

Prestbury Parish Magazine

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 North Cheltenham
Team Ministry

May 2026



£1

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When the office is unattended please leave a message on the answerphone

Baptisms (Christenings) & Weddings

may be arranged with the Team Office (*contact details above*)

Other Pastoral Matters & Reconciliation (Confession)

please contact one of the clergy (*telephone numbers above*)

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:

St Mary's Church (2014)

by Brian Wood

Reflections from the Reverend Jacqueline

As Spring makes good progress into May, the Easter eggs have been consumed, and schools have returned to the term-time routines. The weather is sporadically showing signs of improvement, and we look forward to being able to enjoy evenings outside in the sunshine. This month the Church celebrates Ascension and Pentecost. At Ascension Jesus ascended into heaven after he commanded his disciples to love one another as he loved them. Ten days later at Pentecost, fifty days after Easter, the Holy Spirit came to them and gave them each the ability to spread the gospel of Christ all around the world.

Thousands of years later, we are still challenged to love our neighbours. In a fragile world which seems to be full of violence, political instability and hatred, the challenge for us might seem impossible. After all, how can we possibly stop the bombs and rhetoric from the safety of our homes? It is very easy for us to sit back and leave the responsibility for sorting out our social problems to elected members of our councils and Government. Whether or not you believe in the good news of Easter, we are all capable of kindness, understanding and empathy. To love our neighbours is a practical calling on all our lives. To demonstrate a genuine care for those around us is to show that we need not be frightened of what we do not understand or are unable to change easily. To serve others, to come alongside them in times of need, sadness and loneliness is to move on from mere words to something more tangible. In a world where the behaviour and actions of power-hungry leaders are broadcast into our homes, we might try to show compassion to those in our own communities who need our help. After all, Jesus focussed on ministering to a small population and empowered very ordinary people to continue that work after he ascended into heaven. We still celebrate that commission and are encouraged to continue that legacy to improve our small corner of the world to the best of our abilities.

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience”.
(Colossians 3. 12)

Reverend Jacqueline

This month’s theme is PLEASURE

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The Ascension

When Jesus rose from the dead
Two great tasks lay ahead.
To convince the disciples, like James and John,
That after death Life carries on.
To establish a church in the land of his birth,
To carry the gospel to the ends of the Earth.
Jesus knew if the church was to grow
The Holy Church must come and he must go.
He was lifted up from where they stood
So that all would know he had gone for good.

Pentecost

Pentecost is when the Holy Spirit came,
On that occasion He came as a flame,
Sometimes as a flame, sometimes as a dove,
But always, always, He brings love.
It was the spirit that made St Peter bold,
Without the spirit faith grows cold.
The spirit is here today that we
May worship the Blessed Trinity.

Clare Wyatt

Feedback

Some feedback from a reader:

I've enjoyed reading the issue and especially think Revd Jacqueline makes a great contribution in her opener every month.

I do think also, and I keep thinking it, that you've definitely improved the magazine with the Reflections at the start of each issue.

WITH PLEASURE



Robin on a cherry tree

Photograph by Ellie Forbes

If you were asked to provide a list of pleasures, I wonder what you would produce. The German writer Bertolt Brecht (1898 – 1956) composed this individual list poem called 'Pleasures' just two years before he died of a heart attack:

The first view from the window in the morning
The old book found again
Enthusiastic faces
Snow, the turning of the seasons
The newspaper
The dog
Dialectics
Taking showers, swimming
Old music
Comfortable shoes
Understanding
New music
Writing, planting
Travelling
Being friendly

Would any of your special pleasures coincide with Brecht's? The set subject this month is pleasure and it should be easy to write about because there are so many pleasures, aren't there? And yet when it comes down to it, one has to ask what pleasure really is, what it consists of and what constitutes real pleasure.

Without interrogating the notion too strongly, I can think of various pleasures I could enumerate here. There is the whole business of the pleasures of food and drink. Aren't we lucky to be able to enjoy a rich choice of meals and drinks to go with them? There are so many foods and drinks I enjoy that it is difficult to know what to single out but I love Lasagne al Forno and, for the very first time in my life, I recently made a lasagne for the two

of us for supper. Beef mince, onions, garlic, two tins of tomatoes, cheese sauce, and layers of pasta, accompanied by a glass or two of Montepulciano de Abruzzo.

Then there is the inestimable and marvellous pleasure of a good book. In authors and their work, there is so much entertaining company and there are so many intelligent insights to be gleaned. Most recently, for me, that has been a book called *Why Q Needs U* by Danny Bate. Astonishingly, linguist Dr Bate shows with verve and wit how Egyptian hieroglyphics developed via the Phoenician alphabet into Greek and Latin and thence into our own alphabet. Thus, the gift of language and of the written word brings with it wonderful enrichments and enchantments. I love a good story too whether literary biography (*The Hyacinth Girl*), compelling novel or a tale of survival.

Having enough money to buy such staple luxuries is indeed a pleasure in itself. Money and a degree of prosperity allows both agency and choice, without which life offers more privations than pleasures. Money and freedom from financial worries are joys in themselves. Dosh also enables one to take advantage of bargains and special offers if they arise. But then of course there is the downside to the successful impulse buy which is known as buyer's remorse, best not felt with large purchases such as a car or house.

However, not all pleasure is materialistic 'retail therapy' or the satisfaction of the appetites. There are other inner and more subtle and lasting pleasures. Deeper understanding of an issue or the solving of a problem can involve a real sense of satisfaction which can provide a long-lasting pleasure and sense of contentment. For example, when I read Tim Marshall's explanations of contemporary geo-politics, I often feel enlightened about world events and both historical and modern conflicts which would otherwise be impenetrable to me. Most recently, for example, he lucidly explained the complex nature of the society and ethnic groups which make up modern Iran and its 92 million people.

On the less serious side of life, there is the whole business of laughter so wonderfully provided for us by the comedians, commentators and satirists of our era. It is such a pleasure to find that we are not alone in our exasperation at the 'preposterousness' of life and our sometimes ludicrous times. Laughter is a wonderful medicine and pleasure-machine. Recently, one question in *The Times* daily quiz was: Mark Twain said 'Familiarity breeds contempt ...' and what? Answer: Children.

Yes, among many other pleasures, I would indeed include Children, Family, Plants, Flowers, Birds, Nature (see above). The arts, old and new, can provide wonderful sensory pleasure and mental stimulation. Music and songs can delight the ear, paintings and sculpture can enthrall the eye, and words, stories and dramas can stimulate the mind, and so delightfully on. The five senses are or can be in their own ways pleasure receptors.

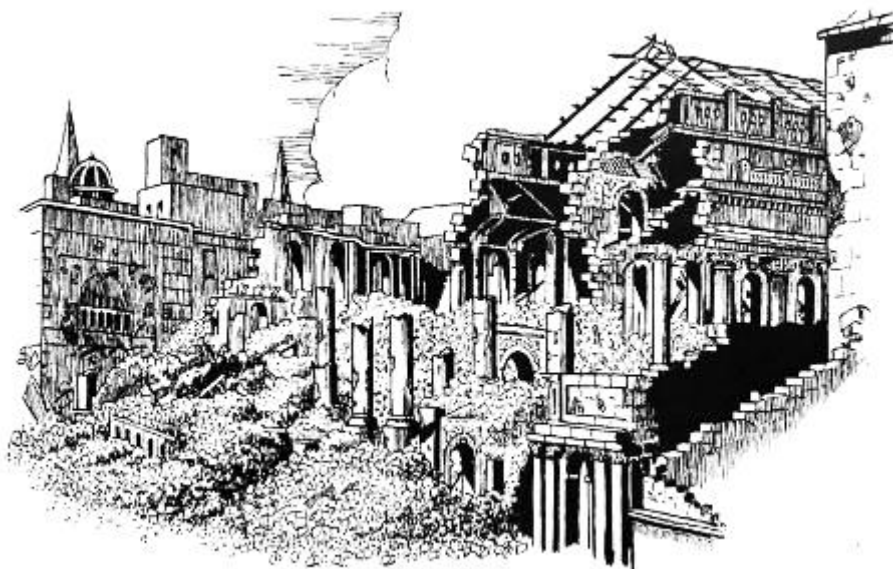
I remember hearing on television about a young man who had been deported in the war to a concentration camp where he had survived, although the rest of his family had been murdered. Afterwards, he found a home in this country and, when he entered a room and encountered a group of friends enjoying a good meal and lively company, he would regularly say, 'You lucky people' because he knew through grim experience, as did Brecht, just how much pleasure is indeed related to liberty, the appreciation of simple joys and genuine freedoms of choice. In this perilous world, it's vital to preserve them as blessings and not to take them for granted.

Duncan Forbes

MUSIC – My Pleasure

The new vicar who replaced Father Hill when he retired in 1953 immediately put a stop to plainsong which had been used at St Mary's since the 13th century. Very much a tradition, I found that rather annoying, as did my fiancée who grew up in the village and was a member of the church choir. I had previously had the good fortune to enjoy the singing of plainsong for several years at Prestbury. Not only was it simple to understand and easy to sing, but it was also a reminder of the rich musical history of the Church and in particular of St Mary's.

When I was stationed on Malta in 1948 and '49, the battered buildings were being rebuilt after German and Italian bombers had done their worst. One of the last to have the rubble cleared away was the Royal Opera House in Valletta. The Maltese were not going to be denied and built a high stone wall which they painted white. On this, during balmy evenings and under a starlit sky, they showed films of Italian operas, and I went along to soak up the atmosphere.



THE SPRING BLITZ 1942.

THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

So intrigued was I that I became a human sponge, at last being able to appreciate Puccini, Verdi and so on. So far in my life I had been put off opera by my Dad's sister who was a semi-professional operatic singer. When my parents arranged musical concerts for friends, she was always the star turn. Always she sang in German, always it was extremely loud and very high-pitched, and always she sent my seven-year-old younger sister and her ten-year-old brother into hysterics, resulting in us being banished from the room! Never did she sing Dvorak's *'Song to the Moon'* or Puccini's *'O Mio Babbino Caro'*. Always it was something dramatic and at maximum volume! It was eight years before I was converted by that white-painted wall, the pictures on it and the accompanying recorded music.

Fifty years later Pamela and I experienced the real thing in the great Roman amphitheatre in Verona where we were treated to a performance of Verdi's *'Aida'*. Again, this was under a starry night sky and this time with the moon in its first quarter. As we took our places high up in the tiered seating, we found ourselves next to an Italian family. When they discovered our nationality, their eyes lit up. "You are English!" they exclaimed excitedly and gave us the mini candles they were holding for use later in the performance, saying "We will get some more!" (How very different from the story my youngest granddaughter returned with after a holiday with her boyfriend in the Maldives in February. Anxious to have a photo of themselves together, they asked another holidaymaker if she would kindly oblige. "NO, you are English!" said the Russian lady, turning her back on them and walking away.)

My father played the piano well and by ear, but he always harboured the desire to play the organ. I remember us calling into a little church in the Golden Valley close to the Malvern Hills when I was about 14, where he found the lid to the simple keyboard unlocked. Seizing his chance, he let fly with the few stops pulled out. That was in contrast to an experience I had when on holiday in Tuscany several years ago. Wandering through the old streets of San Gimignano, I came across a big, heavy wooden door in a wall, from behind which came the sound of music. Opening the door, I found it led into a very ornate church where a young man was practising on the organ. As I sat down, he stopped, so I stood to go back into the street. As I did so he struck up with Bach's Fugue in D with great passion and at full volume. Something I shall never forget. Just me and the organist in this elaborate setting and an instrument of enormous capability. A little like her great grandfather, my eldest granddaughter loved the idea of playing the church organ. Before she was school age, she would be taken to their local church in Dauntsey when it was my daughter's turn for church cleaning or church flowers. As pews were polished and flowers arranged, my little granddaughter would often tire of looking at her books, and quietly make her way to the organ, climb up onto the high stool, open the lid and 'play' a few notes! It was the start of her love of music. Pam bought her a shabby old second-hand piano for her sixth birthday which she loved, and many were the school concerts later on that we enjoyed when she was playing.



Another musical memory is the night Pam and I went to the Royal Albert Hall for a performance by the Dutch violinist and conductor, André Rieu, and his Johann Strauss Orchestra. This was in June 2000 when he was little known in this country. As I did not want to sit doing nothing until the show began, I thought a little exploration of the venue would be a good idea, so I climbed up the stairs to the highest level and began to wander the semi-circular corridor, along which on the side away from the auditorium was a series of doors. All of a sudden, one of the doors burst open and out shot three or four young ladies laughing and giggling. Then further along, another door opened and more came running out. What took me aback was that all were dressed in shimmering ballgowns of dazzling colours. Was there, I wondered, going to be some sort of cabaret? Back in my seat we waited for the show to begin, and onto the stage came the musicians, including, surprise surprise, numerous young ladies clad in beautiful ballgowns and each holding a violin or a cello, a flute, etc, and wearing joyful faces. It was the most glamorous orchestra I have ever seen, and it was evident that they had a strong rapport with their conductor, André Rieu, who became well known for his distinctly unconventional frivolity on stage and encouragement of his audiences to participate in his high-spirited fun! He conducted his orchestra with his violin tucked under his chin, which of course had to be a 1667 Stradivarius! At one point they played the Waltz No 2 from Shostakovich's Jazz Suite. I led Pamela out of her seat and into the central aisle where we joined others who were also

magnetised by the music and were dancing and smiling away. We loved that dance together and whenever I hear that tune or spend an evening watching the DVD of the whole show, I am greatly moved.

Returning to St Mary's, what a blessing it is that we have Peter Greaves and his stand-in John Ursell, two wonderful organists and a jolly good organ, which I'm sure they must thoroughly enjoy playing. That enjoyment usually manifests itself in the last verse of the final hymn on a Sunday morning. So important to leave church feeling uplifted! On Mothering Sunday I was very fortunate as, arriving early at St Mary's for the eleven o'clock, I was able to listen to the choir rehearsing *'The Lord Bless You and Keep You'*. Then, during the service Peter vacated his seat at the organ, led his choir down into the church where they arranged themselves around the piano and adjacent to the pillar commemorating the day in 1980 when Prince Charles attended the Eucharist service and received the Sacrament. Here they performed beautifully. You don't always need the top orchestras and choirs to pluck at your heartstrings.

Bernard Parkin

What's happened to Streaming from St Nicolas?

Some of you, who cannot always get to St Nicolas, may watch online the Sunday service either live or at any time afterwards.

On March 17 I had an email from our Internet Service Provider (ISP), Octaplus, informing me their broadband customers were being transferred to another company; everything was going to be the same; I wouldn't need to do or change anything; the transfer would be seamless.

By Sunday March 29 we had no internet. Neither did several others who had taken the trouble to write reviews on Trustpilot. Since that date I have heard nothing from the new company, not even a response to my message to the support team.

We shall be using a different ISP in the near future.

Meanwhile, you can watch services from All Saints on our YouTube channel

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

Brian Wood

I recently discovered the pleasure of knowing when your loft is empty you will never ever need go up there again!

The empty loft

There comes a stage (it must be age!), when you find you have the urge
To clear the house of useless stuff. It's time to have a purge.
For many years our loft appeared to be a squirrels' lair;
Since it was cleared of squirrels, we haven't been up there.
I opened up the ladder and I pushed it through the gap.
My husband didn't want to climb - he's a vertigo-ish chap!

So up I went and poked my head into the hole to see
Just what was there. Oh no! I thought, that's not a job for me.
Boxes, cardboard boxes that at one time had contained
Computers, vacuum cleaners - only boxes now remained.
A myriad of boxes kept till it was time to part
With little Lego models, but I hadn't got the heart.

There's my husband's record player from the 1970's;
You'd need be a weight lifter to handle one of these.
My mum's two-bar electric fire. Oh, what will be its fate?
It must have been a wedding present back in '38!
As it sits there plugless, I feel I'd like to try
To add a plug and switch it on. Would we be blown sky high?

And there's her bagatelle board in its cardboard box all musty.
The polished wood has lost its sheen; the steel balls all gone rusty.
I calculate it must go back to roughly 1920,
Played with by generations with memories a-plenty.
How many childhood knees have knelt upon those painful pins?
But tears are dried and a lesson learnt before the game begins.

A wedding dress - did I ever fit into a dress so small?
The years have brought a "change of shape" - it happens to us all.
We've offcuts of old carpets, which have long since been replaced.
I suppose we only kept them so they wouldn't go to waste.
There's a lump of funny foamy stuff, if you have a pipe to lag,
And four and twenty terry nappies in a plastic bag.

Then at the back a high chair, not used for many moons,
In which our son was sat and fed with tiny plastic spoons.
I see him now, a smile upon his little chubby face
As he grabbed his food and with abandon flung it into space!
It's hard to think that baby now is 39 years old,
And the high chair's come down from the loft all covered in black mould.

So what have we achieved by this frenetic clearing out?
Well, there's an empty loft which brings relief without a doubt.
But more than that it's made us learn that what we tend to hoard
Turns out to be quite useless. In the end, it's what we've stored
In hearts and minds as memories that can never be effaced;
They all come free, they don't wear out or need to be replaced.

Jill Smith

An hager-awel

Earlier this year, Angie and some friends booked to attend a 'Sea Shanty Singing Course' at Chy Morvah, an HF House in St Ives. I enthusiastically agreed to join them.

I, like the other twenty members of my class at Cheney Technical School had been taught many Sea Shanties, and we were very good at 'Ranting and Roaring like true British Sailors'. Angie and her friends, however, who had had previous excruciating experiences of my lusty singing, were not so smitten with my idea of attendance. I was informed that my contributions would not be required.

"Ah well!" St Ives was not only a fishing port but a great attraction for artists.

So putting my artist's hat on, or at that time of year, a thick builder's beanie, advertising 'Kingspan' insulation, I joined Angie en-route to St Ives by train. I had with me two thick sketch books and an A3 pad of watercolour paper, happily dreaming of sitting in narrow streets around the harbour and sketching the higley-piggily houses so characteristic of the area.

Upon our arrival in St Ives, however, we discovered that severe storms had hit that part of the Cornish coast. Not only was there not a single street in St Ives that had not suffered severe damage, with roofs torn off and slated walls torn down, there was also a weather prediction that indicated further heavy rain and storms.

"Ah!" So sketching en plein-air seemed not, after all, an option.

On our approach to the HF house in the gloom of a rain storm, we could see that the well-arranged front garden of the house had been skilfully rearranged by the descent of two large cedar trees. Most of the front garden's retaining wall was missing, and on the left-hand side, no wall remained at all.

Yes, this was looking severely restricted for the joyous basking in the usual high-UV sunlight, whilst the keenly anticipated drawing and painting activity was fast receding. We were shown to a pleasant room on the ground floor, but could see little from the window in the darkness of the storm.

Drawing the curtains, however, in the morning revealed a brilliant, if storm-washed view of Godrevy lighthouse, some ten miles to the north of the house, framed by the destruction of the garden in the foreground. This was definitely looking up. Having had a very good breakfast, I returned to the room to find that the view of Godrevy was completely obliterated by lashing rain and dark clouds.

"Ah well!" Another rethink.

As I thoroughly enjoy drawing architectural features I decided to reverse the procedure and draw Chy Morvah house itself. Sketch pad in hand, I ventured out of the nearby door to be hit by a welter of fiercely driven water.

"Ah!" Again. Rethink.



Just then a lull in the storm occurred, so grabbing my iPad I shot outside and to the strains of 'Hearts of Oak', emanating from Angie and her friends, I dashed round the garden snapping everything that I thought might be useful and just made it back indoors; with only a few dribbles of rain running across my iPad!

I rearranged the bedroom, placing the desk/dressing table across the window. Then I armed myself with a strong black coffee and finally settled down to three peaceful days of drafting and sketching in a warm cosy room.

Occasionally there were stunning views of the storm-tossed seas, with the strong rip currents tearing out from the Godrevy Headland and turning the roaring seas into a boiling frenzy of white steaming foam. Great inspiration for drawing a storm ravaged garden.

Three whole delightful days with nothing else to do but eat three delicious meals a day and draw!

A feeling of happy satisfaction and enjoyment spread over me.

John Moles



Footnotes:

An hager-awel = 'The storm'; Chy Morvah= 'House by the sea', in Cornish.

Pleasure: a feeling of happy satisfaction and enjoyment. (Oxford Dictionary)

HF = Holiday Fellowship, who operate a series of walking, painting, singing, bridge and other activity holidays in their large, often 'stately' houses.

Why did we boys and girls of Cheney Technical School rant and roar so much? Well for some years we had sung what we regarded as boring songs about 'The Vicar of Bray' etc. and we went on strike and refused to sing. A meeting was called, by Basher Bates, the music master, in the library to discuss this. Conclusion: we would sing sea shanties, in exchange for the more high-brow pursuit of learning different styles of singing, such as Plain Song. So it came to pass that we learnt that, "from Ushant to Scilly is thirty-five leagues". Useful, if you are hauling on the ropes of a square-rigged sailing ship!!!

Marle Hill WI

Marle Hill WI met on Monday 13 April. The speaker was talking about wildlife in Gloucestershire

Dates were given for future events in and around the county.

The next meeting is on Monday 11 May 2026. The speaker is Joyce Brooks who will talk about all things connected to lingerie.

Visitors are welcome to join us at St Nicolas Church Hall GL50 4PA. The meeting starts at 7:30pm

Sue Davies

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Forthcoming Events

Bereavement Friendship Group

**We will be meeting in St Mary's Church, Prestbury
on Monday 18 May at 2.15-4pm**

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

Welcome on Wednesday

**Wednesday 20 May 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?



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St Mary's Church, Prestbury

Sunday		0800	Eucharist
	1st Sunday	0930	Breakfast Celebrate! – All-age worship
	Other Sundays	0900	Breakfast Celebrate! at Infant School
		1100	Sung Eucharist
	1st Sunday	1830	Evening Prayer at Capel Court
	2nd Sunday	1800	Benediction
	Other Sundays	1800	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
Weekdays			Holy Mass usually on 3 days, check noticeboard
Saturday	1st Saturday	1000	Holy Mass for Our Lady of Walsingham

St Lawrence Church, Swindon Village

Sunday	1st Sunday	0930	Family Communion
		1700	Evensong
	2nd Sunday	0930	BCP Holy Communion
	3rd Sunday	0930	Holy Communion
		1700	Evensong
	4th Sunday	0930	Holy Communion
	5th Sunday	1000	Benefice Holy Communion
			alternates with St Mary Magdalene

St Mary Magdalene Church, Elmstone Hardwicke

Sunday	1st Sunday	1100	BCP Holy Communion
	2nd Sunday	1100	Family Service (no communion)
	3rd Sunday	1100	Holy Communion
	4th Sunday	1100	Holy Communion
	5th Sunday	1000	Benefice Holy Communion
			alternates with St Lawrence
Thursday	2nd Thursday	1900	Celtic Evening Prayer
	4th Thursday	1900	Celtic Communion

* These services are usually streamed on the internet. These and other services are recorded so may be accessed live or 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
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St Mary's C of E (VA) Schools

Executive Head Teacher: Mr Matt Ferris
01242 383817

Hall Letting

Prestbury Hall, Bouncers Lane
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 2026

Issue	Copy Date	Theme
June	Sunday 17 May	The Sea
July	Sunday 14 June	British Summer Time
August	Sunday 12 July	Desert Island Discs
September	Sunday 16 August	Ireland
October	Sunday 13 September	Scotland
November	Sunday 11 October	Wales
Dec / Jan	Sunday 15 November	Memorials

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

June 2026 Magazine Theme: The Sea
Please send copy by Sunday 17 May 2026
or soon after



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