



Great Meeting Chapel Leicester

Newsletter - Summer 2022



300 years of Freedom, Reason and Tolerance

SERVICES

June

- 5th (11:00): Simon Hall – GM CSL (Platinum Jubilee)
12th (11:00): Rev Martin Whitell – recent LDPA District Minister
19th (11:00): Rev Jeffrey Bowes – Coventry
26th (15:00): Simon Hall/Congregation – GM CSL (Thanksgiving Service)
Address by Sue Woolley – President of GA of U&FCC

July

- 3rd (11:00): Sir Peter Soulsby – EMU District President
10th (11:00): Congregational (Diane Romano-Woodward) – GM
17th (11:00): Simon Hall – GM CSL
24th (11:00): Simon Hall – GM CSL
31st (11:00): Rev Jeffrey Bowes – Coventry

August

- 7th (11:00): Simon Hall – GM CSL
14th (11:00): Simon Hall – GM CSL
21st (11:00): Rev Shammy Webster - Stand Chapel, Whitefield
28th (11:00): Gavin Lloyd – Oxford

September

- 4th (11:00): Simon Hall – GM CSL
11th (11:00): Simon Hall – GM CSL
18th (11:00): Congregational – GM
25th (11:00): Gavin Lloyd – Oxford

WEEKLY EVENTS

WEDNESDAY	18:00 – 18:30	SOUL HAVEN
FRIDAY	11.00– 1.00	COFFEE MORNING

SPECIAL EVENTS

WED 15TH AND 22ND OF JUNE

Afternoon visits by children from Forest Lodge School.
Volunteers needed, please speak to Mike.

FRIDAY 17TH JUNE : FROM 6.30 PM

Meet up at the Marquis of Wellington Pub on the London Road. Go Dutch on drinks, all welcome.

Sun 26th JUNE: Restorations Celebration

10:00: Chapel and gardens open for viewing

11:00: **Soul Haven** - meditative gathering (30 mins)

11:45: Refreshments available

12:30: **Jazz Group** (Great Meeting Five) playing in gardens

13:00: Picnic lunches in the gardens (bring your own!)

14:00: Presentation about the works/roofing project

15:00: **Thanksgiving Service** in the Chapel (RSVP)

16:00: Celebration Tea (RSVP)

Volunteers needed throughout the day – please speak with Simon

CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT LEAD

Dear Members and Friends,

Since I last wrote to update you on our new role many things have moved on and it's been a very busy and successful few months in general for our chapel and congregation. I won't mention every event that has taken place over the past few months, as many are featured separately within this News letter.

I had the real pleasure of supporting Arthur in his final months as our Minister, helping him with elements of our Sunday services and also taking the opportunity, which he kindly offered, of starting to visit members of our congregation

in their homes by offering some extended pastoral care to those who might benefit from this.

Many and varied events have taken place throughout the spring in the life of our chapel and I particularly enjoyed joining with a handful of members and friends (mainly through Zoom) for our thoughtful *Poetry Discussion Group* for the 6 weeks of Lent.

The *Soul Haven* gathering on a Wednesday evening has continued to attract between 6 and 11 followers (average 9 each week) with a handful of 'one-timers' coming through the doors of Great Meeting (you don't know if this could lead to further involvement at some stage in the future, so it's always encouraging when this happens!)

Our *Coffee Mornings* on a Friday (starting at 11:00 from now on) continue to offer the opportunity to meet and chat for both members, friends and the general public and we often have a few people present for this weekly social event – this past week we actually had 10 people in through the doors!

Having the Chapel open at times during the week has also encouraged the occasional visitor, some of whom have been greatly interested in the building and our history and even generated some financial donations, as some people rediscover connections that they might have had with us through family members or friends in the past.

David and I both attended the national **Annual Meetings** of the General Assembly back in April (Birmingham) and enjoyed a fruitful couple of days attending presentations and workshops and re-engaging with friends and members of other congregations for the first time in a few years. David has produced an excellent detailed and informative report of the event which is printed and displayed on our notice board in the Garden Room for those



who might be interested, just e-mail him if you'd like your own copy of this report.

One of my main areas of focus over the past month has been that of offering Pastoral Support through personal visits and telephone calls and this has been extremely fulfilling to me and has proved of great benefit to those who cannot get to chapel so much (if at all) these days. We need to be mindful of our members and friends who are not in good health, whether short or longer term and I would hope that we would all hold them in our minds and hearts during particularly challenging times for them and their families. We are extremely sad to note the recent death of one of our members – Mark Balding – whose funeral will be held on Monday 13th June @ 13:00 at Gilroes Crematorium, to which all are invited to attend. Mark had previously played the organ for us at Great Meeting and will be greatly missed by us all. Our thoughts and prayers go to his partner Andy (Andrew King) at this difficult time and please do send your regards if you can.

Well, that's it for now as we enter the glorious days of our summer ('flaming June' I was always led to believe!!). I hope to see you throughout the coming months either on a Sunday for our worship service (and we're extremely grateful for those guests who are helping out, including our own congregation members) or for one of our regular or *special* events over the coming weeks. I would particularly like to see as many of you as possible for the **Restorations Celebration** day on Sunday 26th June to offer our thanks in general for the huge amount of effort and final completion of the huge project over the past couple of years or so.

Take care of yourselves and blessings to you all,

Simon

SCHOOL VISIT

On Wednesday 16th March 19 Year 4 pupils from Forest Lodge School, New Parks Estate, Leicester visited the Chapel as part of their religious studies curriculum. The children enjoyed learning about the chapel by means of the children's heritage trail which they undertook in small groups. They also enjoyed a couple of organ pieces played by Robin, some free time to explore the garden and a picnic lunch in the garden room.



The children were encouraged to provide feedback using postcards addressed to Samuel Adam, the child behind the graffiti of the man in a top hat featured on the trail. Their comments highlighted how informative the visit had been and how much they had enjoyed being cast in the role of history detectives.





The teachers accompanying the pupils deemed the visit such an educational success that they are bringing two groups of Year 6 pupils on visits to the Chapel in the Summer Term



Thanks to all the volunteers from the Congregation who led small groups through the trail or otherwise contributed to the smooth running and richness of these visits.

Special thanks are due to my sister, Gill Munday, who drew on her experience as museum outreach officer for Oxfordshire Museum Service to plan the visits and lead the 'carpet time' sessions at the beginning and end of the group trail activity.

Nicky Drucquer

JAZZ CONCERT

The evening of Wednesday 13th April saw the chapel's fund raising jazz gig. Initially conceived to raise funds for the roof appeal, Putin's awful war against the Ukrainian people meant that the funds raised, around £600, was split equally between the roof fund and Leicester City of Sanctuary.

The night was well attended and the licenced bar in the garden room was soon alive with bubbly conversation. Beers, wine and soft drinks had been arranged by Jude, Barnaby and Mimi after a last minute dash! Shout out to them! This all helpfully swelled the coffers for good causes and set the tone for a relaxed and informal night of music and human togetherness.

First on was the Great Meeting Five. Our own home grown quintet. Including James Williams on guitar, George Dunseth on Bass and harmonica, myself on keys and recruiting the seasoned professional drummer and all round good bloke, Stu Graham. Sadly our organist - and the night's intended saxophonist, Robin Lister, was unable to make the gig due to ill health although he had contributed much creatively in our two rehearsals. He was ably replaced by the mellifluous and charismatic Dave Kingdon on tenor sax with just 24 hours notice. He performed flawlessly as we knew he would, bringing his distinctive relaxed vibe to what could have been a tense situation.

The music was well received. Notable moments being James swapping in on bass and providing the seminal groove for Miles Davis' "All blues", soloing and then making way for George's mournful mouthharp. Dave Kingdon in his element in Errol Garner's "Misty". And a rousing funk'd up encore in Nina Simone's classic "I wish that I knew how it would feel to be free" all the while Stu's pulsing rhythm driving the energy. An incredible accomplishment to field a jazz outfit from a congregation of our size.

After the interval and more drinks and banter, we saw the

main act "The Illusive Quartet". Through the magic of technology this trio of talented and spirited professionals: Mike Sole (keys), Dave Anderson (drums), and Chris Lee (Saxes) provide a full and rich quartet sound with Mike -who is also an experienced bass player- providing the bass lines in his left hand on a split keyboard. They played a variety of original material, improvisation and standards. Their rendition of Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" was a particular highlight, with their own creation of an unusual rhythmic device setting the tone for an original presentation of a classic piece. Was it 3/4 or did the time signature just shift? Dave's drumming gave us subtlety at the same time as urging our inner primal grooves to kick in. Chris Lee on Sax was soulful and fluid. Deftly navigating scales of his own creation as the musical ideas kept tumbling out one after another, but allowing for pensive interludes at other times. Mike is one of Leicester's true creative gems. A classically trained resident organist resident at Stoneygate Baptist Church, his jazz style incorporates elements of Chopin, Bill Evans, and many others but he really is his own creative voice. Comfortable across all modern genres in addition, his playing allows for unique spontaneity drawing on reggae one moment and blues the next.



The event was such a success that now that we have the infrastructure in place, we hope to repeat these nights for charity 3 or 4 times a year.

Huw Casson

ARTHURS FINAL SERVICE

Arthur's family and many of his congregation were present for his last service on Sunday 22 May. There were musical contributions from Robin Lister on the organ, the Great Meeting singers under the direction of David Kent, and a personal tribute composed and sung by Huw Casson on piano. Arthur's address was reflective, recalling how he entered the ministry, his personal calling, and his long association with Great Meeting. He spoke of the fulfilment he had received in being our minister, and of his joy at teaching the ministerial students at Harris Manchester College. He paid tribute to Annie, his wife, and the support she had always given him in his ministry. He thanked the officers for their support, and in particular Simon Hall and David Kent, especially in the last few months.



After the service David Wykes as President spoke on behalf of the congregation. It was an occasion of both happiness and sadness. We are celebrating 33 years of a very successful ministry by Arthur at Leicester, but for most members Arthur is the only minister they have known at Great Meeting. David said it was the third longest ministry after Hugh Worthington and Charles Berry, who both managed 56 years. He told

Arthur that the congregation were rather disappointed -- they would like the other 23 years please. David too mentioned Annie much loved by the congregation, whose death had been such a shock. He wished Arthur many happy years of retirement. Diane Romano-Woodward and Morag Jones then presented a Folio Society edition of Hardy, a bottle of single malt whisky and two whisky tumblers.



JUBILEE QUIZ NIGHT

On Thurs 2nd JUNE a small but select group of Great Meeting quizzers enjoyed a *remarkably* close contest of wits, and a delicious fish and chip supper in the garden room.

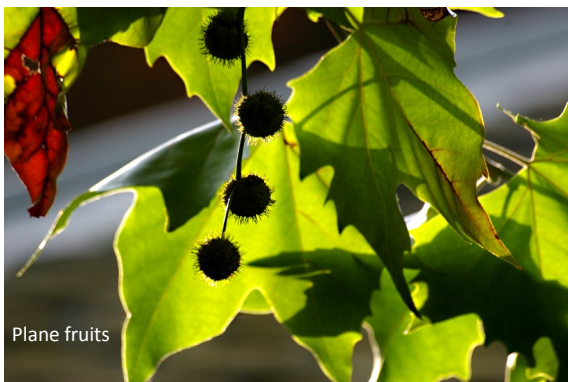
Many thanks to David and Simon who arranged the event and brought their effervescent friend Fiona on board to devise the questions (which were but challenging and fun) and act as quiz master.

A great times was had by all and it is hoped that a similar event will take place again soon.

THE PLANE TREES AT GREAT MEETING

The 'London Plane' trees in the chapel gardens seem to excite attention, partly because people know what they are, but also because of their great size. I decided to investigate further so we could answer any further questions.

Firstly, they are truly London Plane (*Platanus x hispanica*). This hybrid arose between the Oriental Plane (*P.orientalis*) and the American Butterwood, also known in the USA as 'Sycamore' (*P. occidentalis*). To further confuse, in Scotland, the English Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) is called 'Plane'. Our Planes have leaves like the American Butterwood but the female catkins and autumn, ball-like, fruits are in strings of 2-6, and are not borne singly. The parents are rare in Britain and appear to have hybridised in Spain. The first known record of their offspring was in the Oxford Botanic Garden in 1666, planted 1663. Further early plantings are in the Bishop's Palace, Ely and Bryanston School, Dorset, where the trees are huge. It became frequent in London's streets and parks in the 1700's, hence the common name, but is rare north and west of the Pennines because it likes warmth. It may benefit from climate warming and also tolerates air pollution, perhaps because the bark flakes easily, taking soot with it, or the glossy leaves are washed clean with rain water. But possibly of more importance is that it can tolerate compact-



Plane fruits

ed soil, like in the paved streets of Leicester, so it's an urban survivor.

The Oxford and Bryanston trees are apparently healthy and doing well, despite being 350 years old. I wondered therefore, how old our trees might be, and how long they might last. An hour of measuring gave an answer. Trees can be aged roughly, by measuring their girth at breast height (4.5 feet). The rule of thumb is one inch of girth equals 1 year of growth, and this is very close to the values for the girth/ages of the Ely and Bryanston trees.

Great Meeting's London Planes, measured 16th March 2009

London Plane Tree	Girth	Age approx.
Front gate 00755	14ft 6in	174 years
Graveyard west end	14ft 10in	178
Graveyard middle 00757	11ft 2in	134
Graveyard east end	14ft 3in	171

The numbers are Tree Preservation Order numbers, two having dropped off. The girths of three trees are very close suggesting they were planted at the same time. The lower value for tree 00757 may be because its growth was checked long ago, evidenced by a large area of missing bark on the trunk. The exposed heart wood is infested by dead-wood beetles that are making the tree hollow but will not damage it further. As the oldest plantings of London Planes are still growing strong, suffering no diseases, not even wind-throw, it seems likely that those at Great Meeting could last a long time yet. They may incidentally, reach 150 feet high, like those in Dorset.

So our Plane trees appear to be about 170-180 years old. This places the date of their planting around 1830-1840. This is suspiciously close to the year of Queen Victoria's accession when large numbers of commemorative trees were planted around the country.

Concern has been raised to me about the recent trimming. Plane trees seem to tolerate pruning and even pollarding of major branches but coppicing - cutting down to ground level may not be good for them.

Incidentally, on our trip to Oxford's Manchester Unitarian and Christchurch Colleges (2nd May 2009) I came across the much rarer Oriental Plane (*Platanus orientalis*) which is parent to the London Plane hybrid. It lies in the Deanery Garden, opposite the famous 'Alice's Gate' and dates from the mid 1700's. It is huge!

[https://www.monumentaltrees.com/en/gbr/england/oxfordshire/9347_christchurchcollege/]

Antony Fletcher



UPDATE ON THE RESTORATIONS

The Chapel restoration is nearing completion with all major works finished. As I write the decorators are on site applying top coat to the lower windows. The drone picture on the front cover shows the restored roof cap in all its beauty.

The latest phase has concentrated on repair of the upper external cornice which had been damaged by leaking gutters, replacement of gutters and downpipes, and investigation, clearance and part replacement of the drains for the rainwater from the roof.

At the front of the chapel we found out that the downpipes were not connected at all to the drainage system on the car park side, so a completely new run was put in, with access points for future 'rodding out' if needed.

On the Butt Close side, it is a little more complicated, with the rainwater disposal connecting to the sewage outlet from the outside toilet and then on and down and across onto Butts Close. Fibre optic examination reveals a part plastic and part ceramic system on this side, with a crack at one point which will need repair in the medium term. .

Enough about drains. Suffice to say that rain falling onto the chapel will now drain away outside rather than in, and everybody agrees that the Chapel is looking lovely after the restoration and decoration. We are extremely grateful to the generous donors who have made this possible, including individuals, numerous charitable trusts, Leicester City Council, East Midland Unitarians and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The project has presented numerous unexpected challenges and our architect John Eaton, our structural engineer Ian Baggott, and contractor Mark Brown from WW Brown and Sons deserve great credit in coordinating and completing the project with excellent results.

Mike Drucquer

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