

One more step Sue Oldfield reflects on moving house after 32 years

Moving house – like marriage – should not be undertaken ‘unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly’ (*Book of Common Prayer*)! We knew that managing our large family home and garden was getting too much for us, but deciding to sell after 32 years there was hard. We knew God had guided our previous two moves – would He do the same again?

Health issues in February 2024 sparked us into action after a period when neither of us could drive. Dependence on taxis and kind friends wasn’t our style, so anticipating a quick sale, we contacted an agent and the house was online by Boxing Day. House prices promptly slumped after a depressing budget. Bargain hunters gained the upper hand! Getting rid of furniture, pictures, and familiar items pulled at the heartstrings. Though an occasional sale was achieved at auction, most found homes via Trash Nothing and charity shops.

Tidying up for 23 viewings became tedious and disheartening. We doubted that some visitors had even looked at the photos, or the map! ‘No shop?’, ‘No views!’, ‘Too many trees!’ We needed a family who loved the house for itself, and in November 2025 they arrived! The sale was agreed by February and our new home chose us ten days later – its town centre location proving irresistible, once we knew it wasn’t being considered as a new vicarage!

Uprooting has affected us differently – our sons shared rather emotional final visits with local friends from their teens. Our grandchildren have yet to forgive us, though we’ve kept nearly all their toys and games! We find it hard to live in a muddle, and forget where we’ve put things! But reminded nightly of refugee families coping in tents, and returning to destroyed homes, we feel very thankful for a house at the heart of our community at the start of our 46th year here. We had 13 years in Marlpit Hill, then 32 at Gilridge, and now we’re in the valley!



Above: Sue and Bernard say goodbye to Gilridge. Below: the vans roll out (left) and arrive in the town (right)



Saint Peter and Saint Paul Edenbridge Summer 2026



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A lesson in Christian living Barbara Mitchell remembers the Dominican nun who inspired and informed her journey of faith

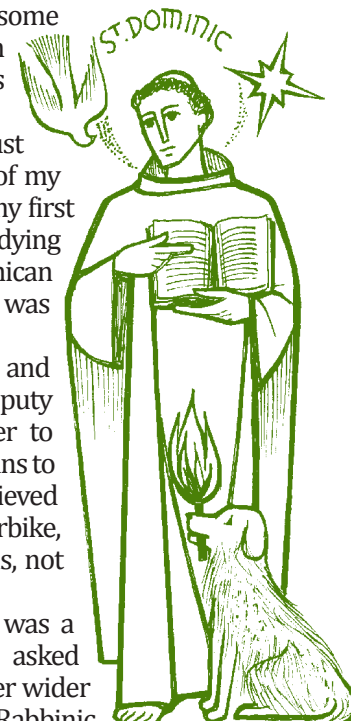
The feast of St Dominic, the Spanish priest who founded the Dominican Order of Preachers, falls on 8 August. St Thomas Aquinas, the great Doctor of the Medieval Church was one of their number, but, on a darker note, some Dominicans were active members of the Spanish Inquisition, seeking out those they regarded as heretics from the 15th -19th centuries.

Our elder son was christened Dominic, not just because he was born on a Sunday, but also because of my own experience of the modern Dominican Order. On my first day at Durham University I met the other students studying Theology. To my horror one was dressed in a full Dominican nun’s habit – but I needn’t have been worried. That nun was to be a good friend through my university years.

Sister Assunta had joined the Order at the age of 17 and taught at a comprehensive school near London. As Deputy Head, she had persuaded her superiors to send her to university. Meeting her was an education in what it means to live a disciplined religious life. She was full of fun and believed the Christian life should be joyous – riding a motorbike, joining us on trips to the ice rink (sadly, wearing jeans, not her habit) and holding parties in the house she rented.

But she also had a real thirst for learning and it was a pleasure to study with her in seminars, where she asked perceptive questions and was always ready to share her wider knowledge of the world. We learned Hebrew and Rabbinic studies together and our discussions led me to a lifelong passion for inter-faith dialogue, as I learned to hear what other traditions had to teach me.

After Durham she became a headmistress, a lecturer at Oxford and Prioress General for the Order. Sadly, she died young, aged 62 years, a great loss to the Roman Catholic community. In one of her obituaries it said that when you had a tutorial with Sister Assunta she didn’t ask whether you wanted a gin and tonic, but just how large it should be. So, on 8 August I shall be raising a glass to the memory of Sister Assunta and what I learned from her about being committed to a faith and the joy of Christian living.



Comfort and company

What happens at the Bereavement Café? Members of the Bereavement Support Group explain

The Bereavement Support Group was set up locally by a small number of committed people. Originally the brainchild of members of St John's United Reformed Church (URC) at Marsh Green, supported by other local churches including St Peter and St Paul, it now includes volunteers from the wider community to offer a group of 'facilitators' who are willing to listen and support anyone who has experienced bereavement. Members have undertaken relevant training and all the necessary safeguarding checks. Although some are trained counsellors, the group does not offer a counselling service, simply a 'listening ear' for those who might want to share their experience, though referrals can be



made for those who may need further specialist support.

The group took an early decision to create a friendly Café style setting for the monthly meeting. Initially the project was offered a free space at the URC in Marsh Green but it has now moved to BRIDGES on Edenbridge

High Street. We received community grants to fund our presence at BRIDGES, which we hope is testimony to the belief that we are providing a valuable community service.

The group is open to anyone who has experienced a bereavement in the past, whether a fairly recent loss or something from several years ago that has not fully healed and needs exploring. Visitors are able to share their feelings over a cup of tea or coffee, either with a small group or an individual facilitator, but always within the shared space for safeguarding reasons. The BRIDGES venue allows a degree of privacy, meaning that several conversations can take place at the same time, so there is flexibility for people to choose the sort of arrangements that suit them best. Sometimes visitors benefit from speaking to other bereaved people and gaining insights from

them, rather than simply talking to facilitators. Some returning visitors have got to know each other and seek each other out.

When the project began, just over a year ago, we were not aware of anything similar in the area and we hope we continue to fill a gap. Some of the facilitators are also lay preachers and pastoral workers in their churches so are very aware of local bereavements and the powerful impact they can have on people in the community. The growing numbers – and the fact that many have returned – gives us encouragement that we are on the right course and we very much hope to build on this in the future.

■ **The next Bereavement Cafés will be in BRIDGES, 2-4pm, on 20 July, 17 August and 21 September. If you'd like to know more, please call Hilary on 07711 681224 or email hilaryjmorgan@outlook.com**

Helping wildlife in summer

The needs of wildlife are just like ours — shelter, water, food. But they need a little help to meet those needs. The good news is that we can do a lot by doing nothing much.

First we can stop mowing. If we cut the grass every two or three weeks and no shorter than 10cm it stays green and lush in the heat. Then daisies and clover can grow and flower to feed insects and little brown butterflies. Wild flowers and easy-to-grow annuals provide food for a wide range of bees and flying insects. Dare I mention weeds? Just hide a few in a corner somewhere and birds will come for the seeds.

A nice thick hedge is perfect shelter for birds, just don't trim until September. Frogs and toads like long grass round the edges, slow worms and snakes like an undisturbed compost heap, and beetles need a log pile. They all eat slugs and we don't have to strim and tidy up.

Everything needs water. A pond is great but not many of us have one. However a shallow container in the shade will do very well. I put stones in so that the bees can get out again.

That basically is it. Pour a drink for the wildlife and another for yourself and have a lovely summer!

Ida Chamings of the Eco Group



The purchase of the new Vicarage has been completed! When appointed, the new priest will live at 15 Tanners Mead, in this lovely four-bedroomed house which has good parking, a good sized study and is within easy walking distance of the church. This important step in the recruitment process means advertisements will go out in September, after the summer holiday.