

# St Seraphim's News, Autumn 2021



**This newsletter comes after a long gap, due to the Coronavirus pandemic.**

Our readers will learn that although closed to normal activities, throughout the pandemic life carried on, not least in the Quiet garden where the wildlife flourished, and with the absence of vehicles passing through the coach park and along station road, the birdsong was louder. St Seraphim's closed from March 2020 until July 2021 following the government guidelines, with difficulty, being used to having an open door every day.

"Glory to God for all things" is the Akathist hymn which is usually sung to welcome the beginning of the Church year reminding us we are part of the

created world and our connectedness to all Creation. Often this hymn has come to mind during the pandemic, which has reminded us of what goes wrong when the natural world is compromised affects the whole world while the natural world goes on trying to survive in the environment.

In the Quiet garden the grass grew long, full of violets and primroses which the insects enjoyed.

A large fir tree attracted bees and wasps to circle round rather noisily and enjoy the food it provided, After consulting the local Council department for advice, I was told they would leave in due course and several days later they did.

Sparrows nested in the neglected hedges and a whole flock of the hedge sparrows, house sparrows and dunnocks come to eat the leftovers when Wanda has finished.

The wildlife in the garden has flourished, with the lack of disturbance, and the peace and quiet. All types of spiders inhabit the nooks and crannies, common frogs appear in the watering can and bees and butterflies are seen in good numbers again.

One lovely morning a loud noise suddenly broke the silence and on investigation it was a swarm of bees in the rowan tree on the bank, settling themselves into a new space. A local beekeeper was consulted and he came with a bee skep resembling the type used long ago and reminding me of the smaller version worn by St Spiridon, patron saint of Corfu.

The bees followed the queen bee already installed inside, with the aid of a long pole and the skep on the end, and the next day all were taken to their new home.

In late Summer bats appear in the twilight time and fly round for a short while in the former stationmaster's garden, before disappearing quietly to their home. The hummingbird hawkmoth is another regular visitor to the shrubs and borders on sunny summer days. A green woodpecker appeared during the summer foraging for the ants around the raised beds. A family of hedgehogs was discovered in the neglected flower border and signs of them are seen all over the garden, and one lonely rabbit also lives in the border, popping out to eat and occasionally being spotted.

Prince E N Trebetskoi, in “Icons Theology in colour” said the ideal of icon painting is universal peace among all creatures.

And he also said “Our icon painting draws all its lyricism and all its drama from the use of the worlds beautiful colours to express the other worldly meaning of the Word.”

St Seraphim said, “Find peace in your heart and those around you will be saved.” They both were speaking before the Russian revolution and the havoc it brought, and their words are timeless.

St Seraphim’s opened to the public in August and it was lovely to see visitors again, one of the first being a young lady who travels from London and comes armed with flowers, one of our many regular visitors who have returned once more.



### **From our Volunteer Coordinator :**

‘The first quarter of 2021 saw St Seraphim’s taking part in the Norfolk Records Office Community Archive Project. Due to the national lockdown the project was conducted remotely rather than through site visits as originally planned. Meetings took place using Zoom, with our collections volunteers participating from home. We agreed the original format would have been more beneficial, but it was still a positive experience. Although we could not meet the rest of the cohort in person we did attend the zoom socials, which was a new experience for us all! Once restrictions eased our collections volunteers returned to site and continued work on improving archive storage following NRO guidance, using acid free materials procured with our project bursary. We were very pleased to gain a new Documentation and Archiving Volunteer in May through our advertisement with the University of Leicester Jobs Desk.

The trustees were thrilled to secure a grant from the North Norfolk District Council Sustainable Communities Fund for a new Garden Room. Installation of the building took place in February, with further fit out of the power supply, lighting and flooring conducted over the subsequent months. An entrance ramp was fabricated and John Clark made some lovely planters for the sides, now home to lavender. Chairs and tables were purchased. The old marquee has served us very well but the new Garden Room will facilitate our own activities and encourage local community groups to hold their own events here, both of which we hope will help us create mutually beneficial relationships.

The Garden Room was used for the final icon painting courses funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Iconographer Helen was very pleased with the space and made suggestions on improving the lighting, which have been implemented. Attendee numbers were reduced due to Covid, but all courses were fully booked and much enjoyed by participants. Local artist Candide was inspired to use the space for Monday art sessions and also gave a talk on the use of earth pigments in her work.





The Community Payback have been unable to attend due to covid restrictions but members of the local WI and gardening volunteers have kept the garden looking glorious over the Summer and into Autumn; thanks to their hard work the local WI and Fakenham and Snoring Carers were able to really enjoy their time in the garden, while the new Garden Room meant they could widen the scope of their activities here, which on both occasions included tea and cake! Covid sadly put pay to our annual Garden Party, so instead we held a thank you event for our volunteers. The weather was lovely, as were the cream scones!

We love to encourage visitors to the garden, including flora and fauna, but we did have to gently ask one particular group to move along...a swarm of bees arrived and attached themselves to one of our trees. They were gently persuaded to leave for the sake of public safety!

The Quiet Garden Group to their great credit has instigated a series of Chapel Icon Guided Tours on a Wednesday and Saturday throughout September and October. This initial trial is being enjoyed equally by volunteers and visitors and is something we very much hope to develop as an ongoing activity next year as they have proved to be very popular! Barbara of the Quiet Garden Group also stepped in to give the Chapel Icon Guided Tours as advertised for Heritage Open Day.

We are working on establishing a social and friendship group here in the Quiet Garden. We've been in touch with a horticultural charity with a view to holding a one day training session here in the Spring. We already have a number of our volunteers who have expressed an interest but there is room for more! Do let us know if you would be interested.

We held our first Autumn Open Afternoon in September, although we did not attract additional volunteers the event was a success; resulting in the opportunity for us to record some precious memories of the railway and add them to our archives.'

The Community payback have not been for almost 2 years now because of the restrictions on their travel, and the garden in places has grown a little wild. A gardener has been mowing and also hedge trimming and will continue through the winter cutting back the shrubs. A good neighbour takes the green waste away. A group of ladies have been coming on Monday mornings, during the summer tending the banks and the raised beds, which have had new timber to replace the old and rotting timber, and the raised beds are slightly larger. Helping hands always needed so come and join in! One thing leading to another, there are plans for a Social/Friendship group using nature and gardening activities next year. We will be working with a horticultural charity and will have further news in the Spring. There is so much inspiration in a garden, following the example of the wildlife which inhabits it and the lengths they go to in order to provide food and shelter for their offspring. The bird's nests here usually contain sheep's wool from the flock in the adjacent field and feathers supplied by Wanda the resident goose. Wanda is very generous by nature and the bushes are full of sparrows waiting for her to finish her meal so they can swoop down and eat. Sometimes there is quite a gathering of birds of various sorts, eating together.



Norfolk Churches Cycle ride took place in September and there were more cyclists this year, after lockdown wanting to get out and explore. Always nice to welcome the cyclists and encourage their valiant efforts.

Pilgrimages have begun again, and it is lovely to see the pilgrims again, after what seemed like a long time. Once again St Seraphim's Quiet Garden will be represented with a tree at Fakenham Christmas Tree Festival, last year having a virtual display. This opens on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November until 2<sup>nd</sup> December and attracts many visitors to St Peter's parish church, Fakenham.

There are books for sale in the garden room and when we have some, plants for sale.

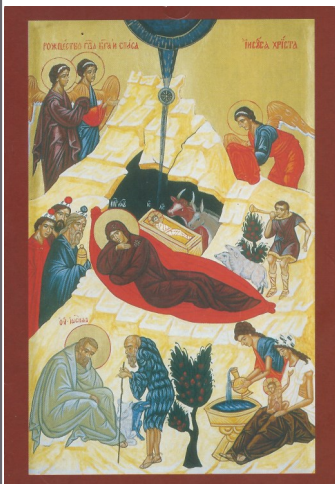
A selection of cards of the icons, and books on the Gallery icons, the Railway and the Orthodox presence in Walsingham all compiled by our volunteers.

Friends of St Seraphim's have waited patiently for a newsletter and now we have something to write about. Many friends of St Seraphim's have visited now it is possible, and a young lady who comes regularly from London has made a welcome return. The garden receives many repeat visitors and Wanda is always an attraction, standing patiently by the pond or foraging for tasty weeds and new grass. A gentle reminder to Friends that it is time to renew annual membership, which remains at £10 per year. We are so grateful to everyone who supports us in this way!

Writing in an early newsletter a friend of St Seraphim's, Andrew Cowling wrote at the end of his article on St Seraphim, "A Living Saint"

"Eventually Saint Seraphim came to Walsingham through Father David, the Brotherhood of St Seraphim and the making of St Seraphim's church. Not only did Fr David bring St Seraphim to Walsingham through his church, but also through his icon, the lives of the British Saints making a rich inheritance for us in our lives today. That church is not an architectural oddity, an Orthodox church made from a railway station booking office, it is a living church, the house of God, the gate of heaven a church in which we stand before his icon and say "Save us by your prayers O Holy Father Seraphim."

A designated room for Railway display and memorabilia is in the planning, and anyone interested in helping set this up would be welcomed. Likewise anyone with memories of Walsingham Station please come and see us so we can share them.



## **Christ is Born!**

**Wishing all our friends and supporters a happy Christmas and peaceful New Year!**

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