

The Hallas Times

The doings of Sam & Sheila in 2020

Introduction

It's the time of year when I say, 'We've only just had Christmas. It can't be here again', but it is, so that must be the cue for the Hallas Press to produce its annual publication. This means that I look back through the diary to see what has happened, write something the old-fashioned way i.e. in longhand, type it up, pass it to Sam who edits it, adds the photos and uploads it to his website.

You will not be surprised to learn that there hasn't been a great deal in this year's diary and I expect it has been the same for you. I know that a few of our gallant readers have been personally affected by Covid 19 but I hope that the rest of you have avoided this pernicious plague.



Sheila & Sam not in Oban

Margaret Hallas 1918-2020



In early March, Sam's Aunt Margaret died, at the grand age of 101, so this year has been dominated by sorting out her

affairs. We always knew that they would be complicated but contending with Coronavirus as well was an added difficulty. Communication with solicitors, accountants etc. has been done entirely by phone or email. Face to face conversations would have been much easier and quicker.

However, God has been in charge and some things have gone better than we anticipated. We looked at various Funeral Directors on line and chose a local, family firm whose website we liked, only to discover that the proprietor, who is also a lay preacher, had been a friend of



Margaret's for 40 years and knew her better than we did.

We also had a buyer for Margaret's rather dilapidated bungalow before it was advertised on the open market. Completion has taken place and the new owners have moved in.

Lockdown

I'm ashamed to admit that we enjoyed some aspects of the lockdown in the spring and summer. Having been retired for some years, it didn't have as great an impact on us as it did on many others. We found the cessation of most regular activities very pleasant. We went out for a walk most afternoons. Sam lost some weight and I gained a suntan which I haven't had for years.

We explored parts of Hitchin and the nearby villages which we were only vaguely familiar with and are now experts on the courses of all the local waterways. Hitchin is the proud



Blue bells at West Wood



Priory Park in town

owner of three named rivers and a number of chalk streams. Sam took dozens of photos which, appropriately captioned, he put on his Facebook page. There are rumours of a forthcoming book, 'Lockdown Walks'. Order your copies now, ladies and gentlemen. An ideal gift for one and all! Only £99.99 each. £89.99 for a signed copy.

Sam adds that *Open Street Map* on the web has been a boon for finding footpaths in the countryside. We are blessed in being so close to both town and country.

Church Activity

After a while, when people realised that lockdown was going to be here for a while, life began to get busier again, particularly for Sam. Sunday morning services and all other Church related meetings are being held on Zoom and Sam's technical and computer wizardry are in demand to ensure they run smoothly.



Church service on Zoom

As Fabric Secretary, he visited the Church at least weekly to check on things and run the taps etc. I did my

bit too. As there was nobody there to drink coffee, I brought the biscuits home and ate them.

Once the congregation got the hang of online Zoom services we found that the attendance became as high or even higher than it used to be when people were there in the flesh. We even had folk who have moved away joining us from elsewhere in the country.

Holidays? What holidays?

In common with many others, we had to forgo our summer holiday in Scotland, so the composite picture heading page one is just wishful thinking. However, we did manage a few days in Symonds Yat in the Wye Valley in September. Symonds Yat is the only holiday destination which we return to regularly but this time we felt that it had lost much of its former charm.

It was doing its best to recover from severe flooding in February. The hotel we stayed in had needed major

reconstruction, and many other buildings were closed. The river banks were overgrown with Himalayan balsam and the whole gorge managed to look both uncared for and increasingly commercialised.

Those of you who follow our Facebook page will have seen the other things we've been up to during the year that there isn't space for here.



Ye Old Ferrie Inn, Symonds Yat



Goodrich Castle

Family news

We try to see as much of the family as we can. Tim is teaching his sixth form students both in the classroom and on line. Harriet has been working at home since



Zoe

March. Zoe, who is now two, is rather puzzled by this. She can't understand why Mummy is shut away upstairs instead of playing with her. Until the second lockdown arrived we had been looking after Zoe on Wednesdays. She is a constant delight to us and she adores Sam. 'Granddad come' is one of her most frequently used sentences.

Sadly, we see less of our other equally adorable granddaughter, Evie. Matthew and Lizzie have let their flat in Shefford and moved into a house owned by the school in Elstree where Matthew now teaches. This move has cut out two hours tedious driving every day.

We were able to see them on Evie's first birthday at the end of October. She was able to show off her newly mastered skill of walking, accompanied by a lot of falling down, but now she is constantly on the go.



Evie

The restrictions in place mean a very different Christmas, but we wish you a very happy one and a healthy Covid-free new year...

With love from Sam and Sheila