

# St John's Guild



## MICHAELMAS NEWSLETTER 2009

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## 1. LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DIRECTORS

Until recently, we have all been used to Father Graeme's letters at the beginning of the Newsletter.

With the deaths of Father Graeme and Stephen Andrews as well as Margaret Chambers' retirement, the style of the Newsletter will change but we do hope to continue with our publication.

Richard McEwan and I have taken on compiling and organizing it and, with Juliet Reeve's talent in producing the taped version, we will continue to ask for your help in letting us have news from the Branches and articles of interest so the content remains good.

Father Peter, chaplain to St Raphael's, has also offered his services in producing copy and reading for the tape. My thanks go to all who are helping in any way with the Newsletter and thanks also to those who have worked so hard over the years to keep this publication a part of the Guild's work.

This edition of the Newsletter will have an appreciation of Father Graeme and his work with and for the Guild.

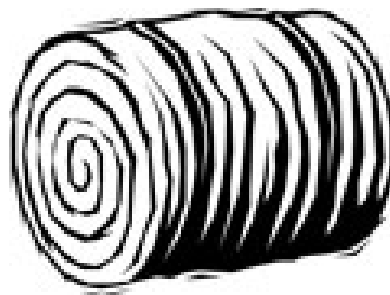
Many of you will have your own memories of time spent with him and we hope that you will enjoy Margaret Chambers' and Christine Oakley Jones' personal tributes to him.

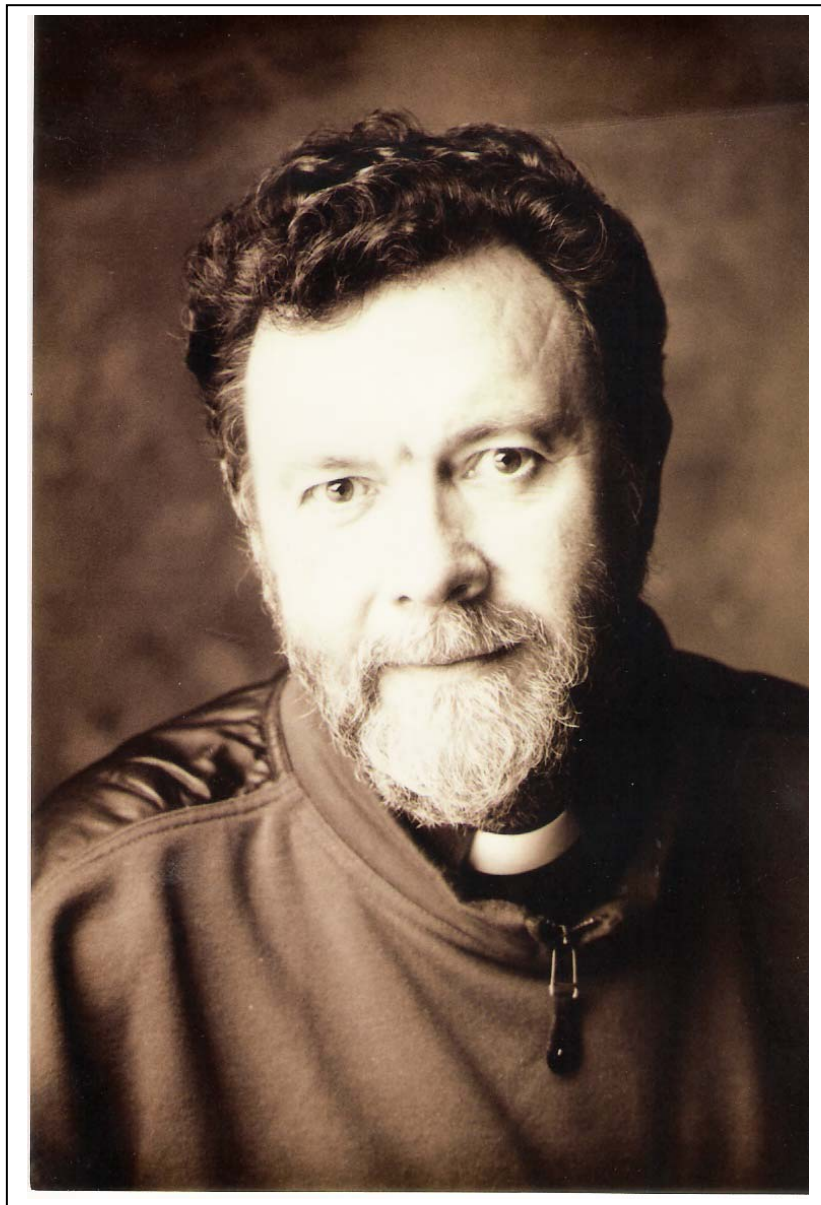
Next time, we hope to have an article on Stephen Andrews in memory of the help and support he was to Father Graeme, and his contribution as a member of the Advisory Council to the work of the Guild.

In the meantime, please continue to let us have your contributions for further editions of the Newsletter.

With love and prayers

*Judy Dunk*





**Father Graeme Hands**

**1935 - 2009**

## 2. FATHER GRAEME'S HARVEST LETTER IN 2004

*This edition of the Guild Newsletter is above all an appreciation of the work of Fr. Graeme and it therefore seems appropriate to reproduce his Warden's letter from 2004.*

Dear Friends in, and of, St John's Guild

In my last letter, I said how fortunate I was to be living in this holy place and that I never expected to spend my retirement anywhere other than Warwickshire where I was born. Since then, my thoughts, in moment of quiet, have often been to wonder, if we are prepared to listen for the voice of God, how differently things turn out from what we expect! I have often told of how I was reluctantly ordained and that as soon as Bishop Cuthbert Bardsley's hands were placed on my head on September 25<sup>th</sup> 1962, I knew the right thing had happened. Since then, my personal wishes have not counted for much. I did not wish to serve my time in Atherstone St Mary in the Coventry Diocese. I was led to the school chaplaincy in Harpenden in the St Albans Diocese. Much against my personal desires, I served a second curacy in Coventry St Alban. St Paul's, Warwickshire, where I spent eleven years, was not a parish I would have chosen, nor did I wish to return to the City of Coventry to Radford St Nicholas, where I stayed for eighteen years and from which parish I retired after the operation which forced my retirement two years early.

The marvellous thing is that wherever I went, I was soon very much aware I was in the right place, and I was where God wanted me to be. Some people might have thought otherwise, but it was very clear to me that there were tasks to do and with God's help and guidance, what He wanted could be achieved.

If within a short period after the ordination in Coventry Cathedral, the circumstances of my personal life had not changed, I would not have found myself Chaplain of Aldwickbury School in Harpenden. It was there that I met the parents of a boy I was to prepare for confirmation, Colin and Gertrude Kinloch. It was through them that I came to know and love Walsingham, and it was through them that I was introduced to St John's Guild for the Blind. How much both experiences have enriched my life, all the people I have met, all the happy times that have been shared, and the opportunities for service have been many and varied. So much has happened which, on looking back, has been for good that one is truly aware of God's hand, that He really does rule, and overrule, our lives.

That was the saying of the Bishop who ordained me 42 years ago, a saying which for me has become so apparently right on so many occasions. My only hope and prayer is that He will continue to guide me through the years ahead and that I will remain faithful and true to Jesus Christ and all that has been handed to us from the apostles.

This is my prayer, my wish and my hope for you as well.

With my love and every blessing

*Father Graeme*

### 3. FROM MARGARET CHAMBERS

Although the news of Fr. Graeme's death was not entirely unexpected, it was nevertheless a shock to most of us in the Guild, as we had been so used to him as our Warden and Chairman for such a long time. In actual fact, Fr. Graeme's first contact with the Guild was through Mrs Gertrude Kinloch, a member of the St John's Guild Council, when he was teaching at the school attended by her son. I don't know the exact year this was, but Graeme prepared Gertrude's son for confirmation, after which he was invited to serve on the Guild Council himself.

Looking back in the old Minute books, it would seem that Graeme very soon became the Vice Chairman to Fr. Laister, at that time the Warden; and certainly in 1983/4/5, Graeme was attending the Council meetings which took place mostly in London at the Church of the Holy Redeemer in Clerkenwell. In 1986, Fr. Graeme was asked to become the Warden and Chairman, and he signed the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting that year on St Luke's Day. He was very involved about that time with the sale of the Guild's St John's Home in Worthing and, reading through those mid '80's Minutes, it is clear that his commitment to the Guild and its residential homes was very strong. Once St John's was sold, there was much to do in connection with St Raphael's, and it was about this time that his skills and diplomacy were needed in our dealings with the Charity Commission!

In the 1990's, the development of the Guild's branches was under way, the Newsletter became more important and the Church Messenger was re-established. During these years, Fr. Graeme arranged regular meetings (mostly in his Vicarage in Coventry) of "the workers" – those of us involved in the actual organisation of these aspects of the Guild's outreach – and again, his commitment and involvement was amazing. I think he would have admitted that he was not always at ease in his relationships with us and yet, he always gave us his full support and backing in our reports to the Guild Council.

In the same way, at St Raphael's many changes were required because of the greater involvement of the local authority and again, he chaired the House Committee in a way which enabled those changes to be implemented and carried out by the staff, always keeping them fully involved.

Since then, of course, there have been more changes because of new legislation and yet, always Fr. Graeme, in his position as Chairman, has enabled firstly the Council, then the Trustees and now the Directors to keep a full commitment to the ethos of the Guild. In the Homily given by the Vicar of Walsingham at Graeme's funeral, he referred to "*a kind of presence which made him tick*", and I think this was so in all his dealings with, for and on behalf of the Guild. He had a total loyalty to its aims and objectives.

We give thanks for Graeme's commitment and work for St John's Guild over a good many years. It was sad that his last years were increasingly frustrated by his ill health, and yet he continued to give his support and advice in whatever way he could. He was totally committed to the Guild and he will be much missed. May he rest in peace.

*Margaret Chambers*

#### 4. FROM CHRISTINE OAKLEY JONES

Graeme became involved with GFS (The Girls Friendly Society) when he was a curate in Atherstone, Warwickshire. He was there when Dorothy Pickering restarted the GFS in Atherstone in 1958. When he moved to become Vicar of St Paul's, Warwick, he started a GFS branch there, with Janet Walters as Branch Leader. This was probably in the early 1960's. Graeme was GFS Chaplain and Treasurer for the Coventry Diocese for as long as anyone can remember!



He was tremendously influential in GFS both locally and nationally. He served on FGS Central Council and was Chair of Finance at the time when GFS sold its property in Greycoat Place, London, before moving its HQ to Queen's Gate in Kensington. He was actively involved with the organisation and the running of events, notably the Camp at the Agricultural Centre in Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, to celebrate the GFS Centenary in 1975, a gloriously hot weekend with "It's a Knockout" in the main show-ring and a service there the next day with the Bishop of Coventry, Cuthbert Bardsley, preaching on the theme "Go, Glow and Grow" into the next century of GFS.

Nearer to home, Graeme organised a Midland Area Camp in the grounds of Chatsworth House, another hot weekend and another at Oundle School. Graeme seemed to have influence in all the right places, even with the weather, and was indefatigable where work was concerned. In a very recent conversation with Stephen Andrews, reminiscing about Graeme and his connections with GFS, he recalled Graeme re-telling a conversation he had had with the late Queen Mother, Patron of GFS.

Graeme's influence was not only practical. He had a great spiritual influence on all he came into contact with and some of us were lucky enough to join in his pilgrimages to Walsingham. Always one to send people away with a phrase never to be forgotten, he told the youngsters at one camp service : "*You are all like peas in a pod. You don't have to like everyone, but you do have to love them!*"

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

*Christine Oakley Jones*

5. FROM FR. GRAEME'S POETRY BOOK

August, by William Morris

Now came fulfilment of the year's desire;  
The tall wheat, coloured by the August fire  
Grew heavy-headed, dreading its decay,  
And blacker grew the elm trees day by day.  
About the edges of the yellow corn  
And o'er the gardens grown somewhat outworn  
The bees went hurrying to fill up their store;  
The apple boughs bent over more and more;  
With peach and apricot the garden wall  
Was odorous, and the pears began to fall  
From off the high tree with each refreshing breeze.



A Boy's Song, by James Hogg

Where the pools are bright and deep,  
Where the grey trout lies asleep,  
Up the river and over the lea,  
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the blackbird sings the latest,  
Where the hawthorn blooms the sweetest,  
Where the nestlings chirp and flee,  
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the mowers mow the cleanest,  
Where the hay lies thick and greenest,  
There to track the homeward bee,  
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the hazel bank is steepest,  
Where the shadow falls the deepest,  
Where the clustering nuts fall free,  
That's the way for Billy and me.

Why the boys should drive away  
Little sweet maidens from the play,  
Or love to banter and fight so well,  
That's the thing I never could tell.

But this I know, I love to play  
Through the meadow, among the hay;  
Up the water and over the lea,  
That's the way for Billy and me.



6. FROM FR. GRAEME'S PRAYER BOOK

*"If we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another"*

1 John 1:7

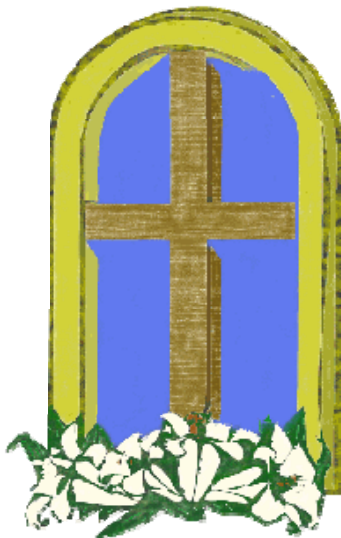
Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits and blessings which thou hast given me, for all the cruel pains and insults which thou has borne for me, O most holy Jesu, merciful friend, brother and redeemer. May I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly.

Amen

O God, we can neither measure your love,  
Nor number your blessings.  
I praise and thank you that in all your goodness  
You are my strength in my weakness,  
Light in my darkness,  
Comfort in my sorrow  
And serenity in my upheavals.

For these gifts, I offer you humble  
And hearty thanks.

In the name of Jesus the Lord.  
Amen



Soul of Christ, sanctify me;  
Body of Christ, save me;  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me;  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me;  
O good Jesu, hear me,  
Within thy wounds, hide me.  
Suffer me not to be separate from thee;  
From the malicious enemy, defend me.  
In the hour of my death, call me  
And bid me come to thee,  
That with thy saints, I may praise thee.

For ever and ever.  
Amen

## 7. HARVEST FESTIVALS

by Fr. Peter Wadsworth

Many years ago, I served in a parish that included the northern edge of Slough and part of the vast Slough Trading Estate. At that time, there was an industrial chaplain in Slough, called Alan, who was very keen that the church should be relevant to today. One year, he had a go at his fellow clergy for running old-style Harvest Festivals. You know the sort of thing – lots of flowers, apples, sheaves of corn and more marrows than anyone would ever want to eat. Instead, he said, we should be celebrating things made in local factories. For my church, this opened up some fascinating possibilities. There was a Mars Bar factory; covering the church with their products would certainly go down well with the children and all chocaholics, but how long would the exhibits stay there? Then there was the Ferguson television factory; interesting idea! But best of all, there was the Berlei corset factory; at this point, my mind boggled and I confess I lost my nerve and we went back to marrows and a traditional Harvest Festival.



Of course, Alan had a point. The traditional Harvest Festival dates from a time when most people worked on the land and it was a very real and immediate celebration of Harvest Home by the men and women who had physically brought it home. It was a vicar in north Cornwall who is credited with starting the church Harvest Festival service as we know it, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to try to Christianise what had been fairly pagan, rowdy and drunken celebrations by country folk. Alan was right to challenge us as to how far such services still had a meaning in the days when most church-goers have no connection with the actual harvest and fewer than 5% of the population still work on the land. There was a real danger of retreating into a sort of cosy nostalgia.

But as I said at the beginning, this was many years ago, indeed over 25 years ago, and at a time when environmental issues such as global warming and the use of the world's resources did not have the prominence that they do today. In a funny way, there are now new reasons for celebrating a traditional Harvest Festival. It chimes in very well with the challenges that face all of us as to how we live in our world without damaging or even destroying the very things we depend on. The Harvest Festival reminds us each year of certain basic truths. When old Vicar Hawker, in his north Cornwall parish, set up the first church Harvest Festival, he wanted to emphasise the Christian dimension to the harvest. In our time too, we need to do that just as, or even more, urgently than in his.

The starting point for any Harvest celebration is that this is God's world. We are thanking God for the Harvest and the abundance that we, at least in our corner of the world, continue to enjoy. We may think we are clever with all our modern technologies and indeed we are, but we will only live creatively and safely with our world if we recognise that what we do, we do in collaboration with God, its creator. That is spelt out in the opening lines of perhaps the most famous of all the harvest hymns :



*We plough the fields and scatter  
The good seed on the land,  
But it is fed and watered  
By God's almighty hand.*

Those lines should perhaps be engraved over the doorway of every scientific laboratory and biotech company in the world. It is when we forget that truth, when in our arrogance we think we can manipulate nature just as we please and are lords over creation, that disaster threatens.

But Harvest Festival has something else to teach us. At the heart of it is the notion of sharing. From Old Testament times onwards, there has been a strong tradition that everyone should be able to share in the delights of the harvest. In the old days, fruit and vegetables given to decorate the church were then distributed to the poor of the parish. These days, in my church, St Swithin's, we collect all sorts of tinned and packet food as well as basic toiletries like toothpaste and shaving cream, and even socks, and all of it goes to the Open Door night hostel here in St Albans to help those who are homeless.

So we **can** still sing with gusto that *we plough the fields and scatter*, and *come, ye thankful people*. We may no longer be the people who bring in the harvest, but we are more aware than ever that only wisdom and humility will ensure that in future years, there is still a harvest to be gathered in.

There is however still one question that bugs me. What would have happened if I had asked the Berlei Corset factory for a few samples to decorate my church? I shall never know!

*Peter Wadsworth*

## 8. EVENTS

### 8.1 St John's Guild Pilgrimage / Holiday to Walsingham

A group of us from St John's Guild spent a very pleasant week in the pretty village of Walsingham, five miles from the Norfolk Coast, from 17<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> May.



Many of you will be familiar with Walsingham, which has been a place of pilgrimage for centuries and is the site of a dramatic vision experienced by Lady Richeldis nearly a thousand years ago. Some people call it "England's Nazareth" and it certainly has a lovely, uplifting feel. The present day shrine - created from 1931 and near the site of a medieval priory - welcomes around 10,000 residential pilgrims each year.

Our group has usually been looked after by Father Graeme and we were saddened to hear of his death in March. He was much in our thoughts.

We attended services in the Barn Church and at The Shrine. The Eucharist Service on Ascension Day was particularly moving and three of us had a special blessing.

On the Wednesday we enjoyed a trip out. Most people went to Sheringham or Wells-Next-The-Sea. Two of us went to Felbrigg Hall, a 17<sup>th</sup> century country house now managed by the National Trust. This elegant house has a lovely walled garden and is well worth a visit.

Our evenings were spent together in the lounge, enjoying food and drink and lots of laughter and pleasant chat. Our thanks go to Judy, who did a marvellous job looking after us. We were sorry when the week ended and we had to say goodbye until next year.

I would like to wish Richard, our Chief Officer, a full recovery from the illness that forced him to miss this year's trip. Hopefully, he will be able to join us next year along with our other members who booked but were sadly unable to make it, Michael and Bessie and our new member, Terrie.

*Beryl Carroll*

## 8.2 The Summer Festival

St John's Guild held its Summer Festival on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June at St John's Church, Kensal Green, London W.10, by kind permission of Canon Andrew Dangerfield and the PCC. The Celebrant and Preacher was the Rt. Revd. Peter Wheatley, Bishop of Edmonton.

Hosting a festival always involves a tremendous amount of hard work, and we would like to express our sincere appreciation to Fr. Andrew who, as Chaplain to the Kensal Green Branch, does such a tremendous amount of work on behalf of the Guild and its members. Special thanks also to the Branch Secretary, Anne Abel, and her team who had done a wonderful job organising the lunch in the vicarage garden which was a lovely setting to meet friends from other parts of the country. So impressive were the arrangements that they even managed to have the Church, Vicarage and garden bathed in glorious sunshine for the whole event!

Our best thanks go to all who contributed to this happy and memorable day.



*Michael Hilton*

Director

## 8.3 Fifty Years of Faithful Service

We send our warmest good wishes and congratulations to Sister Mary Joseph (S.C.) who celebrated the golden jubilee of her profession in June. Sr. Mary Joseph is a member of a religious community called the Sisters of Charity (S.C.), who are a religious foundation inspired by St. Vincent de Paul who encouraged people to work amongst the poor and underprivileged.

Sister is an active member of the Plymouth Branch. The celebration included a Mass of Thanksgiving in St Peter's Parish Church where Sister Mary Joseph works as a parish sister. The Chief Celebrant was the Bishop of Plymouth. Fr. Sam Philpot, vicar of St Peter's, preached the homily. He spoke about St Vincent de Paul as the inspiration for the religious life and in the dedication of the religious life giving an alternative to the values of the world – not least in serving the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century poor in the homeless and the young people of Plymouth.

The golden jubilee was a wonderfully memorable occasion and the packed church, with the Reverend Mother of the Sisters of Charity together with other religious representatives in attendance, was a tribute to the esteem in which Sister Mary Joseph is held in Plymouth and beyond.



Richard McEwan  
Chief Officer

## 8.4 Walsingham 2010

The Holiday Pilgrimage to Walsingham for 2010 will take place from Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May to Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May. The total cost is £225, including a £25.00 non returnable deposit. Anyone interested should contact Richard McEwan at the Guild Office.

## 9. ST RAPHAEL'S AND ST JOHN'S GUILD

by Sister Jean Harris C.A.

It was a former Curate of St Lawrence Church in Abbots Langley who introduced me to St Raphael's. A friend and I had occasionally baby-sat for Dennis and Mavis Hart when he was Curate in the 1950's. After his move to St Saviour's, I called to see them and it was suggested that I might like to attend Evensong in St Raphael's Chapel, which I was pleased to do.



It was around this time that I felt God calling me to full-time ministry in the Church of England, and Dennis Hart was both helpful and encouraging. I was commissioned as a Church Army Sister in 1957 and my ministry within the Society has been varied and interesting, ranging from rural ministry in Lincolnshire and Staffordshire, to Prison Chaplaincy in Holloway, care of the elderly in residential homes and on the staff of the Church Army Headquarters. Approximately twenty years has been working alongside Vicars in parishes where the population was about to treble; I have cycled along roads still to be made up. I went to Newport Pagnell, initially for five years and stayed fifteen.

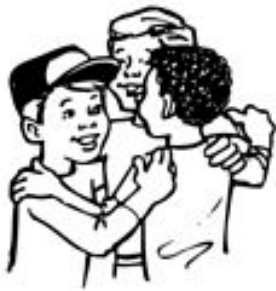
It was when I retired to St Albans that I decided to visit St Raphael's again. I was put in touch with the late Dorothy Thorpe, a delightful if formidable lady who arranged occasional meetings for St John's Guild which met at St Raphael's usually once a month. When Dorothy moved to be nearer her family, I took over organising the speakers and other entertainers for the monthly Guild meetings. Over the years, we've had a wide variety of speakers, some educational and informative, others entertaining – singers, musicians, choirs from local schools or adult groups. The Visitors gave their services free and a donation was given to their cause, for example, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Hearing Dogs for the Deaf, or visiting choirs would name a charity of their choice.

Without exception, all enjoyed coming to St Raphael's and were hugely appreciated by the residents and visitors. The Guild Office followed the afternoon programme and the Guild visitors were taken home whilst the residents went to have high tea. The staff at St Raphael's now includes a member responsible for activities, and a summer visit to Ayletts Garden Centre to enjoy one or two plant houses and an excellent tea may continue. However, membership of the Guild has declined and the regular meetings have discontinued, at least for a while.

## 10. CONGRATULATIONS

Yes, congratulations to all of us who were born before 1960! Why ..... ?

- First, we survived being born to mothers who smoked or drank when they carried us, who took aspirin, ate blue cheese and tuna from a tin, and then laid us in cots painted with brightly-coloured, lead-based paints.
- Not for us child-proof lids on medicine bottles, or locks on doors.
- As children, we rode in cars without seat belts or airbags. Riding in the back of a van was always loose – and great fun! and when we rode our bikes, it was without helmets!
- We drank water from the garden hosepipe; we shared one soft drink between four friends; we ate cakes made with butter, white bread and pop drinks with sugar. But we weren't overweight because .....
- We were always playing outside. We left home in the morning and played all day as long as we were home when the streetlights came on. No-one could reach us all day long. But we were okay.
- We would spend hours building go-karts out of scraps and then rode down a hill only to find out we'd forgotten the brakes.
- We didn't have Playstations, Nintendos, X-boxes, video games, no 99 channels on cable TV, no DVD movies with surround sound.
- We didn't have mobile phones, text messaging, no PC's, no Internet chat rooms. Not us. We had FRIENDS and we went outside to find them.



- We played made-up games with sticks and tennis balls; we rode our bikes or walked round to a friend's house, knocked on the door, or rang the bell, or just yelled for them
- We fell out of trees, cut our knees, broke bones, lost teeth – and there were no law suits from all these accidents.
- We played with worms and woodlice, made mud pies from dirt – and survived such dangers.
- Local teams had try-outs and not everyone got into the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with the disappointment.
- The idea of a parent bailing us out if we got into trouble was unheard of. Our parents actually sided with the law!
- And this is the generation that has produced some of the best risk-takers, problem-solvers and inventors ever. The past 50 years has seen an explosion of innovation and new ideas.
- And we had freedom, failure, success and responsibility; and we learned how to deal with all of that.

Congratulations!