

**Happy Easter and Welcome to our April issue of
Rostrum**

VILLAGE DIARY

April

3 Footpaths Walk – meet at Village Hall – 2.30pm note later starting time

5 Parish Council Meeting – Village Hall - 7.30pm followed by Planning Committee

7 Footpaths Walk – meet at Village Hall – 10am

14 Good, Bad and Ugly WI Talk on Plants - Hall – 2pm

20 Homes 1066–present History Society talk – Hall – 8pm

May

3 Parish Council Meeting – Village Hall - 7.30pm followed by Planning Committee

7 Annual Plant Sale – Churchyard – 10am – 1pm

18 History Society Wine & Cheese – 7-9pm



June Platinum Jubilee Village Events



2nd, 3rd & 4th Jubilee Community Flower Festival
– **Church 10.30am-4pm** (Light Refreshments available)

**Saturday 4th - 4pm-10pm Village Celebrations -
Wateringbury Playing Fields** Bring your own picnic
(and gazebo)

26ft square Adult & Child Bouncy Castle - Fantastic Live Band
and DJ

Paying Bar/Beer Tent and Horsebox Wine-Bar.

**Downsizing Drive Sale - Saturday 23rd APRIL -
9am – 1pm**

At 10 Red Hill proceeds to go to Wateringbury Church

Items both large and small! From a single bed and bedding
to a pick axe;

a desk to flippers, snorkel and mask; Hostess Trolley to
complete cutlery set; a decorating tower to frying pans and
John Lewis hall table in light wood and much more!!

Interested in anything? Email ruth.dunn@btinternet.com

Wateringbury Village Fete - Sunday 19th June

12.30-5pm At The Playing Fields

The Village Fete committee are still looking for
volunteers to help us. We need car park marshals, raffle
ticket sellers, people to help get the marquees up for the jazz
band and the all important beer tent. Help tidying up and
litter picking. We are also happy to receive raffle prize
donations from residents and local businesses. If you can
spare an hour or two on the day, your help would really be
appreciated.

Please contact wateringburyfetecommittee@gmail.com.

VILLAGE PEOPLE Please let us have your news and tributes by 17 April for our May magazine. Entries are free. Email rostrum2@hotmail.com or phone 01622 812023 May Editor

RIP Aubrey Williams

(29 December 1932 – 16 February 2022)

Aubrey was born at Court Lodge Cottages, West Peckham. He moved to Wateringbury (Wateringbury Villa), in 1970 from Mereworth with his wife Jo and son Huw. Jo had lived at the house prior to their marriage at Wateringbury Church in March 1956. Apart from his National Service days, Aubrey's working life had been spent totally in Teston with 30 years at Teston Garage and then Alfred Readers Cricket Ball factory until his retirement in 1997. He had for several years been an Independent Parish Councillor, playing a key part in the acquisition by the Parish Council of the old church rooms and their refurbishment into a village hall. (The site is now occupied by our Millennium village hall.) He was a campaigner in the 70s and 80s for a village bypass. Aubrey was a keen cricketer who had played for West Peckham and Teston. He was diagnosed with mixed dementia in early 2021, which meant him leaving Wateringbury and going into care at the Pilgrims Way Nursing Home in Maidstone in June where he sadly passed away. His cremation took place at Vinters Park, Maidstone on 15th March.

**VILLAGE EVENTS
TO MARK
THIS HISTORIC EVENT**



*Let's all join together as a community
and celebrate!*

Saturday 4th June 2022

Wateringbury Playing Fields 4pm-10pm

Bring your own picnic (and gazebo)

26ft square Adult & Child Bouncy Castle

Fantastic Live Band and DJ

Paying Bar/Beer Tent and

Horsebox Wine-Bar.



JUBILEE FLOWER FESTIVAL

AT THE CHURCH 10.30AM TO 4PM

Thursday 2nd, Friday 3rd, Saturday 4th

Gravesham Choral Society & Orchestra present their first concert since lock-down **HYMNS of PRAISE** Handel, Haydn & Mendelssohn

7:30pm, Saturday 23rd April St George's Church,

Gravesend, DA11 0DJ Tickets: £12 adults and £5 full-time

students. Please go to Events at www.graveshamcs.co.uk for

Hymns of Praise concert details where you will find a link to buy/order tickets

HISTORY SOCIETY

Our speaker for our meeting on **Wednesday 20th April will be Peter Batty who will be talking about the changes to our homes from 1066 to the present day.**

Our **cheese and wine evening will be on Wednesday 18th May from 7pm – 9pm**

by kind permission of Thomas and Emily Best-Shaw in their Wateringbury home. This is a ticket only event and tickets for members and their guests will be available at our April meeting priced £3.

TESTON & WATERINGBURY PRE-SCHOOL

We will finish this term with the children celebrating superhero week and making superhero masks and wrist bands as well as enjoying our Easter egg hunt in the pre-school garden.

Many thanks to those who donated their unwanted clothes for 'bags to school' last term, we raised an amazing £60 which will go towards craft material for the children. I would also like to thank those parents who donated to our collection of nappies and toiletries for Ukraine, your generosity is amazing as I was able to take 2 car loads to the collection point in Kings Hill.

And finally, from all the staff and children, we would like to wish everyone an enjoyable and happy Easter holiday. If you are interested in joining our pre-school, please contact Tina Driver on 07805 796353 or email tandwngroup@gmail.com

WATERINGBURY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE.

The next meeting will be on **Thursday 14th April at 2 pm.** The speaker is **Chris Stewart** who will give his **plant based talk** entitled **The Good, the Bad, the Ugly and the Beautiful.** For the competition please bring a picture, photo or actual plant or part plant which fits one of these categories.

Our March meeting was Competition Day. Many members attended and a large number of entries were submitted. The winners of the Freda Robbins cup for a loaf cake was Joyce Manning with Kathy Coates in second place. The Flower Cup for a Circle of Flowers winner was Diana Burbridge with Kathy Coates and Gillian Sessions in joint second place. The Hickman Cup for Craft was awarded to Margaret Malsher with Margaret Fyffe in second place. Kathy Coates received the pendant for winning the most competitions through the year.

WATERINGBURY FLOWER CLUB

At our next meeting on **Wednesday 20th April Jean Schofield will give a talk entitled "The Magical and Mysterious World of Bees"** at East Malling Institute Hall 7pm for 7.30pm start

We had a marvellous meeting in March with the very talented Eloise Hasler-Stott. Eloise won the young florist of the year award at Chelsea obtaining a Gold medal and has never looked back since, she started her demonstrator training in 2017 and has been entertaining clubs all over the south east since then. We hope that we can have her back to visit again soon now that Covid guidelines have been relaxed slightly. I do hope you can join us, our membership is £40 for this year and £6 for visitors, all information can be found on our website - Wateringbury Flower Club.
Jean Schofield

WATERINGBURY FOOTPATH GROUP

The next walk will be on **Sunday 3rd April, leaving the Village Hall at 2.30pm.** Note the later starting time as we will then be in British Summer Time. It is planned to repeat the walk on **Thursday 7th April, leaving the Village Hall at 10am.** If you

decide to come along and join us, you'll be very welcome.

We had a lovely walk on a fine day in March, with a good turnout. The route was beside the river from Bow Bridge to Teston Bridge with one very muddy patch just before the Country Park. I had warned those walkers whose mobile number I have and most people came prepared. At Teston we split into two groups, one returning by the same route, the other going over the bridge and taking footpaths via Tutsham and Bow Meadow on the other side of the river. No-one chose the third option – to walk up to the A26 and catch a bus back!

I am unable to do the next few walks as I have been advised to rest an injury I've had for a while. A couple of the regular walkers have volunteered to lead walks, so we are planning to continue as usual. I will update people through Rostrum, the village noticeboard at the crossroads and by text. Please contact me if you want to be kept updated and do not already receive my texts. **Lisa Dean 077 5953 9032**

SUNFLOWERS ARE THE NATIONAL FLOWER OF UKRAINE

There many from Ukraine working locally – let's show them we are thinking of them and grow sunflowers in our front gardens this summer.

WATERINGBURY CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Spring time is finally here and the daffodils and primulas are in full bloom around the school. The children have been enjoying the opportunity to get outside more and the den building among the trees has begun. If you see our children digging, they are not trying to escape – they are probably creating an intricate irrigation system for their den!

We have been really busy in school – the spring terms are often the most productive and there is some fantastic, imaginative learning happening everyday in our school. World Book Day saw Wateringbury School become Alice's Wonderland with Mad Hatters everywhere and even a tea party. Our children love reading and so a day dedicated to reading books and talking about our favourite stories created a real buzz with lots of imaginative play at break time too.

I am always impressed with the artistic skills of our children (of which I am a little jealous!) and we are planning an art exhibition in the church for later on in the year. Watch this space for an opportunity to come and see some genuine Wateringbury artwork.

The focus of our worship this term is forgiveness which seems particularly apt in the current global situation. We have been focussing on how we can make things better when they have gone wrong. Some of our older children have organised fundraising events for people in the Ukraine as well as starting their own food bank collection to support local families.

We are looking forward to finding out which children will be joining our Wateringbury family soon when

school places are offered in April. With that in mind we will be hosting a parenting session called 'Stepping Up Into Primary' which is designed to enable mothers, fathers and carers reflect on their own feelings about their child starting primary school, what to expect and how to best prepare and support their child in the transition. This is open to all parents of children starting school (not just Wateringbury) and will run from 9:30 – 11:30am on 19th April 2022 at our school. Please contact the office to register your interest.

If you are looking for a school place for your child or would like a tour of our school, please contact the school office at office@wateringbury.kent.sch.uk.

Debbie Johnson – Headteacher

www.wateringbury.kent.sch.uk

Learning, growing achieving...our journey together with God.

NETTLESTEAD AND WATERINGBURY PRESCHOOL

We returned from half term and began learning about all the different planets in space. The children were fascinated when they made a Solar System Diorama. They learnt what each planet was called and used their books to compare each planet! We then looked at the world we lived in and had walks around the field looking at the bugs and insects we could find.

At the beginning of March, we celebrated "World Book Day" and the children came dressed up as one of their favourite book characters. We were very lucky to have a local author visit us. She read the children her latest book and then they did a craft activity of making a stage with the characters from her book!

Kay Severn and Nisha Reed

NEWS FROM OUR KCC AND BOROUGH COUNCILLOR

One of the measures announced recently in the KCC Budget was a reduction in the subsidised bus services currently provided. There is a consultation under way and I would urge all residents to take the time to take part. Here is the link

<https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/bus-funding-reductions>

Copies are also available at the local library for those unable to go online. This is especially true for residents in East Peckham, Golden Green and Kings Hill, as the 208 and the X1/X2 are proposed to be scrapped. I have started a petition to Save the 208, as many residents have provided compelling evidence for the need to keep it. I hope that you will join me in signing it so that I can present it to Cabinet before the final decision is made. The link is here -

<https://www.change.org/p/save-the-208-bus>. Please, please support this! I need to have the villages behind me, as I try my best to save the service.

Plan Tree - Later this year, as part of KCC's vision for carbon neutrality, I will be given 350 trees each year to allocate to areas within my division. If you would like to discuss this, please email me at sarah.hudson@kent.gov.uk, to register your interest.

KCC has been awarded £1.1m to invest in improving play areas in its country parks. Both Teston

Park and Manor Park have been selected locally to receive over £300,000 of funding to provide new play equipment to be completed by the end of May.

The Local Boundary review has published its final warding patterns for TMBC for 2023. Hadlow, Golden Green, Shipbourne and Plaxtol become Bourne Ward, and East Peckham, Mereworth, West Peckham and Wateringbury become a 2 member ward.

Sarah Hudson

GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

As the days continue to get longer and warmer, nature in all its forms really comes alive and animals that have slept away the winter are now on the move! This includes amphibians, which are well worth attracting into your garden as they consume slugs and snails. The best way is obviously to install a fish-free pond (even a tub pond) but failing that, it's worth remembering that amphibians don't spend their entire lives in water but also seek out damp, safe places under rocks or logs and in compost piles. So, if you can incorporate these into your garden, they may repay you by devouring some of your garden pests!

Frogs and toads are on the move at the moment, heading for their breeding ponds. This often involves crossing roads and volunteers patrol the known highways to offer a helping hand. We can all support this initiative by keeping a look out, particularly after dusk and informing our local KRAG (Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group) or maybe joining them? A garden pond will also attract newts which spend much, but not all of their time, in water. They also eat slugs and snails but, unfortunately, are also very partial to tadpoles!

Our native reptiles (snakes, slow worms and lizards) are also emerging from hibernation and looking for somewhere to warm up. If you want to attract them into your garden, they'll be looking for a sunny spot to bask in in the morning, nearby cover to hide in if they sense danger and if you put down a small piece of corrugated metal, they may well find their way underneath where it's safe and warm.

There are still some spaces for my open garden on Sunday 10th April between 11.30am and 4pm - details on KWT website (kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilder-gardens) and if you would like to find out more about these fascinating creatures, a representative from KRAG will be present to answer any questions.

COVID REFLECTIONS The History Society committee have been keeping a file to place in its archive about the 2020-22 Pandemic and village life. We would welcome long or short recollections from residents to add to this file. One day the past two years will be history, and probably a topic for children to study at school - so let's record our thoughts on how the past two years have affected personal and village life. Please send your contributions to rostrum2@hotmail.com and we will pass them on.

FIRST WATERINGBURY GUIDES

By the time you read this the first term of the year is almost done and dusted. We've been to the Wateringbury Players' Pantomime (oh yes we have!) and had great fun, and we've finally managed our International cooking evening for Thinking Day. This is the day when all members of Girlguiding traditionally think of guiding all around the world and having been a guide myself in Zambia (many years ago!), I'm always keen to keep this tradition going. The date was chosen as it was the joint birthday of Robert and Olave Baden-Powell who started Scouting and Guiding.

Our final trip of the term is to Prison Island in Maidstone – an escape room experience. I must admit to being a bit 'rabbit in headlights' the first time we went but I'll be better prepared this time and able to help the girls more. Before we start we're going to have a chip shop survey on our way to Prison Island and the girls can decide which eatery provides the best chips in their opinion.

Next term is going to be full on as usual – Baden-Powell said Scouting (and Guiding) is a game to be played out of doors and we fully intend to take him literally. We have raft building booked, a return visit to paddle boarding and pedaloos, and High ropes and Dino Golf is also booked. In between there'll be wide games, tent pitching and preparation for camp.

While we're full at the moment you can put your daughter's name on the waiting list via the Girlguiding website. We could take more girls if we have more leaders whether in uniform or just as a unit helper so please do come and join the fun and have something valuable to add to your CV. Please contact me on 01622 815416 or email to sheenastewartx3@gmail.com.
Sheena Stewart and team.

EAST MALLING SINGERS

East Malling Singers and guest singers are performing **Brahms Requiem on Saturday 2nd April at St James the Great Church, East Malling. The concert starts at 7.30pm** and will include two soloists and a small orchestra as well as more than 70 singers. Tickets are £12, £10 for concessions, children are free. Tickets are available from boxoffice@eastmallingsingers.co.uk or telephone 01622 750 943.

Any experienced singers who are familiar with the work and would like to sing in the concert as a guest, please contact robert.greenham@gmail.com, or telephone the box office number.

MARCH PARISH COUNCIL NOTES

The chairman expressed the Parish Council's congratulations to Councillor Hudson who has been invited, by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, to attend a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May to meet the Queen in recognition of her work during the pandemic for our local community.

Speedwatch The chairman thanked the village Speedwatch volunteers for their activities. In February the volunteers carried out 9 one hour sessions. During

this time 1838 vehicles passed by, 219 of which were speeding, 36 being repeat offenders, one of whom had a letter delivered personally by police officers and 6 were high end offenders (travelling at more than 45 mph in a 30 zone). One vehicle's details were passed to the police for active enforcement. One vehicle had no road tax and one no MOT. The team were joined by the Kent Police's Speedwatch link officer at one of its sessions.

The Parish Highway Improvement Plan had been acknowledged by KCC and it is anticipated a site meeting will be held in due course.

Village Fete on 19th June. In response to a request from the fete committee, councillors voted unanimously to organise and pay for the temporary lavatories. Three quotes would be obtained.

Cemetery - A request had been received to place a seat and a tree in the cemetery. Councillors regretted that it would not be possible to do so as there were already sufficient seats and trees. Councillor Simons suggested that some sort of garden of remembrance be considered. After discussion it was decided that a sub committee of Cllr Simons, Cllr Marks and Cllr Tripp would visit the cemetery with this in mind and make recommendations. The final documents relating to the council's purchase of the cemetery car park were with the land-owner's solicitors.

Kent Association of Local Councils

Councillor Wells reported on a meeting in December. Sarah Barker was no longer Chairman of the area committee.

Planning One planning application was discussed - Demolition of existing conservatory and lean to. Erection of a single storey rear extension and insertion of a rear dormer at 316 Old Road. Councillors had no objection to the single storey rear extension. However they felt that as the building is in a conservation area the rear dormer window should be changed to match the size and design of those at the front of the cottages in the terrace.

Village Warden's written report was discussed. Generally there were no incidents or issues. John thanked those who had picked up the litter which had been strewn around following the act of vandalism which destroyed bins at the Playing Fields. He thanked those people/persons who cleared up. He had done two litter picks at the Fields. Councillor Fielding said she had seen a lot of litter in the playing fields and thanked councillors and residents who regularly picked up litter.

The car which appears to have been abandoned in the T & M owned village car park was brought to the attention of the council and the Clerk asked to notify T & M so they can take the necessary action.

The next meeting of the Parish Council is on Tuesday 5th April at 7.30pm in the Upper Room of the Village Hall. Councillors welcome the attendance of local residents who are given the opportunity to raise matters of local concern.

Approved minutes of this meeting will appear on the Parish Council website www.wateringburypc.org.uk in due course.

FROM OUR MP TOM TUGENHAT

Many of us rely on the bus services to connect us. For years, Kent County Council (KCC) have supported bus routes in our community. School children and shoppers have depended on the links to keep going. They're not alone. Many of us, and our family and friends do too. Sadly, KCC have announced they are looking to reduce subsidies for a number of these supported bus routes, some of which are vitally important to the communities in Tonbridge and Malling and will impact the 88, and Tonbridge & Malling Kent Carrier services.

I share the frustration of many in hearing this news. At a time when we know traffic is a problem, fuel prices are rising and we're all doing what we can to protect the environment, getting out of cars and sharing the burden makes sense whatever your motivation. I am pleased that KCC have decided to start with a consultation so we can let them know what we think and tell them how important these buses are to our community. The consultation **closes on 6 April** and I hope everyone will take part by going online to: **letstalk.kent.gov.uk/bus-funding-reductions**. *Our buses keep us together, keep us connected to shops, schools and so much more, and are vital to keeping us active and free. I will be doing all I can over the coming weeks to keep these bus routes running in our community.*

REV GARY WRITES

The Rectory, 72 The Street, Mereworth ME18 5NA
gary.rev@outlook.com ☎ 01622 813178

Sharing in Suffering

Last month it was very moving and humbling to welcome local Ukrainian farm workers to the mid-week Holy Communion service at Mereworth. They and others attended the service at which we prayed for Ukraine and lit candles for the people there. Ever since then we've kept a candle burning in the side chapel and, during daylight hours, anyone is welcome to come and pray and light a candle. I'm pleased to say that Wateringbury Church has also been open on Thursday evenings for people to come and keep vigil.

On the night of his arrest Jesus spent time in intense personal prayer as he faced the suffering that he knew he must endure. He prayed: *"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will"* (Matthew's Gospel 26:39). It was the will of God that Jesus should go to the cross for us and endure all the humiliation and agonies attendant upon it. I cannot understand why God is allowing the awful situation in Ukraine right now but there are three things which I think Christians know and believe about all human suffering. The first is that Jesus was made perfect through His sufferings so that He could become for the whole human race a saviour who would fully sympathise with us in our sufferings (Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10). When we pray to God about another person who is suffering, we are in company

with Jesus Himself who knows the pain of those for whom we pray. And this leads to the second thing Christians know about suffering: it is meant to be shared: '*Remember those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering*' (Hebrews 13:3). Thirdly, that our own sufferings are a way through which God moves us to surrender our wills to Him. I've been thinking a lot recently about that last point and I've been rereading C.S. Lewis' '*The Problem of Pain*.' I think it is a very important book to read on the whole subject of human suffering and I thoroughly recommend it.

It is heart-warming to witness the response of so many people doing what they can to help the Ukrainian people. But whilst I and so many others pray that the sufferings brought about by the invasion of Ukraine will come to an end soon the fact is that will not be an end to suffering. Suffering is too common and widespread throughout the human race for us to face it simply as something that we must work harder at avoiding. We need a deeper and more thoughtful approach to its meaning and place in human experience. And that is one of the things I believe Jesus can teach us if we would only open up our hearts to Him. Our Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services will be good places for entering into this sort of reflection and we shall do so looking forward to the celebration of Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday. Not only is He the one who can teach us about suffering He is also the one who gives us the hope beyond it.

Gary Townsend. Priest-in-Charge of Mereworth, Watlingbury and West Peckham.

CHURCH SERVICES IN APRIL

SJB Church web site: www.watlingburychurch.org.uk

Church Face Book Page: fb.me/watlingburychurch

Friends of SJB Church web site www.fowc.org.uk

Saturday 2nd 3-5pm Messy Church (for young families) –

The First Easter Story, Action Songs, Prayer time, lots of crafts and ending with afternoon tea. All welcome.

Sunday 3rd - 10am – Morning Praise led by Barry Fisher

Palm Sunday 10th - 10am Holy Communion led by Rev Gary

Maundy Thursday 14th 7.30pm Taizé with Communion service followed by Vigil at St Lawrence, Mereworth

Good Friday 15th - 2-3pm An Hour at the Cross led by

Barry Fisher and Ruth Dunn at St Dunstan, West Peckham

Saturday 16th – 9.30am-12.30pm – Easter Fun with Faith in Watlingbury Church – please book

children's places (£2 per child) by emailing
easterfun@wateringburychurch.org.uk

**Easter Sunday 17th - 10am - Communion led by
Canon Brian Stevenson**

**Sunday 24th - 10am - Communion led by
Canon Brian**

**Sunday 1st May - 10am - Matins led by Barry
Fisher**

**There will be a said communion service at
8am in**

**St. Lawrence, Mereworth on Sundays 3rd, 10th
and 24th April.**

**The 5pm Sunday Benefice Youth Services in
Mereworth** will be taking a break in the Easter
Holidays and returning on **Sunday 24th April**.
It's not just for youth but for those who enjoy
informal worship.

WEEKLY ZOOM BENEFICE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Mondays at 7.30pm for about an hour

Rev Gary Townsend invites you to join him for bible
study. To join please email gary.rev@outlook.com for
the link

ANNUAL PLANT SALE - IN THE CHURCHYARD

SATURDAY 7TH MAY 10AM - 1PM

Lots of flower plants to make your garden
beautiful

Lots of vegetable plants - always fun to grow your
own

*If you are dividing any plants we would much
appreciate your potting up some for the sale - just
bring them along on the day*



Easter Fun with Faith

Calling all primary school aged children in Wateringbury village

Join us at to help celebrate and hear the Easter story

A morning filled with fun, songs, and craft activities
Saturday 16th April @ 9.30am until 12.30pm
at St John the Baptist church; £2 per child

Parent &/or older sibling helpers always welcome

Booking is essential because of numbers, see www.wateringburychurch.org.uk for form or email easterfun@wateringburychurch.org.uk

Look forward to hearing from you. Debbie Bond

A HANDBAG

At the Ash Wednesday Service at Mereworth Church we had forty people present, over half of them Ukrainian workers from Hugh Lowe's, Barons Place Farm. We were praying for the people of the Ukraine and longing for peace. After the service I had to go to London to baby sit so I took with me my overnight bag and spent the afternoon in St Paul's Cathedral. They are tight about security and my bag was searched each time I returned after popping out. Three times by the same stewards. They got to know my pyjamas. That was an improvement on my last visit in February where my bag was refused entry to St Paul's and had to be deposited, for a fee, at a bric-a-brac shop opposite. When I went to retrieve it after Evensong mine was the only bag left. So I did not suffer what happened in the most famous play of the nineteenth century 'The Importance of Being Earnest' when Thomas Cardew is given the wrong handbag at Victoria Station Left Luggage and finds a baby within. When that baby grows up as Jack Worthing and wishes to marry Gwendolen Fairfax, her mother, Lady Bracknell, interviews him, asking about his parentage. He says he has no parents only a 'large leather handbag with handles' from Victoria station, Brighton Line. Lady Bracknell is dumbfounded - a Handbag! and goes on to say 'Gwendolen cannot marry into a cloakroom and form an alliance with a parcel'. My bag is also large, black with handles. It has been awarded a number of accolades. On flights to place like Knock, Co. Mayo it has been given a pilgrim's ribbon. Once at Arsenal's football ground, The Emirates, it was deguttet to check for support for the opponents and, none found, we were given the Arsenal seal of approval. Arsenal lost that night. The one accolade we retain is from the V&A which says on an orange ribbon 'Monday Checked' and then a number 99624. It was really packed that day. We spent time in the Oriental Carpet section and longer in the Tea Room.

The bag I miss was a light green one. I bought it to convey our belongings to Tanzania and chose that colour as it is rare in a suitcase. It was so unusual that I became known as the man with the green bag. When our bus broke down near Morogoro we were the only family picked up by a later passing bus - I think its driver was taken by the lime green colour. Sadly it was worn out by the African journeys and had to be retired.

Bag carriers are part of the scene at railway stations and I noticed so many bags carried by refugees at Lviv station in the present Ukraine crisis. I hope that our Ukrainian friends in Mereworth feel welcome here and don't feel that they have to pack their bags.

Canon Brian Stevenson