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Prestbury Parish Magazine



 North Cheltenham
Team Ministry

April 2025



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Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editors, the Clergy, the Parochial Church Council, or of any authoritative body of the Church of England

*The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
St Mary and St Nicolas Prestbury Cheltenham - Registered Charity No 1130933*

continued inside back cover

Cover Picture:

Widemouth Bay, near Bude, on a blowy day by Gill Wood

THE JOY OF CAPEL COURT

Joy as I wake to know that we are here,
this blessed place, home for our later years.
The Lord, who has provided all we need throughout our lives,
has kept the best till now
at Capel Court.

Joy as I open curtains onto lawn and spreading tree,
the seasons each reflected in its branches.
Spring green of buds, then blossoms everywhere,
green shade of summer, reddening of the leaves
as berries ripen, then the stripping bare.
All that remains, branches and mistletoe
at Capel Court.

Joy of the Chapel enwrapped in silence,
prayer of all the saints, here and departed,
who struggled, served and suffered throughout their lives
and found in you, our Lord, their peace and love and joy
at Capel Court.

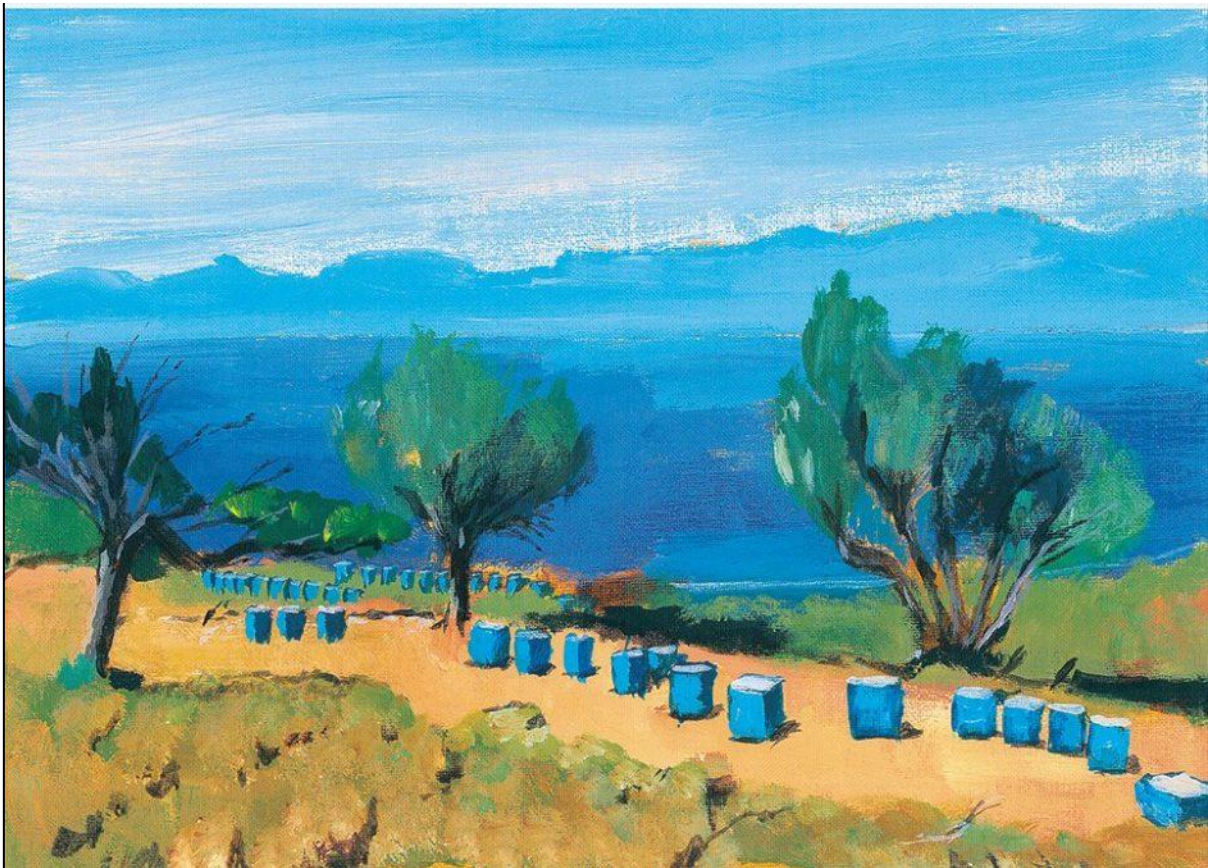
Joy of being cared for by our amazing staff:
practical tasks, their gentleness and patience as they deal
with those whose memory is erased, or cannot hear or see.
The love with which they serve our food, test our alarms,
while still affirming us as people, independent, dignified,
and cared for
at Capel Court.

Joy of fellowship with other residents
each rich in life's experiences, happy and sad,
as we recount them, piecemeal, now and then,
each with our varied eccentricities,
helping each other move towards one end,
anticipated here
at Capel Court.

Joan Copeland
December 2021

This month's theme is **FAVOURITE PLACES**

SALTED PISTACHIO NUTS AND RETSINA



Blue Beehives, Tilos, Greece

2005

We used to go on Greek Island holidays with an excellent family firm called Laskarina based in Derbyshire which ceased trading in 2006, alas. The Murdochs specialized in offering holidays in 'Greece – Her Unspoilt Islands' and I so enjoyed the visits and selecting from their brilliantly colourful brochures that I kept the final one dated November 2005 and I have it in front of me now.

I can see again what drew us to those sunlit islands, blue harbours, fishing boats and sacred sites. The accommodation was honestly described, their reps were cheerful and unfussy too and their arrangements unfailingly helpful and positive. No wonder they won awards annually. The firm took us to the eastern Aegean to Halki and Tilos, islands of the Southern Dodecanese near Rhodes, and further north to Samos and Ikaria.

What is it about those island holidays which made them so attractive at the time and even more so in retrospect? It was the clear blue skies of summer in Greece and the warm blue waters of the Mediterranean with brightly painted fishing boats in the harbours and the nets on the quayside spread out to dry. The harbourside restaurants offered inexpensive meals and servings of saganaki, moussaka and 'Lamb Kleftiko' with local wine, yoghurt, honey and Greek coffee in the *kafeneion*. Before supper we could enjoy salted pistachio nuts and retsina. Above the small towns and villages there were vineyards and olive groves on ancient terraces and, beyond that, areas grazed by sheep or more often goats, where the herby vegetation smelt richly of thyme, rosemary and marjoram. Bees fed on the nectar and a colourful bee-eater bird snapped up passing bees.

Or at least, that's how I remember the pastoral idyll. At the time, I was doing a fair bit of painting and I remember depicting the numerous boxes of blue beehives on the island of Tilos looking towards the mountainous blue hills of Symi in the distance, as shown above. Typically of modern Greece, if I turned round to face the other way there was an ancient and abandoned pale blue car with broken windows and flat tyres rusting away against a scrubby goatscape. Intriguingly, Tilos was also the home of the extinct dwarf elephant and just further north is the volcanic island of Nisyros where you can walk on the crusty caldera.

Greek Islands may be favourite places to visit perhaps, but are they all-time favourite places? And what does that really mean? Somewhere sunny and sunnier than here. Even if it were all affordable, would I really want a second home and if so where? However idyllic, another house would soon become a tie and a chore which might divide loyalties. I am not a handyman ready to learn new trades and spend my time doing-up or maintaining another property. Since living as a mature student in remote east Devon, the rural idyll holds no appeal for me either, especially in winter. Isolated Hayne House Cottage in rustic Plymtree, not very near Cullompton in the back of beyond, put paid to all that.

Food matters too. No place could be a favourite of mine if it leaves you cold, wet and hungry. Polar Exploration has no appeal for me whatsoever. We have been fortunate to travel to some exotic places like Sri Lanka, to California and the Grand Canyon, and to see spring flowers in Crete. I like historical remains and sites to see, such as a Greek temple to visit or a Roman mosaic to marvel at. It also helps to know something of the local language and so La Belle France is a bonus as are its menus.

Nevertheless, I am put off places that are overrun by tourists like Venice and Dubrovnik, although we have been to both and understand the attractions. Dubrovnik in high summer was described as a 'heaving human pâté', while Rome, Barcelona and Florence are likewise said to be overrun since Airbnb arrived. In some ways, affordable travel has become too easy in this overpopulated age of mass tourism. Horseback and sailing boats made it all the more difficult to leave these shores in the early days of continental travel.

But then again, the thought of being elsewhere reminds me that there's no ship to take me from myself. Wherever else one goes to escape or for a dramatic change of scene and scenery, one's inescapable self always unpacks the same old luggage from the familiar mind. That's all the more reason to take good books or Kindle for extra company and distraction.

And so where are my favourite places in Britain and this disunited Kingdom? Where should I even start? Cleeve Hill, Chedworth Roman Villa, Painswick Rococo Garden. There are so many that I'd need a book to write about them and yet I am struck by how relatively few areas of these islands we have visited properly and how I would like to know so much more about them.

Always after travel one returns home, back to the people and the places one loves above all. Of all the places I have been fortunate enough to live in and call home, I like Yew Tree House best which is just as well because here we are, I hope, for the foreseeable future.

Duncan Forbes



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Not so much a Favourite Place more a favourite occupation

In about 1980 I was invited to join a cycle ride around the Donnington tied houses. This involved drinking some beer in 17 pubs. The trip took us via Little Barrington, Little Compton, Moreton-in-Marsh, Stow-on-the-Wold, Naunton, Willersey, Winchcombe and back to Cheltenham. This was a long day out covering some 90 or 100 hilly miles.

In later years I introduced the ride to other friends and it became known as the Donnington Pub Crawl. The last time I cycled this was in 2007 with Chris Read, husband of Sue. He is partly pictured here in the yellow jacket. Alas, by this time there were only 15 tied houses. The one at Fifield had been sold and went up market. That at Winchcombe closed and the site was redeveloped. Interestingly all the Donnington pubs made a feature of Cotswold Stone.

One of the pubs visited each time was The Plough Inn at Ford (mentioned by Bernard in the next article) midway between The Half Way House at Kineton and Snowhill. There was never time to eat at these stops, just a quick half pint of BB and be off. On a separate occasion, with family, I have had a meal at the Plough Inn and agree with Bernard they served the best food for miles around.



The Plough Inn, Ford, 2003

Brian Wood

FAVOURITE PLACES

I presume that when our editor set the subject of Favourite Places for us to write about, he expected us to exclude our homes, as I am sure that would be number one on everyone's list.

The trouble is, so often one's favourite places slip down that list over the years, as so many change with the times. There are some for me which do not and in my book, Donnington Brewery near Stow-on-the-Wold, and its major outlet, The Plough Inn at Ford, are two that time has not affected.

The brewery is set in beautiful Cotswold countryside and has always been family-owned. It is adjacent to a large lake fed by the river Dikler and home to ducks, many of them being rare breeds, also geese, swans and peacocks. The stone building is very old and dates back to 1291 when it was built as a mill to Broadway Manor. Inside nothing has changed in well over 150 years and is pleasantly antiquated, the small office being rather Dickensian with (when I was last there) high stools, the sort one can imagine would have been used by Bob Cratchit. For heating there was a one-bar electric fire, the kind used by the late Queen Elizabeth II! The flooring throughout the ground floor is of untreated planks of substantial thickness and the aroma everywhere is of brewing hops – the same as hung around my junior school (Dunalley) which was adjacent to Cheltenham Original Brewery. In all seasons Donnington Brewery is quite beautiful, and I love the place. Incidentally, not only are there teal swimming about on the lake, the chief clerk, a most polite gentleman who used to perch on one of the high stools, went by the name of Valentine Teal!

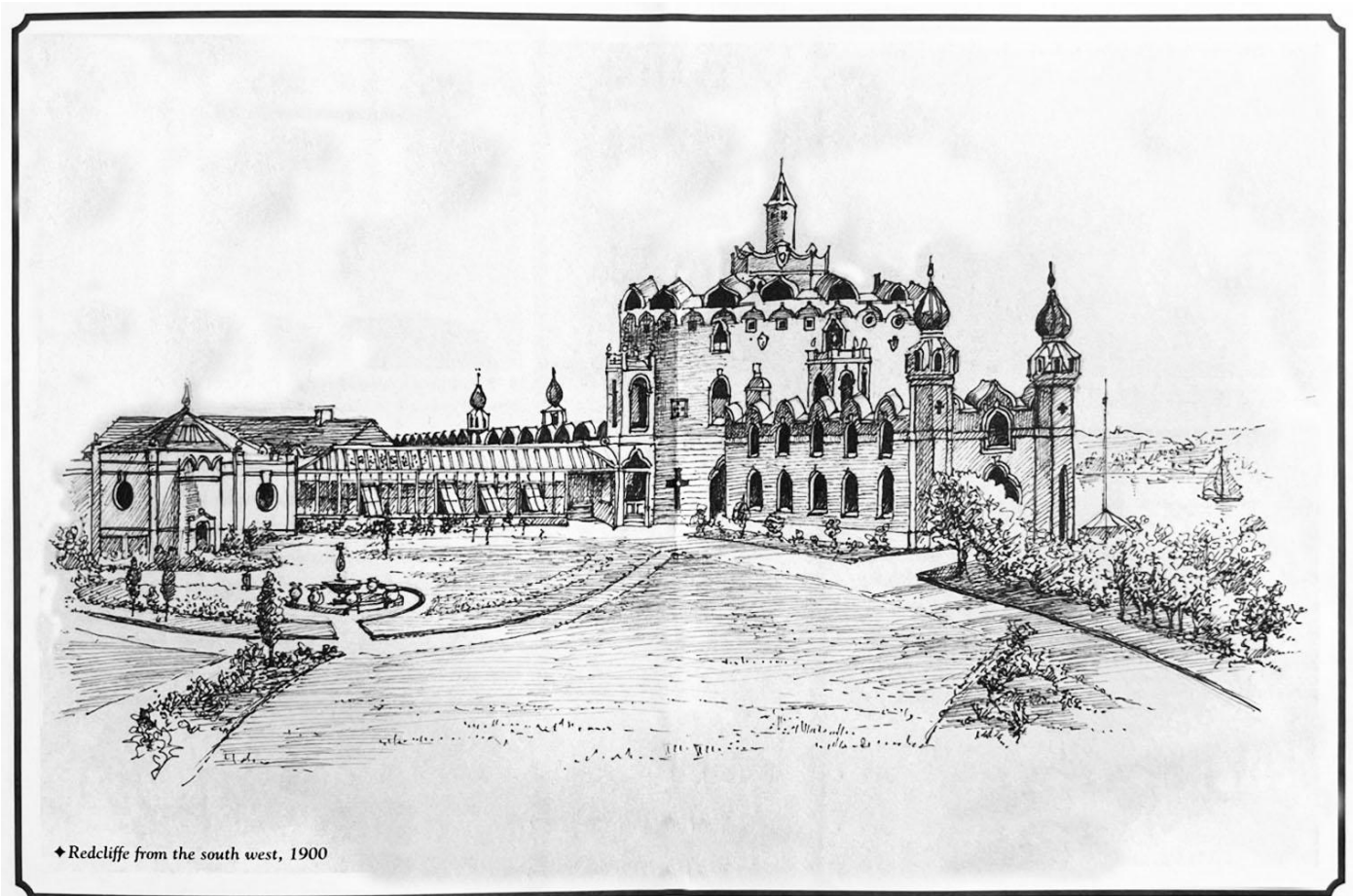
The Plough at Ford is at least the same age as the brewery and completely unspoilt. With flagstone floors and log fires, the inn once served as a courthouse, with cells below being used for sheep stealers, so it may possibly have been the last dwelling place of criminals before being transported to Botany Bay. William Shakespeare is believed to have stayed the night there on his way from Stratford-upon-Avon to Oxford and legend has it that instead of paying cash for his lodging, wrote the landlord a poem which is displayed in the bar. It has been there ever since I began to frequent the Plough in 1953 and probably since The Immortal Bard's visit. It reads:

‘Ye weary travelers that pass by
With dust and scorching sunbeams dry
Or be he numb'd with snow and frost,
With having these bleak cotswolds crosst
Step in and quaff my nut brown ale
Bright as rubys, mild and stale
Twill make your laging trotters dance
As nimble as the suns of france
Then ye will own ye men of sense
That neare was better spent six pence.’

That ‘nut brown ale’ would most probably have been brewed at Donnington, three miles along the road and has on occasions made my own trotters dance, maybe not quite so nimbly as the sons of France, but quite nimble enough! The pub also serves quite the best food for miles around. Occasionally I collect a polypin (36 pints) of their SBA (Special Bitter

Ale) from the brewery and install it in my cloakroom for use during Christmas, Easter or any other special occasion when all the family descend.

Another place close to my heart is The Redcliffe Hotel on the Torbay seafront at Paignton in South Devon. It was designed and built in 1852 as his retirement home by Colonel Robert Smith of the Royal Bengal Engineers. Redcliffe Towers was built in what is now Paignton and later helped establish the place as a tourist resort. While serving in India, the colonel designed and built roads, a lighthouse and a palace for the Rajah of Murshidabad, among many other constructions. Little wonder then that Redcliffe Towers has the look of an Indian palace, with its oriental windows and minarets, standing amid five acres of pleasure gardens with terrace walks, a kitchen garden and a vinery. Colonel Smith built himself a plunge bath set into the rocks on the seaward side of the house, which was approached by an underground tunnel from his dressing room (now the bar). This bath filled with fresh seawater every high tide but sadly for the colonel it was swept away in a severe storm in the 1880s. After his death, Redcliffe Towers was purchased in 1877 by Paris Singer (of sewing machine fame) who lived there for 25 years before selling it in 1902, to be converted into a hotel. He moved half a mile inland to Oldway Mansion.



The Redcliffe Hotel

Apart from some major extensions and alterations in the 1960s and the addition of a leisure suite and pools, the fabric of the hotel remains largely unchanged. Many of the original features, such as the Mecca Prayer Steps, the Indian signs on the tower, and the ornately carved wooden staircase, can still be found. The tunnel out from the bar to the beach was a favourite with my grandchildren and is still in good use, except at high tide when the sea throws itself at the high walls of the hotel grounds. There is now an excellent

maplewood ballroom which attracts dance clubs from all over the UK. Food has always been first class and when dining, one can easily imagine being at sea in an ocean liner. We regularly took our children and grandchildren there for short summer breaks for over fifteen years. That is nothing compared with Dick Francis, the author of 45 best-selling racing novels, and his son Felix, who since his father's death has written seven. Dick had been staying at The Redcliffe since his riding days in the 1940s and took his family there every August since 1950. Felix was telling me before Christmas that he had now holidayed at The Redcliffe for seventy-two consecutive years. His father had lived most of his life in the Caribbean but of all the hotels in the world it is The Redcliffe at Paignton he chose for his family holidays every summer. In fact, probably the nicest room at the hotel is named the Dick Francis lounge! It has comfortable armchairs, an ornate plasterwork ceiling and magnificent views of Torbay all the way round from Torquay to Brixham. Photos of Francis in his time as Champion Jockey adorn the walls.

Third on my list of favourites is Charlton House, Charlton Kings, which was my place of work from the age of fifteen-and-a-half until I was sixty-one (1945 to 1991). I could never get to my drawing board quick enough because I loved my job and I felt part of the place. There were 25 employees at the Spirax head office when I first started. Not only was the founder (L G Northcroft) keen to make his company world leader in steam utilisation (which he managed by the mid nineteen-sixties), he was determined to restore this eyesore of a building to its former splendour, and this he did quite quickly. This 400-year-old manor house had served as a private country estate, had been home to eminent lawyers, industrialists and the Master of the Cotswold Hunt, a school for girls, accommodation for prisoners of war, HQ for a US Army court of law and is the habitat of two ghosts, father and son. In my time of nearly fifty years working at Charlton House, those two apparitions have shown themselves four times, not to me, but to others, all strangers to each other. They, or it, made its presence known to me very soon after I joined Spirax in 1945 by flinging a framed mirror around the drawing office in which I and two others were at work. The ghost of the boy who died as a result of an accident with his horse in the grounds in 1904 was the same age at his death as myself when I first set foot in the house in 1945. We both had the same obsessive interests and I am sure there was a positive connection between us. There certainly was a link with many things to do with the history of this fascinating building, its occupants and myself. In the 1980s I was asked by the Cheltenham History Society to give a talk in the council chambers of the Municipal Offices in The Promenade on this subject. This I agreed to do mainly because one of the houses in the centre of the block was my grandparents' home for 25 years before they sold it to the Town Council, and I thought it would be a nice thing to do in the room adjacent to my mother's birthplace. Afterwards a lady came to me, so moved by what I had to say, that she had tears in her eyes. Charlton House really was a house of tragedy and deep emotion, but I loved the place. The recently constructed, ultra-modern, state of the art building which can be seen from the Cirencester Road that is Spirax today, sits alongside and is connected to the old Charlton House.

I wonder how many can say that one of their favourite places is their place of work. Well, apart maybe from Father Nick, that is!

Bernard Parkin

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My Favourite Places

I don't have just one favourite place - I have lots! All mood and weather dependent. At this time of year my favourite places are all indoors, dry and warm and cosy.

MY chair (no one else sits in it) has a lovely soft blanket and is big enough for me to stretch out full length as and when I feel like it. I can also watch the television from here; I like wildlife programs, especially about squirrels, mice, birds and even dogs. Lots of exciting movements and sounds!

Flat on my back, legs akimbo, in front of the fire is another favourite spot. I can lie here, toast my tummy and dream the evening away . . .

Most days, and especially when there are visitors (stranger danger) I retreat up to my basket in my bedroom, which I have to share. The bedroom not the basket! The bedroom is a nice safe sanctuary and usually quiet, except for early on Saturday morning when I have to listen to Tony Blackburn and Sounds of the Sixties.

Also in my bedroom is another favourite place - The Big Bed - good for a snuggle and a cuddle, especially at 3am with my favourite human.

Submitted by Hazel Langley on behalf of Tishkin Langley

My Favourite Place

Churches have been my favourite place(s) for most of my life, having a Dad who loved visiting them, along with monasteries and chapels. As a boy, I recall Irene Campbell the wife of Norman, the Rector of Stapleton from 1970 -1985, in Bristol where I grew up, taking a group of us Pathfinders around the Holy Trinity, Stapleton, church. She made sure this visit was at night, without any lights on, so we could feel that this was God's house, that He lived here and there was no reason ever to be afraid! This nocturnal visit worked and that night stays with me even now.

As a teenager, we had a school trip to the wonderful Hailes Abbey, just up the road from Prestbury. It was winter and the entire site was laden with heavy fresh white snow and so we climbed over the closed gates and had our own tour! I had not revisited the Abbey until coming here as Team Rector in 2016. This time, it was high summer, the air was thick with the scent of strawberries and raspberries from the fruit farm next door. The stone seemed to speak of 'home' for the monks and lay monks who worshipped and worked here until the Dissolution in the 1530s. The last days of the Abbey, no doubt their favourite place, must have been tremendously sad. But the sense of devotion to and love of our Lord Jesus certainly remains palpable in 2025 in my favourite place.

Fr Nick

I wriggled under the barbed-wired entanglement that blocked my way.

With just a minor scratch on my calf, I ran to the summit, of the dune, and saw my favourite sight: SAND

Sand as far as my eye could see to the due south and sand as far as the rocky granite outcrop of Kelsey Head to my north. To my southwest the two mysterious islands of the Gull Rocks reared like sea monsters from the restless sea just off the massive granite headland of Penhale Point; forming a barrier between the rolling white sea and the glittering yellow sand sea. That sand sea was magic as buried somewhere in its wastes was St Piran's Oratory. The granite headlands formed the limits of a mile-long beach. These granite crags contain many caves and coves with wonderful names such as Hoblyn's Cove and Ligger Point, as well as The Holy Well, where St Cubert was said to have lived in a tiny air pocket in the roof of the cave. Also, Deadman's Cave, at the opposite end of the beach just beyond the Monk, which was a rock stack that stood thirty meters tall in the middle of a large cove. Access to this cove was by crossing the stream or climbing over a rock barrier into Sailor's Cove, where the body of a dead sailor was once washed up. Off the beach in the boiling surf lay A WRECK. What more could a pre-teenager want? I could be Lawrence of Arabia; Beau Geste or Long John Silver. Tucked into the slag heaps; lay unmarked 1,000-foot-deep shafts and broken ground of Wheal Golden, the now-disappeared tin and copper mine. Amongst this devastation nestles Penhale Army Camp. From here sporadic rifle and machine gun fire could be heard, all this added to the excitement of a teenager brought up on stories of the Second World War.

Frequently if I ran down to the beach immediately after breakfast and the tide had fallen the beach was pristine. Occasionally there would be the footprints of a human and a dog walking north along the beach and then disappearing. These did not distress me too much as I knew them to be of Miss Penna and her dog Jethro, she kept the local shop. Apart from this the footsteps went only one way and did not return, the footsteps simply disappeared. (She of course had turned at the far end and made her way across the rocks and back through the dunes to the north, but why let facts get in the way of imagination???)

I learnt to surf using a wooden 'belly' board and over my teens graduated to Malibu longboards. Wet suits followed often hand-made for a good fit. Initially frogman's two-piece suits in a wonderful 5mm thick neoprene with a course surface, for better grip on the board, called shark skin. Styles changed and new brightly coloured all-in-one wet suits appeared.

At one time I owned 3 boards of different lengths, one, my favourite, a Barber West Coast American board of twelve feet in length, great in heavy surf. Now, of course, there are boards of every shape and size to suit your experience, style and the surf at hand, and these varieties were of great help as you will see below.

Over the years the wire and the dragon's teeth were cleared. A surf Life Guard Station was built and manned during the summer months. Marram grass has been planted to bind the sand. My parents, sister and I continued to go down twice a year. When I married Jackie we started to go down similarly and as our children arrived, they naturally began to explore just as I had done. We built boats to sail on the stream and bridges and dams across the stream. We explored the caves; on the low Spring Tides, we reached coves not normally

accessible. As the children became accomplished swimmers we swam around the headlands and into mysterious previously unvisited caves. The children learnt to surf from early on; Jackie made Jo our elder daughter a wet vest when she was just 18 months old. Grandchildren followed in the same footsteps and all have proved, so far at any rate, competent on and in the sea and surf. Sadly, Jackie died in 2011.

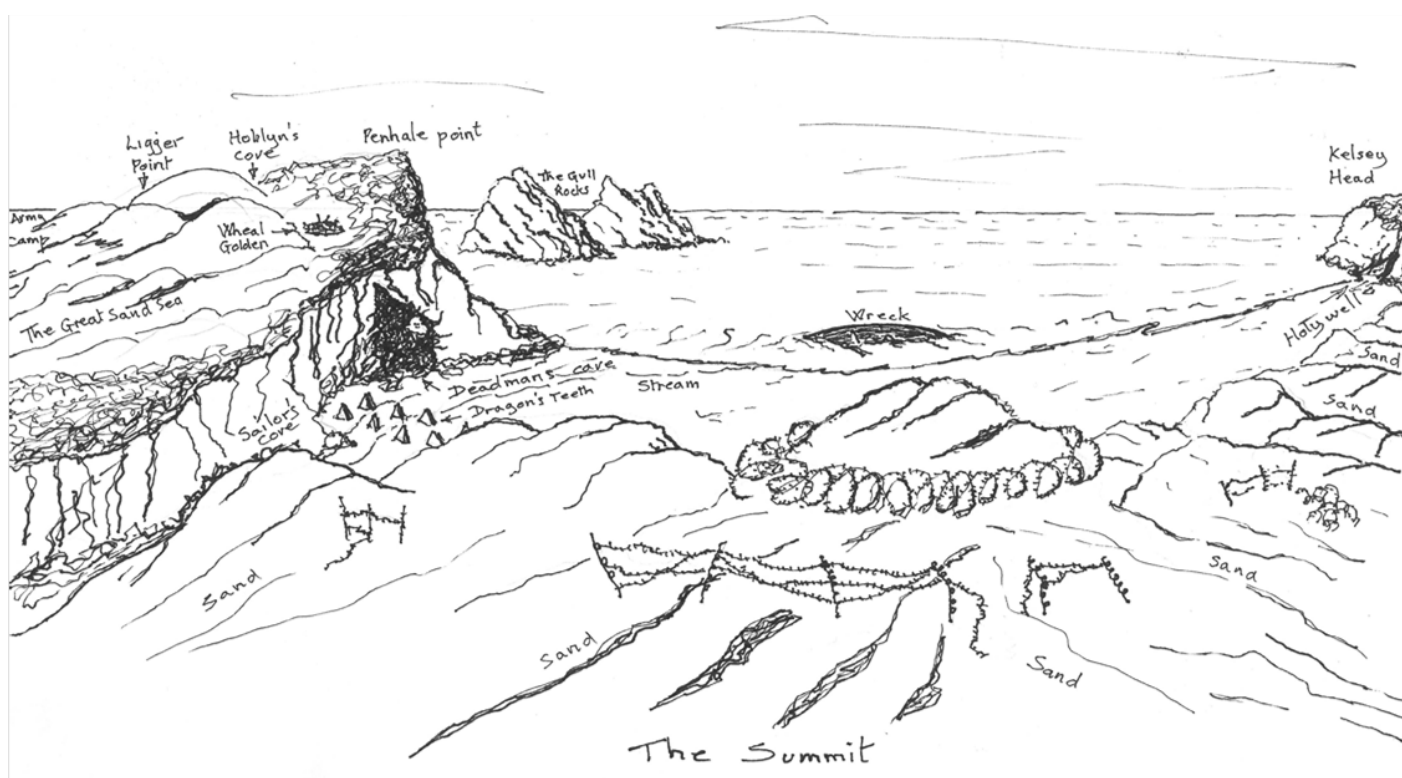
Sometime later I persuaded Angie, from St Nicolas' Choir, to join me, partly in retribution for dragging me off to the cold snow-covered slopes of the Haut Pyrenees to ski! Her first experience of surfing was with a foam 1m body board, now the popular choice for in-shore surfing. This occurred on a cold January day!!!! First before setting off we, of course, read a passage from Our Daily Bread, which on that day was Jonah's sea voyage:

'But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea so that the ship was about to be broken up.'

This passage she reports slightly worried her for her first experience in the mighty rollers of Holywell Bay! She survived and took to surfing brilliantly and has continued to surf both here and on the French coast ever since.

So, I trust you can see that this is a very special place for all of us.

John Moles



John made the 'mistake' of asking his family if they had anything to add to his article. He is afraid to admit they decided on their own articles:

Memories of Holywell even the bad ones are happy (such as chilblains)

- Freedom and space to run and roam
- The mix of beach, sea and countryside all in one place.
- Fresh air, soft sand, spiky grass and cold water
- Bodyboarding and sea fun
- Walks in wellies with wet welly socks along the beach and over cliffs to Perranporth to the south or Polly Joke Creek to the North.
- Cold picnics.
- Flying aeroplanes (we had built)
- Sailing boats (we had built)
- Cold wetsuits - hard and unpleasant to put on - but always worth it.
- The silhouette of Gull Rocks.
- Holywell cave - venturing into the tight space of St Cubert's retreat, over wet slippery limestone-covered rocks and through limestone basins of freezing water in the dark
- Rock pools and the strong smell of seaweed and sea salt (a horrid smell I still enjoy today because of the happy association it has, with happy family times).
- Arriving and seeing Sandpiper one of our favourite locations- always a happy moment.
- Rearranging the furniture as soon as we arrived - always in the same way WE liked it, to obtain the best views.
- The smell of drying wetsuits (still loved today!)
- Making Airfix models with Dad in the dining room.
- Cuddling up with Mum on the green sofa in front of the electric bar fire.
- Playing with Jo, my sister, in the dunes.
- Eating Cornish pasties with our extended family Nanna; my aunt and her family.
- Green nylon sofa covers, furry bed covers, red speckled Formica dining table top, cold plastic tiled floors.
- A slower pace to home.
- Chilblains when standing in a washing-up bowl of warm water when returning from a morning surf (the pain of these today, after an early morning surf or sail, is dulled by the memories they bring of Holywell - happy memories can be a good tonic).
- Time together.
- Time - simply more time!

Each of these lines is packed full: **of lots of different memories.**

Justine Rattray (née Moles)

In the Deadman's Cave, the great boulders were slippery with seaweed

At the age of five, these were almost insurmountable mountains, and they went on and on in this vast cavern, constantly echoing and reverberating to the crash of the sea at its mouth. Would we make it in time before the sea swarmed in? That, in itself, was bad enough but what if I slipped and my skinny body disappeared under the rocks or became trapped between the claws of the tumbled granite; In addition, where have these vast car-sized boulders come from? Answer: from immediately above, from the very roof of the cave, now if they came from the roof..... Better scramble quickly before the next fall arrives.

On and on, exhaustion and fear gripped me, as I slid and scrambled over these sea monsters to reach the bend in the cave and a vision of sea the sky and the great Gull Rocks looming across the exit. One final heave; a quick slide and finallycold sea-covered grit between my toes and a quick dash through the surf to Monk's Cove.

Whew! Done it. Brilliant, now I can glow in the warmth of success and allow my pounding heart to settle!

Jo Moles-Bailey

A haven held most dear

Wow, that's heavy, it weighs a ton! But as the only female, in the lineup, I wasn't going to be beaten by the sheer weight of the board as we ran down the beach and back out into the surf.

A borrowed Malibu board, 1967, aged 15, in Holywell Bay.

The seeds were sown. I even spent my honeymoon at Holywell.

So, throughout the ensuing years, my love of "stand-up" surfing did not abate. In my 60's I became a Marketing Manager for UK Pro Surf, organizing sponsors and contests around the British Isles and further afield such as Sri Lanka. My passion by then was to give the females equal prize money to the men, on tours and contests, worldwide.

Globally, we ladies finally achieved this on the World Surf League Championships Tour on the 7th April 2019.

My passion for surfing has not abated and I have, for many years, volunteered with The Wave Project, empowering children to build confidence through surfing.

Surfboards are now lighter; come in a variety of lengths and are customized to suit.

A cursory glance at Holywell Bay, today, will show an equal number of females and males enjoying the sheer freedom of surfing.

So, at 73, not quite as nimble but just as happy to pick up my board when possible.

Thank you, Holywell Bay.

Jen Church (née Moles)



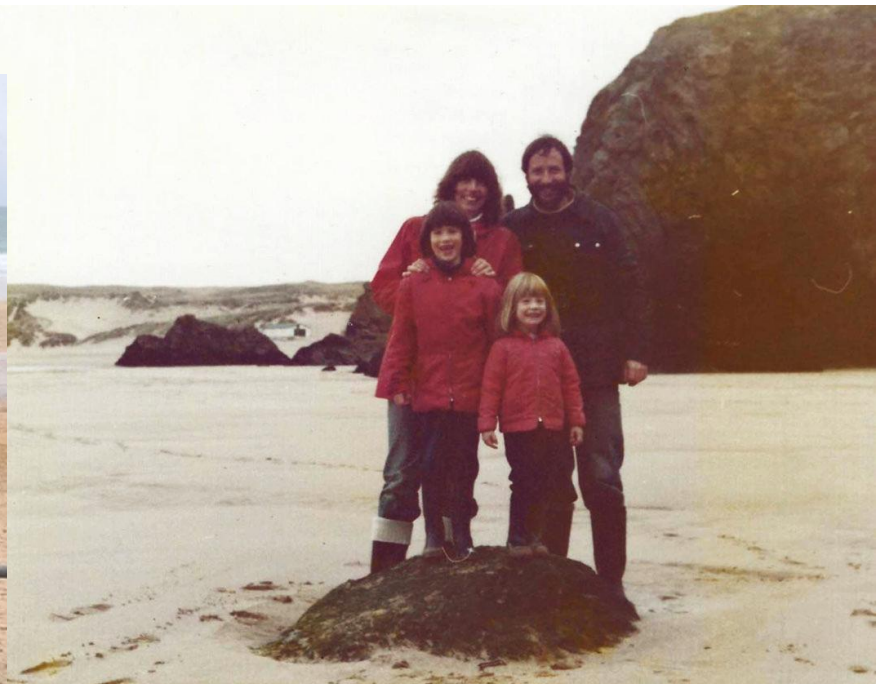
At 15 the only girl in the lineup, Jen



John and Jackie in full homemade frogman's suits



'Angie ready for action'



Jackie; John;
front l to r: Jo and Justine

Note: The wellies, ready to fill with water!

St Nicolas Congregation Go Out to Lunch

In the days before the Covid lockdown several of us from St Nicolas (and other churches) went for a country walk of a morning and stopped somewhere for lunch. Unfortunately time has caught up with many of us and we decided to just go for the lunch.

20 of us were booked in on Thursday March 6 at The Pheasant Inn at Toddington. We were well looked after and the portions were very large. A lovely time was had by all.

Brian Wood



Things Ain't Always What They Appear!

When we were younger, did you find yourselves intrigued by certain people who captured your attention for no particular reason. Maybe you might be curious about a lady who worked in the local Post Office, remember them? Or perhaps a teacher where you attended school.

In my own case I used to indulge in 'People Spotting' on the way to school on the bus loaded up with my satchel and on certain days, a violin as well. People's voices and accents used to intrigue me I was most likely developing into what we now term a 'People Person'?

On one occasion, I was standing waiting for the 62 bus. It was late as usual when this gentleman suddenly addressed me by saying 'You look as if you are going to collapse any time soon', pointing at my burden. In actual fact, this person was a regular and I was familiar with him I had seen him on and off for some while.

I had on the first occasion seen him on the bus travelling along on the seat in front and I noticed he had little or no hair behind his left ear and to the side of his head, just a bare patch. I thought little more about it. Later I mentioned my observation to my mother, a nurse by training. She made some comment using a long medical word to describe the gentleman's condition. How wrong she was as we will find out later!

This scenario continued on and off for most of the time I travelled to school on the bus. Later I was the proud possessor of a second-hand Hercules bike so no more waiting for the bus. Do you know? I never really forgot about this man at the bus stop who would have been about the same age as my parents. He was fairly insignificant in appearance and not very tall, just another average person going about his business. I often used to think about him over a period of time. I just assumed he most likely worked in an office in town or maybe he was a teacher at a school. Maybe I would never ever know.

The years rolled by and I leave home to move to another town to pursue my career.

I used to come and visit from time to time but the train fare was all of £1 0s 0d return. My weekly wage as an Indentured Engineering Apprentice was £2 17s 6d. Older readers will understand what that figure means. At least that was more than an ex-school chum was earning, he chose to join a university and was 'skint' because his parents were not too well off. They could not afford to provide him with very much financial assistance. I am talking about the 1950s! Grants, Benefits!! What Benefits?

During my 5 years as an apprentice, I never really felt poor. I had a suit for Sunday or as and when required and my weekend leisure pastimes were modest. I rarely had a girl friend to take out and didn't go in pubs, not much anyway.

I did come home and on one particular Easter break, I had arranged to meet with a former school mate Barrie who was learning to fly in the RAF, most likely doing his National Service. We arranged to meet in town at a well-known coffee bar with a juke box. We quite liked this form of entertainment.

I am getting ahead of myself. Waiting at the same bus stop near where we lived was a man standing on his own who I thought I recognised from my previous life; he didn't know me. With nothing else to occupy us we struck up a conversation as one does and when the bus arrived we went upstairs and sat together. This fellow passenger told me his father was not too well and was in hospital and he was on his way to visit him.

After a period of conversation, I began to realise my new-found friend was referring to the man whom I used to see some years ago with the bald area on his head. I told my fellow passenger I remembered this man who was his father. I said I knew him from my school days. 'Oh,' said my passenger friend. 'yes, he would have been going to the Station!!' All those years ago, I did not think he was on his way to the Station ... Rail station we are referring to. No, I never thought of that one! At this juncture we parted company and went our separate ways.

Later that day having spent a few hours with Barrie listening about life in the RAF, I made my way back to catch the bus. To my surprise, who was also awaiting the bus but the same person with whom I had travelled with earlier. He was not looking too bright but I made no comment. Together again we more or less continued our earlier conversation he said his father wanted to talk about his earlier life and unsurprisingly this included his life during WW2.

My friend was able to recount that his father had served in the RAF in Bomber Command for about four years. He had volunteered and been accepted as Aircrew and trained as a Flight Engineer. I started to become quite interested at this point. Thinking back to the time I used to see the man with the unusual bald patch on his head, he didn't strike me as someone who once in his younger life sat at the side of the pilot in a bomber flying to foreign parts.

My new-found friend continued to explain.... His father was flying back home following a raid on the enemy when their aircraft was attacked by an enemy fighter, a cannon shell struck a wing and one of the petrol tanks caught fire and exploded. Long story short, from what I can still recall being told, chaos commenced, and the aircraft started to dive, the crew were ordered to bail out by the Captain and some of them did. The Navigator calculated they were flying over an area that was retaken (friendly) by the Allies which was fortunate. By this time, the fire had spread and my friend's father was fighting back the flames as the aircraft continued to reduce height. It was still dark and it was difficult to know what the terrain was like. The aircraft was now very low and the pilot was able to make out some fields and buildings. My friend's father was in a bad way and his flying jacket was on fire. Suddenly, there was an almighty crash as the aircraft struck the ground at a speed of over 100 mph. It slid along the ground with flames emitting from the wing and fuselage. Apparently, from what I can recall my bus passenger friend explained, it slid along the ground and demolished some farm buildings and then came to rest in a small river. All this was recounted to me as if it happened last week!

From what I was told there were casualties of course and my friend's father was taken off to a hospital by friendly locals with severe burns. The bald patch on his head was the result of this and so that explained his appearance. I don't believe I was told anymore about his father's accident experience, not that I can recall.

The point of this story is this... many men and women who served in uniform in the War, any war for that matter, seldom spoke about their experiences, they were too terrible to recount. However, my friend's father was dying in hospital and he wished to explain to his son all about the crash before it was too late. So many service folk carried their experiences to their graves.

Nigel Woodcock

Thursday 8 May 2025 - 80th Anniversary of VE Day

On this day there will be celebrations commemorating the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day when war in Europe ceased. War in the Far East continued. Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945, VJ Day, after two atomic bombs were exploded over Japanese cities. 2 September 1945 is officially regarded as the end of the war but fighting continued for some days after this.

Perhaps you can recollect a story, first or second hand, of some event or effect of the Second World War you might like to share with our readers.

Any articles of general interest may be acceptable. They do not need to follow the monthly theme.

Ed

Marle Hill WI

Marle Hill WI met on Monday 3 March 2025. Our. This month they had a quiz night which went down very well.

Members were reminded of the dates for the monthly meal out, knit and natter and the book club.

Our next meeting is on Monday 7 April 2025 at St Nicolas Church Hall at 7:30pm. and our speaker will be talking about her life as a Trugger.

Visitors are very welcome to attend. Come and see what we have to offer and have some ME time.

*Sue Davies
Marle Hill WI*

Book Review

***Haweswater* by Sarah Hall** (Faber & Faber, first published 2002)

Favourite places can be revisited time and time again, either in reality or in memory, and part of what probably makes these places so cherished is that in essence they remain the same. In *Haweswater*, however, the protagonists must struggle to accept or to fight against an irrevocable change to a treasured place. The novel traces the effects on a community when, in the early decades of the twentieth century, a Lakeland valley village is flooded and dammed to form the Haweswater Reservoir. The first part of the story introduces a key character, Janet Lightburn, through her birth, her early years and maturation into a determined, headstrong young woman. She is passionately attached to the farming landscape she has been brought up in and to her belief in the rights of the tenant farmers who work on the land which the powers that be have decided must be flooded for the new reservoir. When Jack Liggett, a representative of the Manchester City Waterworks undertaking this project, arrives in the valley he and Janet embark on a complex relationship and the story of their romance weaves through this tale as these two characters both clash and combine.

When, further on in the story, the construction of the dam begins Sarah Hall demonstrates the scope of the suffering caused by this, not only to the farmers and local families but also to the construction workers who have had to leave their own homes and families to take up temporary residence in the area for this arduous and complex project. One devastating stage of the project is the bombing of the village, for which the army is drafted in, invading the peaceful landscape with the tools of war. Hall writes poetically, depicting this scene of forceful change and evincing Janet's primeval relationship with this place in which she has grown up, where she has worked on the land, where she has fallen in love, and which she must now watch be blown apart:

Janet watched the bombing alone, from the gentle hill next to her old home [...] [she] felt the pull of nitrates and molecules in her body as the land changed within its existence [...] The bombs continued to detonate, bragging through the village [...] She caught pieces of the old village in her new locks of hair, in her lap, in her skin.

As the project progresses, further turmoil ensues and the novel weaves a complex web of the stories within a place – its history, its scenery, its wildlife, its human society and the reader is quickly absorbed in the complications of human passions. The characters are convincingly clothed in real concerns and emotions and the reader is both fascinated and appalled by the unstoppable process of change. Many a skilled writer in the rural tradition has made a character of landscape itself, as Hall successfully does here too, but she also makes a character of water itself, which in all its powers, its sounds and movements features in a core thread throughout the novel, through rainwater, river, and flood - *The rise and fall of the water's tensile voice. Its sound [...] a continuance of text in a land of broken fluid.* The purpose of the new reservoir is, indeed, to provide water to the people of Manchester whilst at the same time, ironically, destroying Janet's community. Hence water in this novel becomes a convincing trope for change and its capacity to alter the course of life forever, both for good and for ill.

For a thoughtful, imaginative and captivating read, this novel, which was a winner of the Commonwealth Writers First Book Award, is a worthy choice.

Ros Davie

BOOK REVIEW**The Collected Poems of W B Yeats**

Poetry reaches the parts other words can't reach. Yeats goes even deeper. I came to poetry late in life. About ten years ago, while I was running a group for the Progressive Christian Network I attended a Saturday seminar on poetry run by Mark Oakley of St Paul's Cathedral. It was more to try out something outside my comfort zone rather than of any particular interest. In the morning he gave a talk which I did not understand. In the afternoon we were split into groups and given two incomprehensible poems to study, so I watched as the activists set to work. However, afterwards on reflecting on what had happened, I noticed that I felt that I had experienced a much more human connection with the people in the discussion group than in normal conversation.

A few years later, I found that I had started to read a few poems and we joined a local U3A poetry group run by an English teacher whom we knew. Slowly we became hooked and discovered a new world of ideas, relationships and emotions. All the members saw things differently, yet there were common themes running through everything. Some liked the sound and texture of the words; others the rhyme. I liked the expression of new ideas in alternative forms.

The poems which I keep coming back to are those of the Irish poet, W B Yeats. He lived in late Victorian and the early Twentieth Century, which were times of turbulent change in Irish politics. Like all people, he had a very complicated life which would be better described in a biography or YouTube lecture. Many of the poems were of his relationships and observations of Irish life and the world order. He was completely obsessed with an Irish radical lady, however this was unreciprocated. Maud Gonne was an actress and Irish revolutionary, who did not think that Yeats was sufficiently committed to Irish Independence. The brilliance of much of his poetry is as a result of the pain he felt. The Collected Poems contains most of his published work and is very well worth dipping into.

If you wish to understand yourself, the Bible helps but poetry is the icing on the cake. Ultimately the Bible fails because it is used to control God, whereas poetic words and ideas (like music) can penetrate parts of the brain that the conscious mind does not normally touch.

I find that I like only a handful of the poems I read. There are many good poems; however, there are no bad poems, only poems that you have not yet understood.

Here is a sample of the power he can pack into a few words.

I hear it in the deep hearts core	(The Lake Isle of Innisfree)
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams	(Aedh wishes for the Cloths of Heaven)
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?	
Was there another Troy for her to burn?	(No Second Troy)

Only God, my dear, could love you for yourself alone and not for your yellow hair
(For Anne Gregory)

And her hair was a folded flower (The Cap and Bells)

A lonely impulse of delight drove to this tumult in the clouds (An Irish
Airman foresees his Death)

All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born (Easter 1916)

She bade me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree (Down by the
Salley Garden)

Malcolm Stebles



PRESTBURY
PARISH COUNCIL

All residents of Prestbury Parish are welcome to attend the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
to be held on the Pavilion, New Barn Close, Prestbury
at 6.30pm on Wednesday 23rd April 2025.

This is a meeting for residents to raise issues and make suggestions.

I look forward to you joining us.

Martyn Hansen, Chairman

Forthcoming Events

Plant sale in aid of Prestbury Open Gardens – 5 April

Please join us for one of the ever popular Prestbury Plant Sales, which will be taking place in the Burgage outside the Scout field on 5 April between 11am – 2pm.

These plant sales started in lockdown, with eager gardeners gathering in The Burgage in a socially distanced manner, delighted to have this opportunity to stock their gardens with local favourites.



We have continued putting on the sales as a way of raising funds for the setting up costs of the biennial Prestbury Open Gardens event, which will take place this year over the weekend of 14/15 June. We offer a wide variety of local plants for sale and are always happy to advise on planting location and on-going care. Both cash and card payments are welcome.

Do join us on 5 April for the plant sale and if you have any plants to donate to the sale then please either bring them along in the morning or contact Gill in advance.

Jo Simons & Gill Cartwright 07538 532484

Notice of Prestbury APCM – Sunday 6th April 2025

This year's meeting will be held at 1.15 pm at St Mary's Church and will take the form of a 'Bring and Share Lunch' together. This will give people the chance to get to know each other better and help our many new faces at both churches to meet others from our congregations!

The Annual Meeting of Parishioners, which begins at 1.15 on Sunday 6th April, at St Mary's church, is a short meeting to elect Churchwardens: two for St Mary's and two for St Nicolas'. Candidates must be nominated and seconded before the meeting begins and nomination lists will also be displayed on the notice boards of both churches. Anyone who lives within the parish or who is on the church electoral roll may attend and vote at this meeting.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting will follow the Annual Meeting of Parishioners. This is a chance to come to hear a review and reports of what has taken place during the last year, together with plans for the future and an opportunity to ask questions.

At this meeting, elections to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) take place. Nominations for PCC members will be displayed on the notice boards of both churches for at least the two Sundays prior to the meeting. Candidates must be proposed and seconded by a person who is on the Electoral Roll of the parish, and they should also have been asked if they are willing to stand.

Stella Caney, PCC Secretary

Cheltenham Philharmonic Orchestra Spring Concert

Sunday 6th April at 3pm in the Princess Hall at Cheltenham Ladies College

Dvorak In Nature's Realm

Sibelius En Saga

Dvorak Symphony No 8

We invite you to join us for an afternoon of lively and moving music.

Sibelius En Saga is a tone poem, expressively evoking a fantasy landscape and deep emotions.

Dvorak wrote his cheerful and optimistic 8th symphony while on holiday and was obviously inspired by his surroundings with bird call melodies, a thunderstorm and themes from Bohemian folk music.

Tickets available from www.ticketsource.co.uk/cheltphilorch

Adults £18, Students £9 Under 18 free

Wendy Price

EVENING SERVICES 5pm AT ST MARY'S

These will return to the Summer schedule from Sunday 30th March. IE 1st Sunday is at Capel Court, 2nd Sunday is Benediction (with three hymns and usually accompanied by an organist) in St Mary's and Evening Prayer on the remaining Sundays. Do also join us for a special evensong on Easter Sunday!

****Please note the new starting time of 5pm****

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING & BRING-AND-SHARE-LUNCH

The APCM (basically, the church's AGM) will take place at St Mary's after the 11am service on SUNDAY 6th APRIL. The meeting will start at 1.15pm and will be held concurrently with a bring-and-share lunch. Everyone is invited to come along to find out what has been happening in the life of the church and what is planned for the year ahead. If you are on the new Electoral Roll then you will be entitled to vote too. If you hope to come (and eat) please contact me so we have an idea of what food people will be bringing. See you there! Helen

helen_mann@live.co.uk

07814 638 990

CHURCHYARD SPRING-TIDY-UP AT ST MARY'S

SATURDAY 12TH APRIL 9.30-12.30

Do join us for whatever time you can spare. Please bring basic tools if possible and definitely gardening gloves. Refreshments will be provided.

PALM SUNDAY 13TH APRIL

There will be a procession from St Mary's to Capel Court and then back to church in time for the 11am service. Exact timings are still to be arranged, so please look out for a notice in the pew sheet nearer the time. It would be great if you could join us for this very public act of worship.

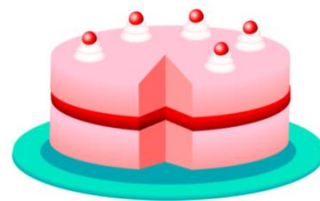
Musica Vera

Musica Vera present their spring concert for this year, featuring Haydn's oratorio, *The Seven Last Words of Christ*. This beautiful but rarely-heard gem was originally a set of orchestral pieces for a Good Friday service but was later transformed into a choral work. In this performance, each of the seven movements will be paired with a corresponding work, with music by Victoria, Morley, Wesley, Walton and others.

Do join us in St Mary's, Prestbury on **April 12th at 7.30**, for what promises to be an evocative and moving musical reflection on the Passion story.

Welcome on Wednesday

Wednesday, 16 April at 2.30pm in the St Nicolas Room. There will be home-made cakes, tea or coffee for £2 and the chance to meet friends and have a friendly chat. So please come along, maybe bringing a neighbour?



Bereavement Friendship Group

We will be meeting in St Mary's Church, Prestbury

on Monday 28 April at 2.15-4pm (Please note this date avoids Easter Monday)

If you have lost a loved one and would like to talk to others in a similar situation, please come along. You will be most welcome, whether you are new or have come before.

Light refreshments will be provided.

Marion Povey

MUSICA VERA
CHAMBER CHOIR

Haydn - *The Seven Last Words of Christ*

Saturday 12th April, 7.30 pm
St Mary's Church, Prestbury

Also featuring music by
Victoria, Morley, Wesley
and Walton

Conductor: Matthew Clark
Accompanist: John Wade

Tickets: £15, Students £6, Under-18s free.
Available at the door or in advance from the
Three Choirs Festival Box Office (subject to
booking fee) – www.3choirs.org / 01452 768928

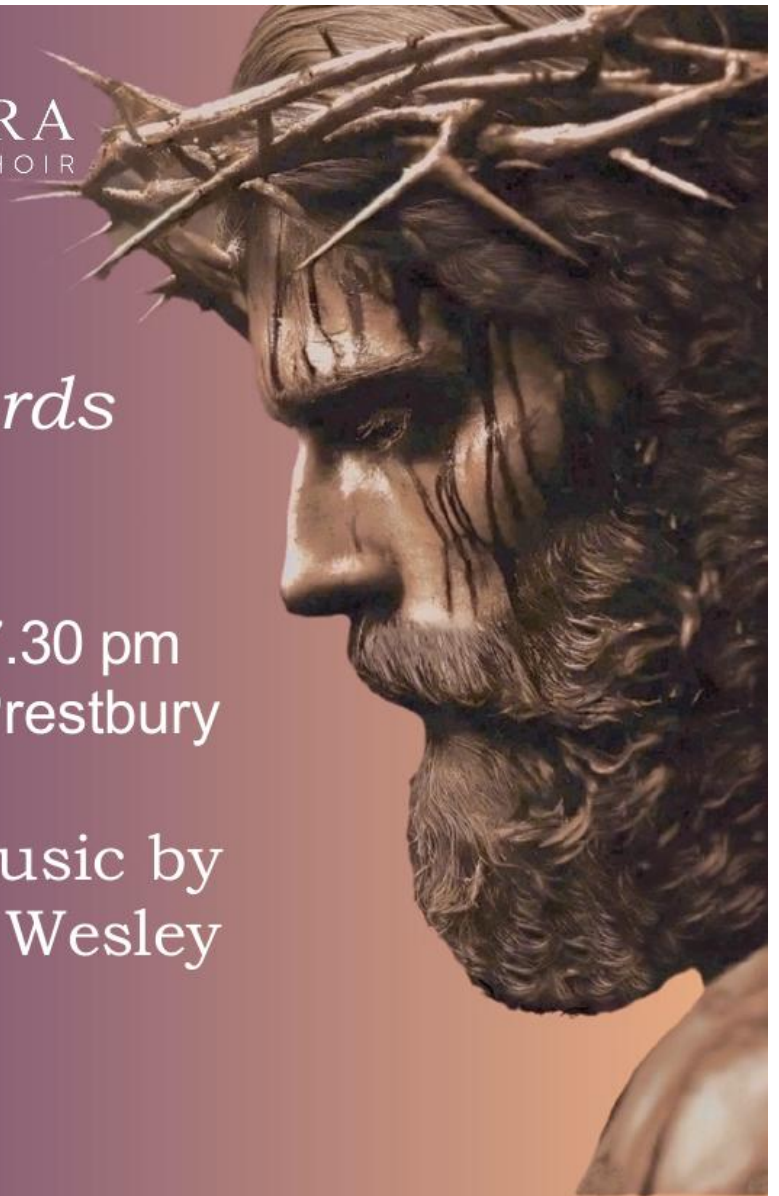
www.musicavera.org



musicaveracc



@musicavera



Prestbury St Mary's Flowers for Easter

St Mary's flower team will be preparing special Easter arrangements in the church on Holy Saturday, April 19th. White Easter lilies are always a lovely feature of the displays. If you would like to sponsor a lily in memory of a loved one, there will be envelopes for donations in church during the weeks before Easter. Please write the name of your loved one on the envelope and we will display the list.

We would also be pleased to receive any offers of help, either with a contribution towards cost of flowers in the bowl provided, or with preparing the displays on the day. New members of the flower arranging team would be very welcome. Do speak to one of us to find out more. With a love of flowers and enthusiasm to adorn the church you would be very welcome!

wendy.price@prestbury.net

Diane Lyle 01242 570453



Spring Cleaning in March in St Mary's

A small but hard working crew managed to clear all the cobwebs from way up into the roof and clear all the dust and debris left behind after the organ-repair-scaffolding was removed. Well done all, we earned our cups of tea!

Helen Mann

Easter Services in Prestbury

St Mary's, Mill Street, Prestbury, GL52 3BQ

17th April — Maundy Thursday

10.30am Service and Prayers

9.00pm Silent Watch at the Altar of Repose

18th April — Good Friday

10.30am Breakfast Celebrate! All age service at St Mary's Church

2.00pm Our Lord's Passion Meditation

19th April — Holy Saturday

1.30pm Easter Event and Prayers, Starvehall Farm - Flora Green

8.30pm Paschal Liturgy & First Eucharist of Easter

20th April — Easter Day

5.45am Celtic Dawn Communion (Cleeve Hill), meet Mill Street at 5.15am

8.00am Said Eucharist 9.30am Breakfast Celebrate! - at St Mary's Church

11.00am Sung Eucharist 5.00pm Evensong

St Nicolas, Swindon Lane, Prestbury, GL50 4PA

17th April — Maundy Thursday

7.00pm Eucharist , then Watches at Churches

18th April — Good Friday

10.30am Good Friday Reflection

20th April — Easter Day

9.30am Sung Eucharist

The United Reformed Church, Deep Street, Prestbury GL52 3AN

18th April—Good Friday

10.30am Service followed by coffee and hot cross buns

20th April — Easter Day

10.30am Easter Day Service

WASTE NOT WANT NOT

Treading lightly on the planet

SATURDAY 5 APRIL 2025, 10:00AM - 3:30PM

- € **FREE ENTRY**
-  **STALLS**
-  **EXPERT ADVICE**
-  **TALKS**
-  **FUN ACTIVITIES**
-  **REFRESHMENTS**



PRESTBURY HALL (OPPOSITE SCHOOL)
BOUNCERS LANE, PRESTBURY, GL52 5JF

TIMES OF REGULAR CHURCH SERVICES

St Mary's Church, Prestbury

Sunday		0800	Said Eucharist
	1st Sunday	0930	Breakfast Celebrate! – All-age worship
	Other Sundays	0900	Breakfast Celebrate! at Infant School
		1100	Sung Eucharist
	1st Sunday	1700	Evening Prayer at Capel Court
	2nd Sunday	1700	Benediction
	Other Sundays	1700	Evening Prayer
Thursday		1030	Said Eucharist

St Nicolas Church, Prestbury

Sunday		0930	Sung Eucharist
Tuesday		1000	Said Eucharist

All Saints Church, Pittville

Sunday		0800	Holy Mass
		1030	Solemn Mass
	1st & 3rd Sunday	1730	Choral Evensong and Benediction
	Other Sundays	1730	Evening Prayer and Benediction
Wednesday		1830	Holy Mass
Thursday		1115	Holy Mass
Friday		1200	Holy Mass
Saturday	1st Saturday	1000	Holy Mass for Our Lady of Walsingham

St Lawrence Church, Swindon Village

Sunday	1st Sunday	1030	Together @ 1030
		1830	Holy Communion
	2nd Sunday	0915	BCP Holy Communion
		1830	Evening Prayer
	Other Sundays	0915	Holy Communion
		1830	Evening Prayer

St Mary Magdalene Church, Elmstone Hardwicke

Sunday	1st Sunday	1045	Holy Communion
	2nd Sunday	1045	Family Service (no communion)
	3rd Sunday	1045	BCP Holy Communion
	4th Sunday	1045	Holy Communion
	5th Sunday	1045	Holy Communion
Wednesday	2nd Wednesday	1900	Celtic Evening Prayer
Thursday	4th Thursday	1900	Celtic Communion

A Sunday Service is streamed on the internet
from St Nicolas at 09:30 or from All Saints at 10:30, sometimes both.

These and other services are recorded so may be accessed later on
the Team's YouTube page -

<https://www.youtube.com/NorthCheltenhamTeamMinistry/streams>

Parish Directory *continued*

Children's Work

Linda Biggs 01242 510856
linda.biggs@prestbury.net

Safeguarding Officer

Linda Biggs 07769 581822

Parish Magazine

Editor: Brian Wood 01242 515941
magazine@prestbury.net
Advertising: Richard Johnson 07535 417828
advertising@prestbury.net

St Mary's C of E (VA) Schools

Executive Head Teacher: Mr Matt Ferris
01242 383817

Hall Letting

Prestbury Hall, Bouncers Lane 01242 239590
bookings@prestburyhall.com
St Nicolas Hall, Swindon Lane
hallhire@northchelt.org.uk

Parish Giving Scheme

76 Kingsholm Road,
Gloucester GL1 3BD 0333 002 1260
info@parishgiving.org.uk

Copy Dates and Themes for Future Magazines 2025

Issue		Copy Date		Theme
May	Sunday	13	April	Celebrity
June	Sunday	11	May	Pet Hates
July	Sunday	15	June	Camping
August	Sunday	13	July	Photographs
September	Sunday	17	August	Routine
October	Sunday	14	September	Crafts
November	Sunday	12	October	Avenues
Dec / Jan	Sunday	16	November	New Year

Prestbury Parish Magazine is usually published on the last Sunday of the month. The copy date is usually the Sunday 2 weeks before this, but there may be scope for some flexibility.

Copy may be sent in a clearly marked envelope to 'Prestbury Parish Magazine'
2 Honeysuckle Close, Prestbury, Cheltenham, GL52 5LN
or preferably by email to magazine@prestbury.net

May 2025 Magazine Theme: Celebrity
Please send copy by Sunday 13 April 2025
or soon after

**AWARD-
WINNING
FOOD**



**CASK ALE,
CRAFT BEER
& CIDER**



**BEAUTIFUL
BEER
GARDEN**



Planning an event or party?

Ask us about
The Pavilion, our versatile
private hire space.

royalookprestbury.co.uk
royalookprestbury@butcombepubs.com

01242 522344

 @royalookprestbury

The Royal Oak, The Burgage, Prestbury,
Gloucestershire, GL52 3DL



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All day every Wednesday for Butcombe Loyalty Club members

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