

# ST JOHN'S CHURCH, RANMOOR



**Memories of Mother Churches for  
Mothering Sunday 2021**

Dear Friends,

Despite appearances to the contrary there are not many things about which I grumble. That said, I do find myself giving in to a spot of grumpy muttering in newsagents and card shops in the weeks leading up to the Fourth Sunday of Lent. 'Happy Mother's Day' say the vast majority of the cards on offer and it's a rare triumph if you can find one that refers correctly to 'Mothering Sunday'.

This Sunday is the day when, historically, those who worked in service and were therefore living away from home, would be allowed a day off to return to their home or 'mother' church. Naturally, this would usually also include a visit to their family, but the day itself was (and still is in the Church) focussed on remembering and returning to the church that nurtured us in our early years of exploring faith.

It's not that Mothering Sunday should not be a time to rejoice in loving and supportive human family relationships, but it's a time when we can reflect on the broader family of God to which we all belong and, within which, we are parented, nurtured and loved by God.

I hope you'll enjoy this collection of memories from some members of St John's community where they tell of the influence that their mother church had on their lives.



I grew up in Broadstairs in Kent. My family was heavily involved in the life of the church of St Peter-in-Thanel and I was often to be found clambering around the pews as a toddler whilst my mum carried out her various duties as vergier, sacristan and parish secretary. When I was old enough I joined the choir and remained a member until I left home to go to university in Lancaster. The church, the vicars I knew during my time there and the extended family with whom I grew up were all hugely important to my discernment of God's calling on my life and I couldn't be more grateful for the push in the right direction that they gave.

As a church family at St John's we have missed being together for nearly a year now. But, with the vaccination programme proceeding apace and the situation improving throughout the country, there is hope that we will soon be able to gather together again to share fellowship and stories (like those below) in person.

God bless,

Revd Matt



## Janet and Malcolm Anker's memories of their Mother Churches

### **Malcolm writes:**

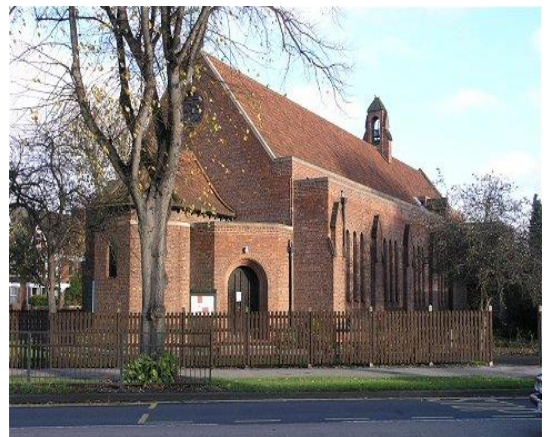
My first memories of church came at about 6 years old, when I was taken with my twin sister, Ruth, by my parents to the church up the hill and across the fields known as St. Peter's, Woodmansterne, in Surrey, just east of Banstead. My parents did not go to Matins (they did not count themselves as high enough up the social order!) but to Evensong at 6.30 and we always sat in the back seats behind the entrance door. I remember counting the congregation coming in. We didn't go to Sunday School, but my mother home Sunday-schooled us. I remember producing my own handwritten copy of the Prayer Book with illuminated initial letters! By the time we were twelve we were allowed to join the Bible Class, a youth club for all the young people who worshipped at St Peter's, a lively group that enjoyed 12 mile hikes in the Surrey countryside in holiday times, put on dramatic productions (3 act plays, farces and thrillers) and met each Friday evening in the Rectory, where as many as 50 would crowd into a room meant for only 12! The purpose of each evening was to study a book of the Bible and see what it had to tell us about our daily lives and problems. I was also signed up to join a local Crusader Group, (for boys only!) and that met each Sunday afternoon. It was not connected to the Church. As time went on I remember getting into trouble because I said I didn't believe that all the stories in the Bible were literally true! Yet nevertheless I did enjoy going on their well run holiday camps in the Isle of Wight, Scotland and Framlingham.



*St Peter's, Woodmansterne in Surrey*

### **Janet writes:**

I started Sunday School at 5 years old at St Martin's Church, Hull which met at 2.30 on a Sunday afternoon and attended regularly until confirmation classes at age 11. After confirmation I became a Sunday School Teacher, and attended, with my mother and sister, the Parish Communion at 9.30 which was followed by a Parish Breakfast - a great time for socialising with our friends. At 13, we were encouraged to join the Church youth club which involved many fun outings (e.g. evening trips on the ferry across the Humber and weekends away to Wydale Hall, near Scarborough - the Diocesan Retreat House). The weekly meetings were held in the Vicarage on a Sunday evening, with lively discussions and hot chocolate. The Vicar was a superb teacher and encourager. I was also a member of the Discoverers Group, which was the young people's section of the Church Missionary Society. When I was 14, I was asked to take over the leadership of the group! I continued with this until I was married. The friendships that were made in these formative years have lasted to the present day.





## My mother church: Pam Simms

*Interviewed by Rosemary Farkas*

When I interviewed Pam on the phone yesterday she revealed some fascinating information, not only about the church she attended between the ages of approximately 7 – 15, but about her life at that time. She grew up just before the start of the Second World War and much of her experience was typical of the time.

Pam lived with her parents and elder brother in Wembley. Her father worked for an electricity company. Her parents did not go to church but were not against religion. Pam decided to start going to church with a friend who attended with her parents because 'it was something to do'. Other than the church being C of E, quite new and modern, in Greenford and close to home, she cannot remember anything about it, including its name! However, she was confirmed there.

Later on, Pam continued attending because she wanted to learn to play the organ. She was having piano lessons at home. The church organist did indeed teach her how to play, although it was a harmonium rather than a full organ. I asked Pam if she played in church, to which she said no, as there was an organist in post, but she admitted to deputising for him occasionally. As far as I know, this talent has remained latent ever since, although Pam is (she would say was) an accomplished pianist.

The war started. Her father's firm relocated to Newbury and Pam was evacuated with her family 'to a funny little cottage' for a year. Thus she missed taking the 11+ exam and stopped piano lessons. As not much seemed to be happening, everyone returned to London a year later – just in time for the Blitz! They lived 'on the edge of the worst affected' area and fortunately were not directly involved. She had to be interviewed to get a place at grammar school, which she attended up to the age of 15. She described the frequent dashes to the air raid shelters when the sirens went off and how the teachers tried to teach in them, which 'wasn't very successful'. She restarted piano lessons when she was 14: everything was very unsettled.

For two years, when she was aged 14 and 15, she attended harvest camps. These camps were held in the summer holidays in agricultural areas to utilise older students' labour as part of the war effort. (I had not heard of them before). She went to Lincolnshire, near Louth. Off they would go in the back of a lorry to the fields to plant leeks. She and others also went to church (again nameless) where there was a nice vicar who let them climb the tower and walk the plank in front of the church bells (so much for health and safety regulations) and she also sang in the choir.

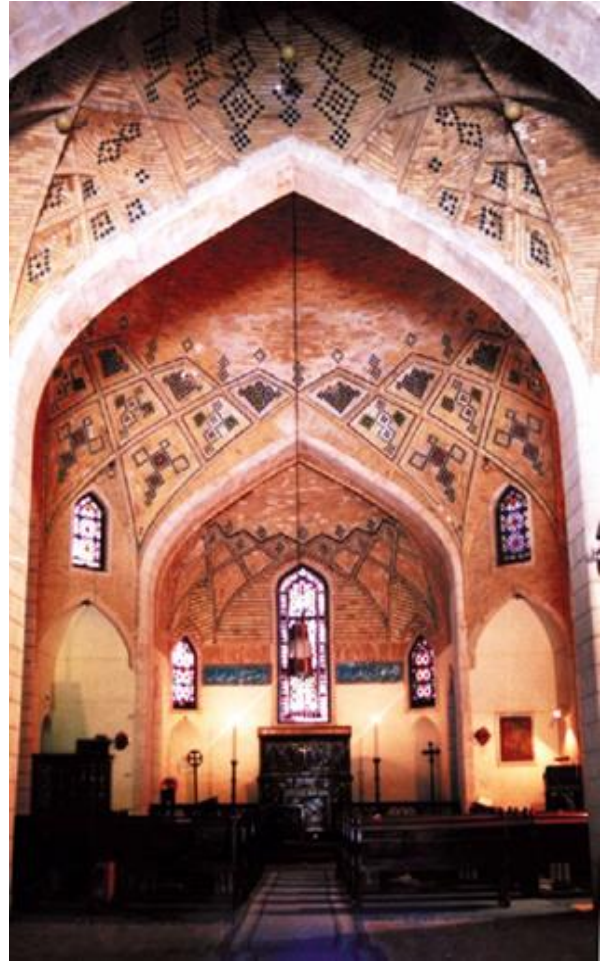
After she was 15 a new chapter in Pam's life began, so this is a good place to end her story. As she said, she had lived through 'an interesting time', albeit one in which her mother church did not feature very prominently!

## Cathy and Matthew Rhodes and the churches that nurtured them

### *Matthew writes:*

Cathy and I have moved a lot in our lives. Cathy changed school twelve times! So when Mary asked us about our mother churches we had to think hard about the answer. Our mother churches have always been the churches where we find ourselves. But a few stand out.

Cathy's parents were CMS missionaries in Iran when she was growing up. Her father was a physician at the Christian hospital in Shiraz. The family worshipped in the compound church which was dedicated to Simon the Zealot. It was built with a traditional dome and the blue tile mosaics that are often found on Persian buildings. Cathy attended services in Farsi and English and had just started organ lessons in the church when the revolution happened, and the family had to return to the UK.



*The Church of St Simon the Zealot, Shiraz*



One of the churches that stands out for me is my university church in Bristol where Cathy and I met. St Paul's, Clifton boasts a Julian Chapel which was a wonderful space for prayer and contemplation. It played an important role in the discernment of my calling as a priest.

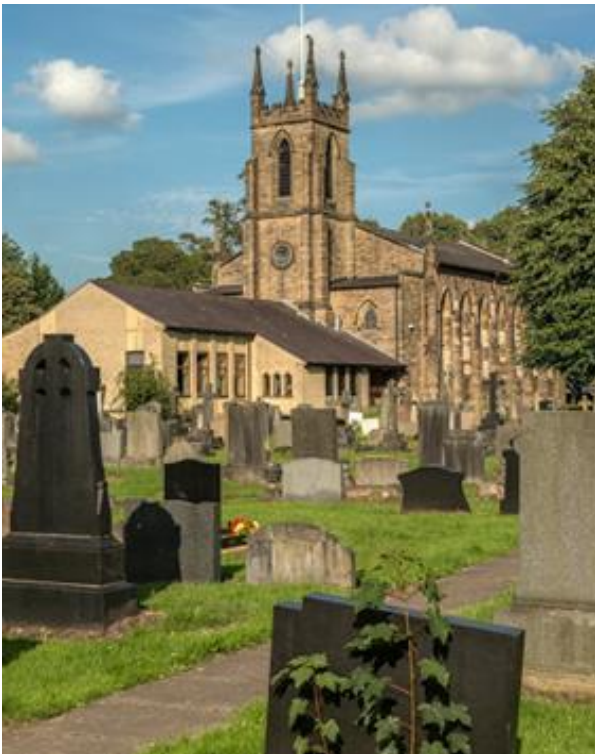
Julian is Mother Julian of Norwich, an anchoress and mystic in the Middle Ages who was blessed with a series of visions which she recorded in her 'Revelations'. One of my favourite quotations from Mother Julian which has sustained me for many years and which seems particularly relevant now is:

*All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.*

*A mosaic in the Church of St Paul's, Clifton in Bristol*



**The mother church of Janet Noble,  
who runs our children's work at St John's.**



My Mother Church is St Thomas's Norbury Hazel Grove. My parents were married there as were my sister and I. I was christened and confirmed there.

As a child, my week consisted of choir practice twice a week, Youth Group Friday, weddings on Saturday and two Sunday services. Then there was Sunday School in the afternoon at the nearby church school which was always packed out with children. I was first a member then a teacher.

As a teenager there was Pathfinders after the evening service, Children's Christian Crusade holiday clubs, weekend trips to Cae Canol a church centre in Wales for fun and working parties, Harvest and Michaelmas queens, choir trips and competitions. Church parade - which uniform do I wear? Choir, Guides or St Johns Ambulance brigade.

The Choir used to lead the Whit Walk through the village and to the War memorial (at the other end of the village) on Remembrance Sunday (which as a teenager wasn't as enjoyable!) My parents weren't regular attendees but always supported us and encouraged us. They were on many committees, making Harvest Queen dresses etc. and supporting the Church. Dad's ashes are buried at the Church so we still visit to say hello. Norbury is also an old family name so I have always thought it is MY Church and it still feels very special whenever we drive past, with lots of happy memories.



*Janet as Harvest Queen Janet as Attendant and in the choir at St Thomas'*

## Susan Fielding's Mother Church

*St Mary's Windermere in Cumbria*



Susan Fielding talked to Mary about her teenage years in Cumbria:

'The church where I was confirmed was very important to me. I was born in 1936 and spent the war years alone with my mother as my father was a Japanese prisoner-of-war. When at last he returned I had to share my mother's attention with him and I found it very difficult. So I was sent to the boarding school of St Anne's in Windermere at the age of ten and that was the making of me.

Not only did we have a bit of Windermere Lake all to ourselves, we had a close connection with the church. Every Sunday a long crocodile of us girls were walked down to the church in the morning and the Vicar often came up to school to teach us. This Vicar was a very outspoken man. He made a big impression on me and he became a Bishop. On the day of my confirmation I was dressed in white with a white veil and the vicar's wife made a lovely tea for us all at the Vicarage.

This church and the school made all the difference to me.





# Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March

**10.30am**  
Come and join us online for our special  
Mothering Sunday service.

*Celebrate this special  
day with us!*

**3pm**

Join us for a themed quiz about the  
worlds most Inspirational women!  
Sit down relax with a  
cuppa and cake.  
Share any news with each other.



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