

A Reflection from a St Mary's Churchwarden (Charles Wilson)

Let's have a bike-free month, eh? (*Cheers off-stage*). No promises.

I'm delighted to say that we're now in dialogue with the Diocese and Archdeacon about advertising for a new Rector, and by the time you read this I hope, hope, hope the post will have been published! So many people ask me – why on earth does this take so long?

I can think of one or two reasons in favour of a significant period of Vacancy, and many of you have helped me list the ideas against it, which I add to my own list! All I can say is this – I now know much better all the things that a priest has to organise, lead, manage, do, pray for, think about. The lay team don't do the half of what a priest does - particularly on the pastoral side, visiting people daily, talking through family baptisms, weddings and funerals. So I salute the long line of Rectors from 1333 shown on the brass plate by the Rector's stall in St Mary's. And the one whom God has appointed to come and live amongst us next! God knows who it is, but we don't – yet!

In the summer, our calendar has been fairly quiet as school holidays take priority, but with the Autumn term starting, we're off again with a bang! The village has just enjoyed the WW1 Pack Up Your Troubles in the Victory Hall, and the Windsor historic trip which I sadly missed. There is also the new Remembrance church-bank display of poppies which has been set up to help us - and numerous passing motorists - recall the sacrifices made for us. We shall be placing some of these beautiful ceramic poppies onto the Commonwealth War graves in our own churchyard, after the 10.50am service on 11th November.

Very soon now, our Family Harvest festival will be here - Sunday 7th October - with the school's harvest celebration two days later. Our food parcels from both events go to the Easter Team in Crawley, and the diocesan Family Support Work (FSW) charity for children. We're having a bye on Harvest lunch after the morning service this year, so that next year the new Priest-in-charge can plan a Harvest social event with a clean sheet.

A week later on Monday 15th October at 7.00pm, we have the Ardingly Senior school choir kindly giving a concert of quality choral items, both accompanied and unaccompanied. It will be a great opportunity to relax, listen and enjoy quality music-making from the talent who are the stars of the future! There is a 20 min interval, and it'll be over before 9pm. *No need for tickets, please just come along.* There is a retiring collection.

Finally, a personal and heartfelt thanks for the concern many have expressed about my visit to N London (Highgate, it was) on my erstwhile bike, before it was stolen. Yesterday, a wonderful nonagenarian friend asked me if I knew the place of his childhood, namely Highgate.

I certainly do.