

Centenary book in progress



Since he started delving into the history of the church for a book marking the centenary of St Jude's, the vicar has been surprised by discoveries he has made. Little was known about the artist who covered the interior with murals over a ten year period after the first world war. "We know a lot more now," he says, "thanks to a visit from Starmer's great nephew who turned up with a treasure trove of pictures, photographs and family history."

Fresh from commissions to photograph St Pauls Cathedral, Buckingham Palace and the Tower, Sue Salton (pictured above) turns her expert eye and her

camera on the murals in St Jude's. "There are so many and they range from tiny decorations to huge panoramas – its a real challenge but I hope people will be pleased to be able to see these inspirational paintings on the page in a way that is often impossible in the church."

What they are working on is a lavishly illustrated book showing seldom seen aspects of this famous church and its history. From Lutyens' grand design to the intimate detail in his altars and intricate brickwork. Walter Starmer's amazing murals; long forgotten paintings from the earliest days of St Jude's. These and other aspects of the history

of the people and this great building will be detailed over forty beautifully bound large scale pages in a limited edition of three hundred numbered copies each signed by the vicar, the Rev Alan Walker, who has researched a hundred years of church records to bring the story of St Jude's to life in time for its centenary in 2011.

To be published in June 2011 the cover price will be £35. Early subscribers will pay only £30 and have their name printed on a subscribers page in the book. Order at: www.stjudeonthehill.com/2011/03/invitation-to-subscribe-to-st-jude-on.html or pick up a form in the church which is open to visitors every Sunday from midday to 5.30pm.

Sacred and profane

Art critic, historian and television presenter Andrew Graham-Dixon, addressed a packed meeting of the HBS Literary Society in February, on the subject of his latest book, *Caravaggio – a Life Sacred and Profane*.

Vicar Alan Walker yielded the chair on this occasion to his wife, Lucrezia, familiar to anyone enjoying her conducted tours of London's National Gallery. She hosted an eye-opening and entertaining evening, which began with a selection of poems read by their authors, Henrietta Barnett School girls, some of the more vivid imagery contained in them an apt preparation for what was to follow.

As Andrew Graham-Dixon prefaced his talk by explaining, the biography of the artist Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, better known as simply Caravaggio, had been very difficult to trace. He used the analogy of nocturnal lightning to epitomise both the painter's masterly deployment of light and dark, of chiaroscuro, in his works, and the scarcity of documentary evidence which illuminated the circumstances of his 38-year lifespan.

As soon became clear, although Caravaggio had friends in high places within Roman society and the Catholic church, he chose to paint gospel scenes peopled by models drawn from among his friends and companions, fellow-artists and other, more shadowy, characters. In Italy's churches and the world's art galleries, their likenesses now personify St Peter and St Thomas,

Martha, Mary Magdalene and the Roman soldiery that scourged and crucified Christ. A graphic parallel with the artist's lifestyle was drawn, when the author described interviewing pop-star Keith Richards in New York for the BBC's Culture Show. Given a copy of the book, the ageing man of rock recognised a kindred spirit in the artist's portrait, and affirmed that, were he alive today, he might indeed have qualified as a member of his band. The author commented only that, if Caravaggio had been a Rolling Stone, then in his career he had gathered very little moss.

In keeping with a character likened to that of a human alley cat, however, was the revelation that Caravaggio frequented the narrow streets of Rome's artists' quarter by night, armed not with a palette and paintbrushes, but a sword and dagger. On one such foray, magistrates' records show, the painter of such masterpieces as the National Gallery's *The Supper at Emmaus*, killed a man in a duel. It was an event which sowed the seeds of his own doom, casting a deep shadow over the remainder of his life and posthumous reputation.

Andrew remarked that he had never managed to complete this particular lecture, and in the event failed to do so on this occasion, too. Nevertheless, the fruits of his years of research provided a fascinating, if seldom comfortable, glimpse into the life and career of one of the authentic geniuses of western art.

DAVID POPE



Andrew Graham-Dixon and Lucrezia Walker

Save our Suburb Library



Barnet Council have announced plans to save £1.41 million from their library budget over the next three years. Our library in Marketplace, which has been in its current location for some 60 years, is the only one of 16 in the borough which is set to shut down completely. This, despite the fact that it provides a very valuable service to the community, particularly to young children and the elderly.

While it is claimed that our Suburb library is the second costliest to run, one of the reasons cited being that the premises are the only ones in the borough which are leased from a private landlord, our investigations have shown that the rent for 2010/11 is only £10,532 per annum, just 7.6% of its total costs. What however is very disturbing is the fact that over £57,000 or 41% of the total overheads is being charged to us by way of 'central' Barnet library charges. To determine what savings are indeed possible, without prejudicing the quality of the service, surely any cost projections must be calculated on a 'like for like' basis?

Moreover, contrary to the claim by one of our local councillors that "the lease is essentially a short term one, so that there would be no further rent to pay if the library closes," we have discovered that the lease is not scheduled to expire until 2021! No one we asked was willing to answer the question "what would be the expense if the lease were terminated before this date?"

The 'alternative' proposal, currently under discussion, would involve a move of the stock from our library to The Institute premises (next to East Finchley tube station) and the installation of a self-service machine – no

doubt dispensing with the librarians. If there are to be cost savings as a result of such a move, surely these could only be achieved by a 'rent free' agreement with The Institute. Is that a realistic proposition? We also have to assume that in their calculations Barnet Libraries would have to continue to allocate the same proportion of central costings to any new venue. Again, we have tried to discover the details of this potential arrangement but no reply has been forthcoming.

This is all before one asks how many of the current Suburb library users – particularly the elderly and the mums with pushchairs, would be willing or able to make the journey to this new location – nearly a mile away from Marketplace?

When Barnet published their cost saving plans for the libraries they said that there would be a 10 week period of consultation. This finishes on June 13 so there is still plenty of time for everyone who feels strongly about the need to protect our local library to make their feelings known, before it's too late. You can do so in the following ways:

- Go to www.hgs.org.uk and sign our petition (we will also be campaigning in Marketplace and Temple Fortune with petitions to sign);
- Email or write to our local Councillors and encourage your friends and neighbours to do the same;
- Email or write to Tom Pike, Head of Libraries, London Borough of Barnet, tom.pike@barnet.gov.uk

Finally, many thanks to all those who have already pledged their support and particularly to Karen and Neville Silver for their intrepid search for the facts.

DEBORAH WARLAND

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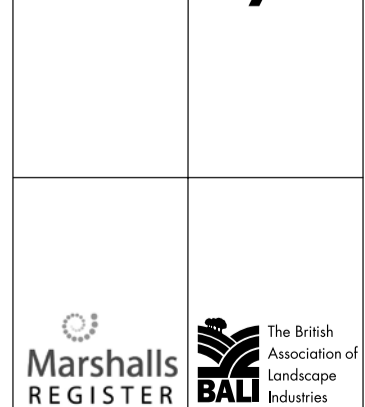
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