of that remembrance and, as custodian of the graves mentioned above, St Andrew's also plays an integral part. The CWGC has designated the week of 21-28 May 2022 National Awareness Week to encourage people to search for and visit local veterans. Why not take a walk around our beautifully maintained graveyard and see if you can identify the eight graves mentioned? The distinctive headstones should help, otherwise the FoStA membership secretary may be able to provide directions!

Meryll Goodwin

Photographs in this article are by courtesy of Mr David Goodwin J P

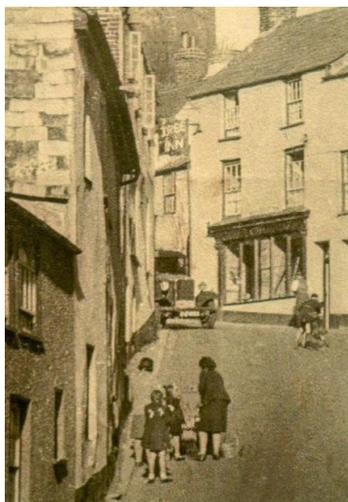


Autumnal Stratton

Then and Now

As well as being an excellent fundraiser for FoStA, the calendar, which is produced each year by David Goodwin, has evoked amazing memories for many of you and here is one such from Jeremy White, the husband of Doreen (nee Pearce).

In the picture is a group of people walking up Fore Street in Stratton; on the left is Doreen's Mother and next to her, daughters Doreen and Joyce and unseen in the pram would have been their baby brother Derek. On the right is their Auntie Mar (Mrs Marion Dymond) and again unseen in her pram was her son Raymond. It is about 1948/49.



At the top of Fore Street can be seen the double fronted shop which was Marrow's Chemist and at the bottom of the hill, on the left, was a branch of Lloyd's Bank.



Just up from there was the Buckingham's home, Birwood House, where Mrs Buckingham provided lunches for the farmers on Market Day. Their own farmyard and milking parlour were behind the house accessed from Corner Gardens. At the top of the hill by the vehicle is the Tree Inn.

Opposite would have been Mrs Rattenbury's establishment - a real curiosity shop where you could buy almost anything from a watch to a hook for your fishing rod. Just below, as Jeremy recalls, was Woollacotts's first little shop from which was built up the huge firm it is today. At the very bottom of the hill was May's grocery shop and then of course the Kings Arms Public House.

A nice little trip down memory lane.

Many thanks to Mr Jeremy White.



Fundraising

We have for sale, once again, our free-standing desk calendar for next year. It has continued to be popular and several members asked us to produce one again for 2022. I'm pleased to say that David Goodwin has produced another with his outstanding photographs and production skills. As I have said before they are a great stocking present or small Christmas gift ideal for mailing to a friend or family member who has fond memories of Stratton.



CALENDAR 2022



The 2022 calendar contains 13 images from in and around St Andrew's Church. The spiral-bound calendar is A5 size (8.3" x 5.5") and the images are produced on high-quality silk-finish paper. They are reasonably priced at £4 each, envelope included. Please be aware that there will be a small charge for p&p for orders that have to be mailed – see order form.

You will also find our Christmas cards illustrated on the order form and the FoStA Shop page on the website.

The online monthly calendar is kept up to date by our Web Master with services and events so do check for further details at www.fosta.org.uk

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Members are sent a copy by post and
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please let me know.*