

ELSTOW PARISH MAGAZINE



June 2011

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What does Christian Aid Do?

They say; Christian Aid and its partners are working to bring an end to poverty around the world - tackling its root causes as well as its effects

Christian Aid is the official relief and development agency of 40 British and Irish Protestant churches and works to support sustainable development, alleviate poverty, support civil society and provide disaster relief in South America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

It works with 570 local partner organizations in 45 countries around the world to help the world's poorest communities. Christian Aid states it works where the need is greatest, regardless of religion, nationality or race

Examples of their work can be seen in a couple of stories that I'd like to share with you from their web site;

Every morning 12-year-old Etebane Jemal sets off on a four kilometre walk to collect clean water for her family. It's a journey she has to make twice a day, carrying ten litres of water on her back – all she can carry given her small size - and it's a trek that puts her at risk of abduction and rape.

Etebane is from **Ethiopia**, a country beset by widespread **poverty**. Regular **droughts** and **food shortages** make it a struggle for people to survive.

A major problem for many people in Ethiopia is the lack of **access to clean water**. Families often have to use dirty, stagnant ponds to drink from and wash.

Ponds that are breeding grounds for mosquitoes and diseases like malaria – a life-threatening illness in the region Etebane and her family live.

To get clean water, women and children have to walk long distances across sometimes dangerous terrain.

This can leave them – especially young unaccompanied girls – at risk of rape and abduction by men who want to avoid paying a 'bride price' – a dowry paid at marriage.

But despite these risks they continue to walk miles to fetch and carry water for their family and loved ones. Often children forfeit their education because it takes up so much of their time and leaves them too exhausted to go to school.

Thanks to the help of Christian Aid partner Water Action, Etebane's community has been busy digging trenches and laying pipelines so that clean water can flow directly into the village.

It's a life-changing project they've embarked upon.

Etebane is happy she will no longer have to walk so far every day and she is glad she will be safe in her village.

She's hoping that soon her headaches will stop and that she will be able to go to school.

Donations are helping children like Etebane in Ethiopia. Yet there are thousands of children around the world who still have to trek to collect clean water so that their families are not put at risk of disease and illness - children who have to give up their education and the chance of a better future.

The simple things we overlook – like clean water – result not only in less disease in a community but mean that children like Etebane can be given the gift of an education.

Isn't it easy for the impact of natural disasters to fall off our attention radar. We consume the next catastrophe a bit like another commodity until the news agenda is 'renewed'.

Christian AID and its partners know all about Cyclone Nargis:

Three years ago on 2 May 2008, cyclone Nargis tore through Burma's remote Irrawaddy delta region killing 140,000 people, injuring 30,000 and devastating the lives of a further 2.4 million.

When cyclone Nargis hit Teik Gyi village in Kungyangon, 60-year-old Tin Win's house was completely destroyed.

The small plot of land that she used to farm to provide for her 16-year-old son's education was also devastated.

As a widow, Tin Win qualified for support from one of nine Christian Aid partners working on the response efforts.

After staying with her eldest daughter's family for more than two years, in January 2011 Tin Win finally moved into her own home built with Christian Aid's support.

She says that her new house is better than the hut she lived in before and it is strong enough to withstand cyclones and floods. There is also a new borehole nearby so she doesn't have to walk far for water.

'I never thought I would have a house again. Every night when I pray, I pray for all those who helped give me my house.'

Three years on, Tin Win is earning a living again from her trees and vegetables and, most importantly, she feels safe and secure.

'I never thought I would have a house again. Every night, I pray for all those who helped give me my house'

Tin Win and her youngest son are among 1,134 families who now live in stronger homes equipped with sanitation and water conservation facilities thanks to Christian Aid's support.

Since the initial three month relief phase, Christian Aid has also helped 17,000 fishing and farming families recover from Burma's worst disaster in living memory.

Cash for work programmes, livelihood support and the replacement of lost livestock have helped 180,000 of the most vulnerable people build back stronger livelihoods which are much less vulnerable to severe weather events than before the disaster.

A further 1,500 households have received training in disaster management and preparedness, and five villages are regenerating their mangrove forests to protect themselves against future cyclones.

Christian Aid has also supported 1,136 people living with disabilities resulting from the cyclone through treatment, care and equipment.

What's more, many communities now have access to therapists who have been trained to help people cope with trauma and loss when catastrophes like this happen.

These have been just two stories. They are replicated across the world in the words of Christian Aid "helping those in poverty out of poverty". We pray that this year people will be as generous as ever and donate to Christian Aid as the widows mite.

Revd. Roger Chapman.

THE CHURCH CALENDAR

JUNE 2011

1 st	Wednesday	11.30am	Coffee and Soup in the Vestry
2 nd	Thursday	09.30am	Morning Prayers at St Michael's (JRC + SS)
Ascension Day		11.00am	Holy Communion (JRC)
		12 Noon	Monthly Lunch at The Red Lion
		6.15-7.15pm	Yoga (for mixed abilities) Elstow Abbey Church for more details call June Hannigan 07817601686
		7-8.30pm	NO London Road Youth Club
3 rd	Friday	7pm	NO Choir Practice
		8pm	Bell Ringing
5 th	Sunday	10.00am	Holy Communion (JRC)
		10.30am	<i>Joint Service St Micael's @ London Road Methodists followed by Bring and Share Lunch</i>
		11.20am	Mattins (JRC)
		1.30pm	Baptism of Harry Benjamin Welham (JRC)
		2.15pm	Baptism of Leo Peter Neal (JRC)
		3pm	Baptism and renewal of vows – Woods family
		6.30pm	Evensong (JRC)
6 th	Monday	10.00am	Mums and Toddlers in the Vestry
		2.00pm	Prayer Group in the Vestry
		4.00pm	Baptism interview (JRC)
7 th	Tuesday	1.15pm	Tour of the Abbey from "Young @ Heart"
		1.45-2.30pm	Sing and Sign in the Vestry
		3.15-5.15pm	After School Club at St Michael's
		6.30-8pm	Youth Club at the Vicarage
8 th	Wednesday	11.30am	Coffee and Soup in the Vestry
		1.30pm	Clergy Meeting @ Stephen's Vicarage
		7.30pm	Bedford Street Angels Meeting in the Vestry (JRC)
9 th	Thursday	09.30am	Morning Prayers at St Michael's (JRC + SS)
		11.00am	Holy Communion (JRC)
		Noon	Burial of Ashes of Dr Campbell Fraser (JRC)
		6.15-7.15pm	Yoga (for mixed abilities) Elstow Abbey Church for more details call June Hannigan 07817601686
		7-8.30pm	London Road Youth Club
		8pm	Finance and Standing at the Vicarage
10 th	Friday	<i>Jeremy on holiday for a week</i>	
		7pm	Choir Practice
		8pm	Bell Ringing

		7.30pm	Strawberries and Song @ Cardington Church, (part of the Friends of Cardington Church). Tickets on the door.
12 th	Sunday	10.00am	Holy Communion (PL)
		10.15am	St Michaels Holy Communion (RC)
		11.20am	Mattins (DW)
		6.00pm	Open air service at Cardington
		6.30pm	NO Evensong at Elstow Abbey

Deadline for the June/July Parish Magazine to **Jacque Waterfield @ 269 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK41 9PH or jakhat77@hotmail.com**

13 th	Monday	10.00am	Mums and Toddlers in the Vestry
		2.00pm	Prayer Group in the Vestry
14 th	Tuesday	1.45-2.30pm	Sing and Sign in the Vestry
		3.45-5.15pm	Afterschool Club at St Michael's
		6.30-8pm	Youth Club – cycle ride around priory park
		7.30pm	Parish Council Meeting at the Playing Fields
15 th	Wednesday	11.30am	Coffee and Soup in the Vestry
		9.15-10.15am	Wilstead Children's Centre in Church
16 th	Thursday	09.30am	Morning Prayers at St Michael's (SS)
		11.00am	Holy Communion (RC)
		6.15-7.15pm	Yoga (for mixed abilities) Elstow Abbey Church for more details call June Hannigan 07817601686
		7-8.30pm	London Road Youth Club
		7.30pm	Salvation Army Concert at the Abbey, organised by the Friends of Elstow Abbey. Free concert – donations welcome.
17 th	Friday	<i>Jeremy back from holiday</i>	
		7pm	Choir Practice
		7pm	Howard Church Fayre, Cardington
		8pm	Bell Ringing
18 th	Saturday	12-4pm	St George in the East (London) church family to visit Abbey
19 th	Sunday	10.00am	Holy Communion (RC)
	<i>Father's Day and Trinity Sunday</i>	10.15am	St Michaels Holy Communion (NM)
		<i>JRC at St Mary's, Cardington</i>	
		11.20am	Mattins (RC)
		2.45pm	Baptism of Madison Paige Foster (JRC)
		6.30pm	Evensong (JRC)
20 th	Monday	10.00am	Mums and Toddlers in the Vestry
		2.00pm	Prayer Group
21 st	Tuesday	1.45-2.30pm	Sing and Sign in the Vestry
		3.15-5.15pm	After School Club at St Michael's
		6.30-8pm	Youth Club – mid-summer madness!

22 nd	Wednesday	9.15-10.15am 11.30am 5pm 5.45pm 6.30pm	Wilstead Children's group in Church Coffee and Soup Wedding rehearsal for Daryl Endersby and Michelle Baker Wedding rehearsal for Andrew Harris and Clare Kelly Wedding rehearsal for James Carroll and Katrina Eaton
23 rd	Thursday	09.30am 11.00am 12-1.30pm 6.15-7.15pm 7-8.30pm 7.30pm	Morning Prayers at St Michael's (JRC + SS) Holy Communion (JRC) JRC to Clergy Chapter Yoga (for mixed abilities) Elstow Abbey Church for more details call June Hannigan 07817601686 London Road Youth Club PCC in the Vestry
24 th	Friday	7pm 8pm	Choir Practice Bell Ringing
25 th	Saturday	12.30pm 2pm 4pm	Wedding of Daryl Endersby and Michelle Ann Baker (JRC) Wedding of Andrew Paul Harris and Clare Kelly (JRC) Blessing of Katrina Nicola Eaton and James Carroll (JRC)
26 th	Sunday	Archdeaconary Church Tourism Day – Abbey open from 09.30am-7.30pm 10.00am 10.15am 11.20am 12.30-1.30pm 2pm 2.45pm 3.30pm 6.30pm	Family Service (JEH) <i>St Michael's (PL)</i> BCP Holy Communion (JRC) RC Preacher. Visit by children of FEPOW Baptism of Chardonae and Lianna (JRC) Baptism of Daniel Richards (JRC) Baptism of Sienna Sells (JRC) Evensong + Holy Communion + Laying on of hands (JRC)
27 th	Monday	10.00am 2.00pm	Mums and Toddlers in the Vestry Prayer Group in the Vestry
28 th	Tuesday	10.30am 1.45-2.30pm 3.45-5.15pm 6.30-8pm 7.30pm	Burial of Ashes – Anthony Ledwick (JRC) Sing and Sign in the Vestry After school club at St Michael's Youth Club – swimming night Team Council Meeting @ St Michael's Church
29 th	Wednesday	9.15-10.15am 11.30am	Wilstead Children's group in Church Coffee and Soup in the Vestry
30 th	Thursday	09.30am 11.00am 6.15-7.15pm 7-8.30pm	Morning Prayers at St Michael's (JRC + SS) Holy Communion (JRC) Yoga (for mixed abilities) Elstow Abbey Church for more details call June Hannigan 07817601686 London Road Youth Club

JULY

1 st	Friday	7pm 8pm	Choir Practice Bell Ringing
2 nd	Saturday	2-4pm	Cardington Fete
3 rd	Sunday	10.00am <i>10.15am</i> 11.20am 1.45pm 2.30pm 6.30pm	Holy Communion (JRC) <i>St Michael's Family Service (NM)</i> Mattins (Group) Baptism of Sienna Thompson (JRC) Baptism of Riley Snoxell and Keeley Holder (JRC) Evensong (JRC)

READERS' LIST FOR JUNE 2011

<u>DATE</u>	<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>1ST LESSON</u>	<u>2ND LESSON</u>	<u>READER</u>
5th June	10.00 am	Acts 1: v.6-14	John 17: v.1-11	Lynn Harris
Sunday after Ascension	11.15 am 6.30 pm	Isaiah 65: v.17-end 2 Samuel 23: v.1-5	Revln 21: v.1-8 Ephns 1 v.15-end	Barbara Routledge Dorothy Steele
12th June	10.00 am	Acts 2: v.1-21	John 20: v.19-23	Alan Freeman
Day of Pentecost	11.15 am 6.00 pm	Genesis 11: v.1-9 No Evensong - Open Air Service at St Mary's Cardington	Acts 10: v.34-end	Tessa Wood
19th June	10.00 am	Isaiah 40: v.12-17 & 27-end	Matthew 28: v.16-20	Sarah Duffy
Trinity Sunday & Fathers' Day	11.15 am 6.30 pm	Exodus 3: v.1-6 & v.13-15 Isaiah 6: v.1-8	John 17: v. 1-11 John 16: v.5-15	David Ewbank Peter Moss
26th June	10.00 am	Family Service		
Trinity 1	11.15 am H.C. 6.30 pm H.C.	Genesis 22: v.1-14 1 Samuel 28: v.3-19	Matthew 10: v.40-end Luke 17: v.20-end	Peter Batiuk Barbara Routledge
3rd July	10.00 am	Ephesians 2: v.19-end	John 20: v.24-29	Phillip Bettles
Trinity 2	11.15 am 6.30 pm	2 Samuel 15: v.17-21 Job 42: v.1-6	John 11: v.1-16 1 Peter 1: v.3-12	Tim Elliott Dorothy Steele

SIDESMENS ROTA

JUNE

5 th	10am 11.15am 6.30pm	Mrs A Morris F.W. Crossen Mrs G Annan	Mrs G Freeman
12 th	10am 11.15am	Mrs S Batiuk Mrs M Crossen	Mr P Batiuk
		NO EVENSONG AT ELSTOW. SERVICE AT CARDINGTON	
19 th	10am 11.15am 6.30pm	Mrs J Barnicott Mrs D Fordham Mr P Moss	Mrs S Brown
26 th	10am 11.15am 6.30pm	Mrs A Morris Mrs A Knight Mrs C Parrish	Mr A Freeman

JULY

3 rd	10am 11.15am 6.30pm	Mrs A Morris F.W. Crossen Mrs G Annan	Mrs A Barfoot
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Bell Ringing at Elstow Abbey

A quarter peal rung by our bell-ringers during May 2011

Bedfordshire Association

Elstow, Bedfordshire

Abbey Church of Ss Mary and Helena

On Saturday 14 May 2011 in 43 minutes

1260 Single Oxford and Plain Bob Minor

- 1 Sarah-Louise Ward
- 2 Jennifer S Thompson
- 3 Ann Desics
- 4 Barbara Beard
- 5 Derek A Hammond
- 6 Stephen H Stanford (C)

Rung to open the Elstow May Festival held on the village green.
Also for the conductor's birthday.

Street Art Project



During the February and the Easter School Holidays, young people from Shortstown and Elstow Youth Clubs were discovered painting the walls of the pedestrian underpass between Elstow and Wixams. However, this was not an act of graffiti but part of a Street Art Project, funded by the Parish Council and Community Safety Forum.

During their youth club sessions, young people from Shortstown and Elstow designed murals to paint on the walls of the underpass. They were advised by a local street artist. These murals reflected their lives as young people in the South Bedford area.

During the February Half Term, the Shortstown Youngsters spent several afternoons transforming one side of the underpass using paintbrushes and spray paints. Even though it was cold and rainy, they had a great time!

Then, for three afternoons at Easter, young people from both Elstow and Shortstown Clubs were able to paint designs on the opposite wall. The weather was a lot warmer then and there was some waiting around watching paint dry, but again it was a fun experience for them.

The names of all the young people involved have been painted on a scroll to be seen on the wall. They have brightened up the underpass for all who walk through it.



ART EXHIBITION

By Steve Bowers & Mike Newnham

Cardington Village Hall

17th September 2011

7.30pm-9.30pm

Once again, local artists Steve Bowers and Mike Newnham join forces to hold another exhibition, at Cardington Village Hall in September. The pair will donate 25% of the proceeds of sales to the Friends of St Mary's Church, Cardington.

Steve Bowers has been painting for 40 years and continues to produce his popular, quirky figurative work. Steve loves lots of colour and is inspired by everyday events and off-the-wall ideas.

Mike Newnham has lived in Elstow for 16 years. Mike's inspiration comes from the shapes and colours of nature and everyday items. Mike uses watercolours, felt tip pens and crayons. His recent trips to Venice have also inspired him to produce warm, vibrant work. Mike's 20 years of experience with ceramics will also be on display at the exhibition.

"I love Mike's work," says Steve. "He's an artist who paints with his soul."

All works will be for sale and this year's raffle prize will be a unique painting produced by both Steve and Mike.

Posters advertising the exhibition will appear closer to the event. Refreshments will be available during the evening. Entry is free, and a colourful evening is guaranteed.



Painting by Mike Newnham, Priory Park, Bedford, 2011

DETAILS FROM THE REGISTERS

MARCH 2011

Date	Communicants	Attendance	Collections
3 rd	11	11	6.00
6 th	38	70	219.47
9 th	14	14	Ash Wednesday
10 th	10	10	14.00
13 th	47	109	226.06
17 th	6	6	14.00
20 th	35	84	153.63
24 th	9	9	5.50
27 th	31	76	353.42
31 st	10	10	5.00
	<u>211</u>	<u>399</u>	<u>997.08</u>

APRIL 2011

Date	Communicants	Attendance	Collections
3 rd	40	88	236.38
7 th	12	12	6.00
10 th	42	74	228.15
14 th	7	7	3.00
17 th	48	110	275.95
19 th	16	16	Holy Week
21 st	16	16	'''
22 nd	--	64	'''
23 rd	--	22	'''
24 th	98	137	503.54 Easter
28 th	8	8	4.00
	<u>287</u>	<u>554</u>	<u>1257.02</u>

BAPTISMS

March 27th 2011 Aiden William
Fearne Baddeley

April 17th 2011 Riley Cupit
Oliver Andrew Ford

May 1st 2011 Freddie Allen
Ellie Bandy

May 15th 2011 Jessika Evans
Freddie Massey

MARRIAGES

April 2nd 2011 Gemma Edwards and Paul Lawrence

April 21st 2011 Emma Clarke and Phillip Claridge

April 30th 2011 Heather Jane Warren and Craig Patrick Joseph Fullerton Kenny

BURIALS

March 30th 2011 Clifford Henry Johnson

April 18th 2011 Charles William Goff (Ashes)

May 16th 2011 Allan Collins

Job opportunities – King’s House

We have two new Part Time vacancies within King’s Arms Facilities.

- Facilities Booking Administrator – 10 hrs weekly
- Facilities Support Team Coordinator. – 12 hrs weekly

Both these posts are new and we anticipate that the hours required could change as the requirements increase.

For more details visit <http://www.kingsarms.org/vacancies>

or contact King’s Arms Reception 01234 306500 for an application form and Job Specification.

“COME AND SEE”

CHURCHES WELCOME VISITORS

Many parish churches across Bedfordshire will be open to welcome visitors on Sunday, 26 June. “Come and see” is their invitation to people all over the county (and beyond) to visit some of our finest medieval and later buildings.

In many communities the parish church is the oldest and most notable building, enshrining much of the history of that community. These days many churches are not left unlocked outside service times, and this is a chance for interested people to see the architecture and artistic features, and to find out something about the local community, past and present.

Some of the churches will be serving refreshments; some will have displays about their history or about their present activities; some will have local products, souvenirs and gifts for sale. All will be glad to welcome visitors from their local community and those who have travelled some distance to see their church.

Some of the open churches have important historical links, such as Dunstable Priory, where Henry VIII’s marriage to Catherine of Aragon was dissolved, or Elstow with its many associations with John Bunyan. Some have architectural features which are recognised as being of national importance, others have works of art, medieval, Victorian and modern, which are well worth seeing; some have important tombs and monuments; some offer quiet and relaxation in a peaceful and beautiful setting. Open Sunday provides an opportunity to explore some of these, and to be surprised at so much of interest in our own locality.

“Open Sunday” is an initiative of the Archdeaconry of Bedford in the Diocese of St Albans. For further information, look out for local publicity, or go to the diocesan web-site: www.stalbans.anglican.org.

On June 26th - Elstow Abbey will be open from 9.30am-7.30pm, and St Michael’s Church from 4-5pm

Light On The Path



A day of Spiritual Encounter and Reflection...

Walking the Labyrinth

Meditating using Anglican Rosary Beads

Exploring the Inner and Spiritual in Anglican History

Touching on the Mystery of the Liturgy

Opening the Gate on the Mysteries within Our Faith

Saturday, June 25

St Paul's Church, Bedford

Cost: £10 (including light lunch).

Please book in advance at our website or call 01234 301554

Going deeper into God....

Light on the Path

The current Diocesan initiative, *Living God's Love*, 'is an invitation to the Diocese of St Albans to discover new things about God, ourselves and the world. It's an invitation to look with fresh eyes and explore new ways.' It is 'an invitation to a journey' and one of the things it invites us to do is to engage with the process of 'going deeper into God.'

Christians have always been encouraged to actively engage with the spiritual journey that leads into a closer relationship with God, through Christ. It is a journey or pilgrimage that leads towards the New Jerusalem; a pathway which leads from the outer and into the inner and spiritual teachings of our faith. It is a road that has been well travelled throughout the centuries and the stages along the way are well known and recorded. Neither is it old fashioned nor outdated, for such realities transcend both time and culture. This is a journey that leads into the very heart of Christianity, the heart which is Love, where we encounter God through Christ. It is a journey that leads us into our own hearts.

Yet for many taking the initial steps along this way can be challenging because it may seem that an unknown and difficult road lies ahead. Assurance soon comes, however, for Christ is always beside us on our journey as gradually we come to see him from a new perspective, in the greater light of his resurrected glory, and to know a deeper fullness of his Love, an unbounded Love that we never before dreamt possible of experiencing.

Programme

9:30 Holy Eucharist **10:00** Coffee Break

10:30 *Welcome and Introduction* followed by *The Inner and Spiritual, Part 1: The Knowledge of the Kingdom of God*

11:15 *The Inner and Spiritual, Part 2: Entering Into the Deeper Love of God*

12:00 Group activity 1: Walk the labyrinth, Learn to pray with Anglican Rosary Beads, or Discover more about how God calls us.

12:30 – 1:15 Lunch **1:15** *The Inner and Spiritual, Part 3: The Second Conversion*

2:00 Group activity 2: Choose a second activity from: Walking the labyrinth, to pray with Anglican Rosary Beads, or Discovering more how God calls us.

2:30 Group activity 3: Participate in the third activity of Walking the labyrinth, Learning to pray with Anglican Rosary Beads, or Discovering more about how God calls us.

3:00 *The Inner and Spiritual, Part 4: Touching on the Mystery of the Liturgy*

3:45 Questions and Answers **4:00** Compline

BOOK REVIEW

“Parting Shots” by Matthew Parris & Andrew Bryson (Viking 2010)

This is a tantalising book, but I have to say that, for all its hype, it is not an easy read. Its chief merit in this latter respect is that it comprises an extensive collection of reminiscences and thus may be dipped into serendipitously. Its possible defect is that it requires a great deal of alertness because the many authors of the diplomatic despatches it features are to a man (or a woman), very well-educated, highly intelligent and considerable stylists. They write using at times recondite, if not opaque, reference points ranging from classical quotations to allusions to childhood books of a long forgotten era.

“Parting Shots” consists of a collection of despatches written by senior diplomats on leaving their (usually) final posting. Such despatches, called “valedictories”, were traditionally an opportunity for such people to let their hair down about the countries they were quitting. Such an opportunity rarely went ungrasped so that many of the despatches were definitely a bit near the knuckle. Further, they were widely circulated within the Foreign Office, passed to government ministers and invariably copied to carefully selected other recipients. They were even on occasion leaked embarrassingly to an eager press.

The tradition was ended by the humourless Margaret Beckett in 2007 during her time as Foreign Secretary. She unsmilingly took exception to a description of British foreign policy under Tony Blair as ‘b*****t bingo’ and brought the tradition to an abrupt halt (the quotation is a good example of the sort of thing that was contained in the despatches). Matthew Parris, who in his early years had been a junior employee of the Foreign Office before working for Margaret Thatcher, was persuaded by Andrew Bryson of the BBC to resurrect some of these despatches and present them on Radio Four. The book followed, despite the many attempts (some successful) of Authorities to avoid complying with the Freedom of Information Act.

A look through the despatches will immediately give you a flavour of what those demob-happy diplomats were prepared to write. The dust cover introduces a few gems: “I doubt if the mainland Chinese will ever learn to make a basin plug that fits ...”, “... the average Nicaraguan is one of the most dishonest, unreliable, violent and alcoholic of the Latin Americans”, “All those who have dealt with the Russians over the centuries have commented on their indifference to the truth”, “[Any Canadian] who stands out at all from the crowd tends to be praised to the skies and given the Order of Canada at once”.

Further reading reveals that, rubbing shoulders with this sort of heartfelt, but not in fact spiteful, denigration are some very uncomfortable home truths (often central bulls’ eyes): “most foreigners in Vietnam ... are on the edge of insanity”, “you aren’t paid for doing things, you’re paid for being here (Rome)”, “the Tunisian temperament, like Tunisian toilet-paper, tears in such unexpected directions”, “neither the Minister nor the Permanent Secretary have (*sic*) been educated beyond primary level”. And so it goes on.

The charm of the compilation, really a trip down memory lane, lies in its sometimes brutal frankness but also in an unmistakable and universal affection for the countries in which the writers have represented their Queen, even the much and sorely berated Nicaragua. When all is said and done, every single writer of a valedictory despatch has kind and positive things to say: they are, moreover and comfortingly, totally lacking in any patronising intent. After all, British diplomats who represent their country are well aware of the line in the sand beyond which it is not in their remit to tread – even when there is unlikely to be any come-back.



Bookworm