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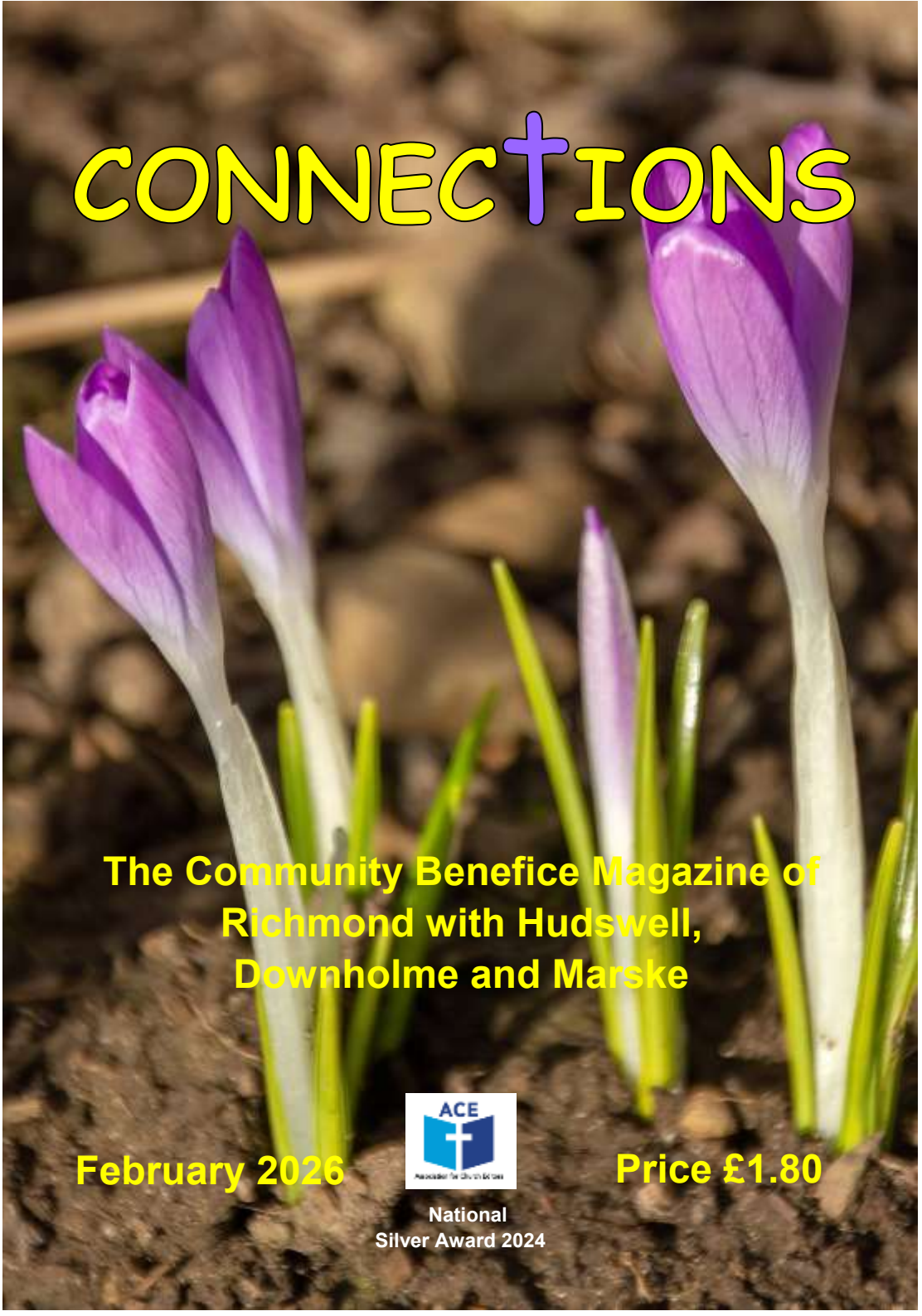

The Community Benefice Magazine of Richmond with Hudswell, Downholme and Marske

February 2026

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Silver Award 2024

THE BENEFICE OF RICHMOND WITH HUDSWELL, DOWNHOLME AND MARSKE

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CHURCH SERVICES — St MARY THE VIRGIN, RICHMOND with Hudswell

8.00 a.m.	Holy Communion		Every Sunday
10.00 a.m.	Parish Communion		Every Sunday apart from1st Sunday
	Morning Worship	(no communion)	Every 1st Sunday
4.00 p.m.	Café Church		3rd Sunday (every 2 mths — Jan, March etc)
	Fun-Key Church		Last Sunday each month
6.30 p.m.	Choral Evensong		Second Sunday each month
9.15 a.m.	Holy Communion		Every Wednesday

CHURCH SERVICES AT HOLY TRINITY CHAPEL, MARKET PLACE , RICHMOND

10.30 a.m. Holy Communion — Every Thursday

PARISH OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, DOWNHOLME

CHURCH OFFICERS

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Church Treasurer	Phil Ham	(07920) 884103	'Sundale', Reeth, DL11 6TX philip.ham@outlook.com
PCC Secretary	Andra Sison-Ham	(07753) 842246	andrakrumins@gmail.com

CHURCH SERVICES AT DOWNHOLME

9.30 a.m.	**Morning Prayer**	**Every second Sunday**
9.30 a.m.	**Holy Communion**	**Every fourth Sunday**

THE PARISH OF ST EDMUNDS, MARSKE

CHURCH OFFICERS

Church Warden	Ruth Tindale	(01748) 823371	Skelton Lodge, Marske
Organist	Jennifer Wallis	(01748) 822930	1 School Terrace, Marske
Treasurer	Peter Coates	(07801) 521954	Orgate Farmhouse, Marske peter.coates54@hotmail.co.uk
PCC Secretary	Andra Sison-Ham	(07753) 842246	andrakrumins@gmail.com

CHURCH SERVICES AT MARSKE

11.00 a.m.	**Holy Communion**	**Every Sunday, except 2nd (& 5th) Sunday**
11.00 a.m.	**Morning Prayer**	**Every 2nd (& 5th) Sunday**

EDITORIAL from connections.ed24@gmail.com

Rather belatedly, a Happy New Year to you all. I hope that 2026 brings us all peace and fulfilment.

The start of a new year always feels like a time of renewal, of new beginnings, so our cover photo this month of new crocuses emerging, appropriately in the colour of Lent, was chosen to reflect this. Thank you, Wendy, for providing it.

After Martin's message, with initial information about Lent activities and Confirmation, we have a variety of articles which we hope will be helpful and of interest. Jan Beeton starts an account of her visit to Madagascar — more on this next month; Judith MacLeod shares her impressions of a monastery in Provence and explores the monastic way of life; and Stephen Clark tells us about the first of no less than 3 archbishops associated with Marske. John Pritchard provides an explanation for one of the most perplexing questions about the Christian faith, and, with his interest in the Middle East, encourages us to support this month's Charity. Christine Porter has discovered several Winter celebrations of various kinds in different parts of the country, and Jane Hatcher enlightens us about the numerous chapels and churches that, over time, have existed in Richmond.

Jim Jack entertains us with his and Jan's latest exploits on the next stage of their Camino Walk through County Durham, and brings us up to date with the activities of the Friends, while Paul Perry reflects upon the training and what is involved in being our Occasional Preacher. Sharon O'Connor, one of our Pastoral Assistants, kindly agreed to be the subject of a 60 Second Interview, and finally there is a heart-warming little homily for you to discover.

If you have any suggestions about what you would like to see included in future editions, or, better still, would be willing to contribute something for possible inclusion, we would love to hear from you. Perhaps you have had an interesting experience, been somewhere unusual, or even just read a book which you could recommend to others? Think about it, and then do please let us know.

John McCormack

Cover photo by Wendy Pritchard
New beginnings

Martin's message
February 2026

To be a Pilgrim

Our baptism – whether as a child or an adult – is the beginning of a life-long journey of faith. Another word for that journey is 'pilgrimage': over the course of a lifetime our faith changes, with each new experience or challenge sometimes deepening, sometimes stretching our faith. It is normal to find ourselves going backwards in some periods in our lives, as well as forwards in others. It is normal to question our faith if we find it no longer fits. It is normal to celebrate new discoveries, which deepen the security our faith can bring.

If we have been Confirmed, then we will have attended a preparation course in which we explored the fundamentals and the meaning of our faith. For many of us, however, that may have been some years ago: we all need to continue learning – and to keep asking questions.

Regular individual or group Bible study, reading up on our faith, or engaging in discussions are important ways to keep learning, to keep growing. Just as important is maintaining a regular pattern of prayer – one which works for you (the old saying, "Pray as you can, not as you can't" remains apt).

As I write, the Worship and Prayer Team are preparing a survey which will soon be launched to establish the resources ***you*** would like to see available to sustain your spiritual life. Do please respond: we need your guidance!

A Pilgrimage through Lent

Lent is always a good time to explore the options available for resourcing our spiritual health – and to establish good habits which can sustain us all year round. This special Spring-time season of growth offers us the opportunity to be intentional in seeking to draw nearer to God: to make more time for prayer, reflection and learning, and for supporting neighbours in need.

Indeed, the Church of England's theme for Lent this year is *'Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent.'* As Archbishop-elect Sarah Mullally and Archbishop Stephen Cottrell have written, "*Draw Near* is all about teaching us how we can cultivate the habits and practices that will draw us nearer to God. And we will find that, in doing so, God will draw nearer to us, too."

Please visit Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent | The Church of England or churchofengland.org/faith-life/what-we-believe/lent-holy-week-and-easter/draw-near-life-giving-habits-lent for further details of the booklets available for adults and for children.

Also available is the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book on discipleship, *'Dancing to the heartbeat of God'* with a foreword by Sarah Mullaly: spckpublishing.co.uk/dancing-to-the-heartbeat-of-god-pb

So please be thinking how you will be observing Lent this year. Will your Lenten discipline involve giving something up or taking something on, and why? What will your Lent book be this year? How else will you be seeking to draw nearer to God? And which good cause will you be supporting? Please consider beginning Lent by attending an Ash Wednesday service (on 18th February), when you will have the opportunity to receive the Imposition of Ashes. There will be services at 9:15am and 7:00pm.

During Lent our regular Prayer Group, Home Groups, and Book Group will continue to meet. These are led respectively by Anna Boyce on Tuesday evenings; by Martin Clarke on Tuesday afternoons; by Bishop John on Wednesday evenings; and by Isobel Short on Thursday afternoons. Alongside these, there will be a Lent Course which this year will explore the Lord's Prayer. This will be a springboard to enable us to learn more about prayer in general and about all aspects of living out our faith.

Please look out for further details of the Lent Course and other Lent resources, which will soon be available.

To be Confirmed

Would you like to be Confirmed? If so, there will be a Deanery Confirmation Service on Wednesday 13th May at St Cuthbert's church in Colburn, led by Bishop Anna.

Ahead of this, there will be a preparation course beginning at the end of March. Even if you do not wish to be Confirmed, following the course will be an excellent way to learn more about our faith.

If you would like to join the four candidates from our Benefice who have already expressed interest in being Confirmed, or if would simply like to join the course, Lorna or I will be delighted to hear from you. All are welcome.

With every blessing,

Martin

FROM THE REGISTERS

We give thanks for the lives of those who have died.

David Wood	6th November '25
Leonard Hutchinson	28th November '25

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.
Speak of me in the easy way in which you always used..
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.
Let it be spoken without effort, without the ghost of a shadow in it.
Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?
I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near…
All is well.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE 200 CLUB

Congratulations to our latest Winners

December — no: 19 — Margaret Squires

December bonus — no: 60 — Graham & Judith Barber

January — no: 89 — Nigel Metcalfe

CHARITY OF THE MONTH

You may not have heard of this charity, but, in a different guise, it has been working in that troubled part of the world for several years. This month **John Pritchard**, long familiar with the area, invites us to support its vital work

Do you remember the carol sheet you used to sing from years ago? It came from the Bible Lands Society and we used the newest version, the Bethlehem Carol Sheet, at this year's carol service in St Mary's.

The Bible Lands Society has now become 'Embrace the Middle East' and is a Christian development charity tackling poverty and injustice in the Middle East. It's a small charity – I remember visiting the headquarters in High Wycombe when I was Bishop of Oxford and being impressed that it was light on its feet and highly professional in supporting Christian projects and organisations in Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere.

It has three focus areas: education, community and healthcare. **Education** is key to finding a way out of poverty, so, for example, Embrace supports a learning centre for deaf people in Lebanon and a Christian-run project in Syria for some of the 8.5 million women reckoned to suffer from gender-based violence – giving them skills and training.

Planting a new olive tree

In focusing on **community,** the charity supports the Olive Tree Project to plant such trees (£20 each) to replace the one million olive trees destroyed by the Israeli authorities and illegal settlers since the six-day war. I've been to villages where whole olive tree plantations have been bull-dozed to the ground to make way for illegal settlements, or to spite the local Palestinians.

Under **healthcare,** Embrace has obviously been very active in Gaza, supporting organisations supplying emergency food for 500 families, together with mobile health clinics and training for healthcare professionals.

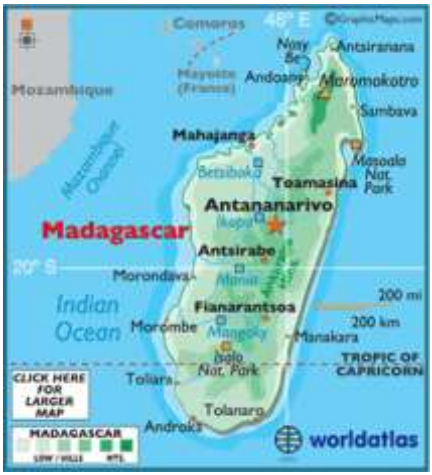
This small charity punches well above its weight and it's a privilege to support it. I very much hope we have a generous response to it as this month's Charity.

John Pritchard

TIME OF MY LIFE (part 1)

Some 10 years ago, our intrepid explorer, **JAN BEETON**, joined another study tour to a lesser known part of the world, with a focus this time on **Medicine, Society and Nature in Madagascar**. This is the first part of her experiences and impressions of the country: part 2 will follow in next month's issue.

Having been fortunate to take part in working projects and study tours in various parts of the world, I travelled to Madagascar at the end of October 2015 with others who had been part of our group in previously described tours in India, Brazil, Ladakh, Thailand, Vietnam, North Korea, etc.



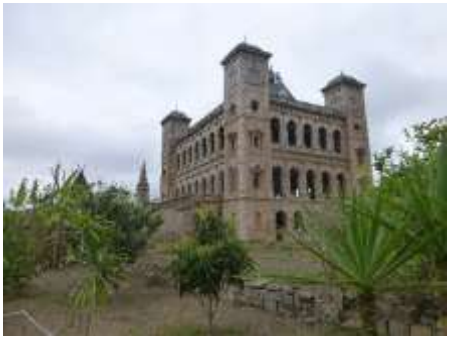
Madagascar, previously known as the Malagasy Republic, is an island country in the middle of the Indian Ocean, close to the South-east coast of Africa, and has been claimed by some to be the "The Eighth Continent". Although the closeness to Africa would suggest a similarity to their peoples, flora and fauna, the land of Madagascar actually broke away from the Indian peninsular during the pre-historical break-up of Gondwanaland. This allowed native plants and animals to evolve in relative isolation, so consequently the country is a biodiversity hotspot, with over 90% of its wildlife found nowhere else on earth. This provided an opportunity for our group, aside from our main focus on hospitals and clinics, to observe an abundance of unfamiliar wildlife, from the smallest insects and spiders to the large mammals and reptiles.

There is evidence of Indo-Malayan human settlement from approximately 2000 BC, with migrants arriving from different parts of East Africa and further afield over the following four thousand years. Today's population of Malagasy reflects these waves of settlement, with approximately 18 ethnic subgroups, each with their own dialects. The official languages are Malagasy and French and there were approximately 22 million people living there at the time of our visit. As we discovered, however, registration of births and deaths is really haphazard in remote regions, so the total number is unknown.

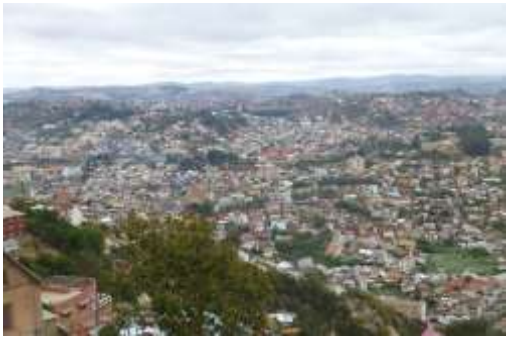
So, armed with that background knowledge, our group travelled via London and

Nairobi to land in Antananarivo, the capital, on a sunny day when jacaranda trees blossomed and filled the air with fragrance. Tana, as the capital is more usually called, is a sprawling metropolis of low-rise buildings, centred around the historic centre of sacred hills, the old palace and churches. The first missionaries were Welsh, but ceded the country to French missionaries in the 19th century and the country became part of the French Colonial Empire in 1897. The majority of the population adheres to Christianity, traditional beliefs or an amalgam of both. There were lots of churches and we seemed to see nuns walking about everywhere!

Following a welcome sleep in a comfortable hotel, we set out with our guide to explore the historic centre.



Remains of the Palace, sited on Sacred Hill



A view of the city from the Palace

The city is as hilly as Richmond, so we were glad to stop for lunch before going on to the main professional visit of the day, a maternity hospital. Following a tour of the hospital and meeting with medical staff, we were left chastened with the statistics they provided for normal births, morbidities and analysis. At each professional visit organised by Master Travel, we donate either services and skills or pre-assessed items. For this hospital, we left boxes of medical supplies including stethoscopes, surgical packs, dressings, needles etc.

The group in the Museum gardens

We finished the day by visiting the museum gardens and testing laboratories of the Institut Malgache de Recherches Appliques (AMRA), a state-owned research unit exploring pharmacological uses for their vast range of plants and fungi. French Pharma companies also own large tracts of land in Madagascar, as they, too, seek new drugs amongst this exceptional flora.

One of the Lemur

Conversations about medical provision and exploitative Pharma companies were set aside during the next morning, as we embarked on a long journey to Ampefy, south of the capital, broken up by a visit to a Lemur Park. The park hosts seven varieties of the ninety different species of lemur known in Madagascar, for which they have a breeding and conservation programme, allowing reintroduction into areas where populations had been threatened. Lemurs are totally free in this park, but tend to stay as they are regularly fed.

One member of our group is a known artist who doesn't take photographs, but sketches and draws as we go along, producing memorable annotated diaries of each tour.

Leaving Tana along the route to Ampefy, we stopped at an army dispensary which acted as a first clinic for people with minor injuries or illnesses in a remote area. This is an agricultural region where rice is grown, and Zebu (a type of cattle) are herded. Water-borne infections, parasitic infestations and general accidents are common. Sadly, we reflected that each of us probably had more medicines in our cupboards at home than we saw in their dispensary.

Zebu cattle

Zebu and rice formed the staple for our meals while we were there – it was no good being vegetarian!

The area around Ampefy and on to Faratsiho was mountainous, so the next morning we swapped into 4x4s to cope with the terrain. At Faratsiho we visited an extremely basic district rural hospital staffed by one hard-working doctor and a nurse, who hadn't been paid for over a year. The hospital had no water supply or electricity, but was dealing with childbirth, minor injuries and diseases. Not all bedframes had mattresses, and the feeding and general care of patients was done by families. It was distressing to see blood-spattered walls in the delivery suite and unclean surgical equipment. Despite this, a new mother proudly showed us her baby which had been born safely, earlier that day.

Basic hospital conditions

A happy event!

Within walking distance of the hospital was a dispensary, which had been opened independently by the local evangelical church. The doctor was married to the priest and in the six years they had been there, they had rebuilt the church and developed the dispensary to support the hospital. She was very grateful that we had visited her, as she said no-one else does. She claimed we were part of God's plan, as we left gifts of equipment, painkillers and antibiotics. The dispensary had electricity and a fridge for drugs, enabling her to provide vaccinations, ante-natal care and health advice. The walls were festooned in advisory pictorial health posters for the largely illiterate people using the dispensary.

Two of the Advisory Health Posters

The next part of our journey took us along a treacherous mountain road to Antisirabe during a violent storm. There was much evidence of previous landslips, so we were mightily relieved to arrive safely for an overnight stay in a busy town. The next morning, we visited a private thermal treatment centre, complete with spa facilities and a pool, beyond the range of most Malagasy people who live on less than 2$ per day. This was followed by a visit to a large, public orthopaedic hospital where we had a full tour of their facilities, including children's wards for congenital abnormalities such as hip dysplasia, foot abnormalities, etc. The hospital was proud of its workshop creating bespoke prostheses, callipers, boots and crutches. Many of the people working in the unit were disabled and were most likely former patients.

Workshops at the public Orthopaedic Hospital

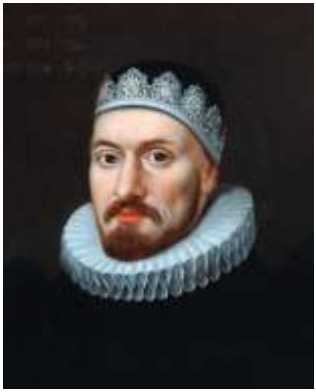
(To be continued) *Jan Beeton*

MARSKE'S FIRST ARCHBISHOP

Strange though it may seem, the tiny village of Marske has connections with no less than three Archbishops. **STEPHEN CLARK**, a resident of the village with a strong interest in local history, tells the story of the first of them.

Matthew Hutton (1529—1606)

Matthew Hutton was born in Lancashire in 1529, about four years before Henry VIII cut his ties with Rome. Matthew lived through the turmoil of the Reformation and the establishment of the Anglican church, before his death in 1606 as Archbishop of York.



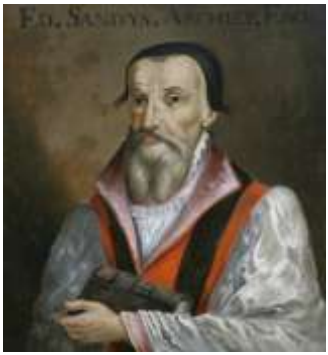
Matthew Hutton

In 1547, Matthew set off from his birthplace near Lancaster to a religious education in Cambridge. His studies took place during the reigns of Protestant Edward IV and Catholic Mary Tudor, so he must have navigated his religious education with some caution and adaptability. In 1561, three years into the reign of Elizabeth I, he was Professor of Divinity, one of the most important posts at the university, where his intellect and character caught the eye of the new Queen on her visits to Cambridge. He was aligned to Elizabeth's policy of a "middle way" between Catholic tradition and calls from Puritans and others for a new order. For example, he supported Elizabeth in 1563 in a debate about the continued use of historical vestments in the church.

Queen Elizabeth 1

In the early years of her reign, Elizabeth had a weak power -base in the North, as dissent amongst Catholics was strong. In 1567 Matthew became Dean at York Minster, and two years later the "Rising of the Northern Earls", led by the Catholic Percy and Neville families, aimed to put Mary Queen of Scots on the throne. This challenge to Elizabeth's rule was put down by an army from the South, with the help of northern families including Bowes of Barnard Castle. Matthew, of course, was loyal to the

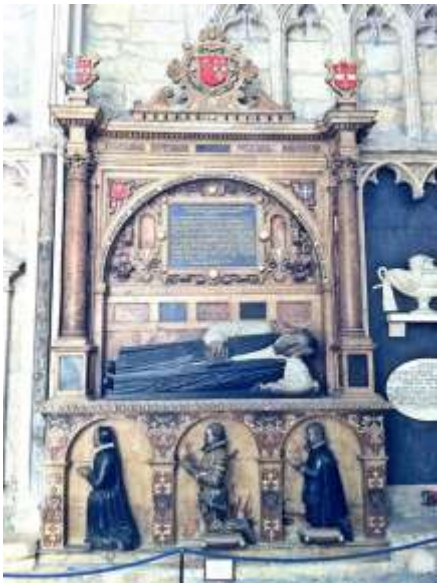
Queen, and in the clampdown afterwards he presided at the trial of the Catholic John Acridge of Richmond. After conviction, Acridge died in prison some 15 years later.



Archbishop Sandys

Whilst at York, Hutton had prolonged arguments with his superior, Archbishop Sandys, and these eventually reached the church courts. He disagreed with Sandys on who should be ordained, and refused to help in managing the diocese. Sandys thought that Hutton's ungovernable temper, and an inappropriate accumulation of wealth, should count against him. Clearly they didn't, as Hutton won the case and was later promoted to Bishop of Durham in 1588. Six years later he returned to York as Archbishop.

Sandys may have had a point about Matthew Hutton's wealth, for this continued to grow. In 1592, Matthew's son, Timothy, married Elizabeth Bowes from the family that had supported the Queen in the North. Elizabeth Bowes was the Queen's god-daughter, so a substantial dowry probably followed her marriage into the Hutton family. The Hutton Cup, a wedding present from the Queen, remained in the Hutton family silver collection until it was bought back by Queen Elizabeth II in 1957.



Matthew Hutton's tomb in York Minster

Matthew Hutton, and son Timothy, both bought land in Marrick and Marske. We don't know why they chose this area, but it is possible that Marrick's long religious history, including its former Augustinian priory, had some significance for Matthew. Land at Marrick had first been bought by Matthew in 1592, and the Hutton's then bought land in Marske five years later. The wealth of an Archbishop, who supported Elizabeth I in establishing the Anglican church in the North, then became the bedrock of a family that remained connected with Marske until the 1960s.

Stephen Clark

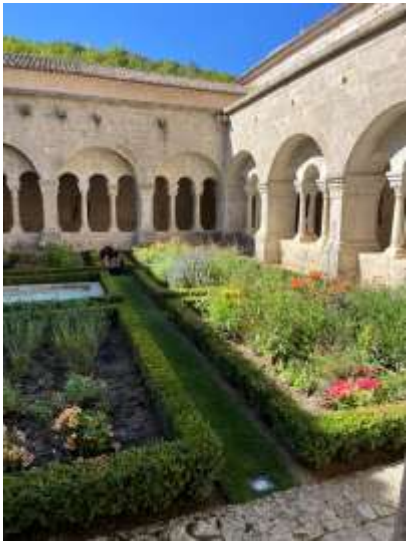
NOT A CATHEDRAL, BUT STILL WORTH CELEBRATING

As a digression from her Cathedrals series, last Summer **JUDITH MacLEOD** visited the south of France and offers her impressions of Sénanque Abbey, as well as reflecting on monastic life.

Early in the year, when the nights are still long, we dream of warm sunshine and summer holidays. Last summer we visited Provence in the south of France. If you have ever been there in late June or early July, you may have seen wonderful stands of lavender cultivated for its perfume. The Abbey of Notre-Dame of Sénanque near Avignon in the south of France offers this classic view.

We went there at the beginning of September and our expectations were high. We knew that the abbey is popular with visitors, so the timed entry tickets were booked before we left the UK. We set off from the village of Caromb near the Mont Ventoux (famed for the Tour de France mountain climb) and drove along the circuitous route into the Luberon massif via the Fontaine de Vaucluse and the hilltop town of Gordes, to discover the abbey in a secluded valley. As lavender flowers earlier in the summer, it had to be imagined in its glory. My first impression of the building was of tranquil simplicity: the interior of the building, however, is beyond simple — it is undeniably austere! After my visits to some of the glorious cathedrals of England with their intricate vaulting and delicate tracery, I admit to be having been disappointed. The interior of the abbey is completely unadorned, except for some delightful carvings on the pillars of the cloister and its charming garden in the centre, but the attraction of the visit is to be found elsewhere. For me, it was in the history of the mediaeval Cistercian

order on which it is founded and which led me to consider what it meant to be a member of a religious order in medieval Europe, to pursue a life of Christian contemplation as a monk or a nun. Christian contemplation involves silencing the mind, turning inward, and engaging in prayer, meditation, and reflection. It allows Christians to attune themselves to God's voice, so I will write more about the Cistercians and their history later.



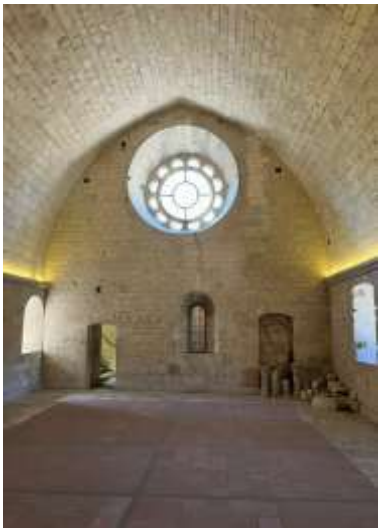
The cloister, with its twin pillars and carved capitals, contains an attractive garden.

The Abbaye de Sénanque in Provence was founded by Cistercian monks from a nearby abbey in 1148. It took more than 30 years to build, and at its apogee in the 13th and 14th centuries it possessed 4 watermills, 7 barns, a hospital in Arles and extensive territory in Provence. It probably benefited from its proximity to Avignon just 40 km away, as from 1309 to 1377 the Papacy was in Avignon after the Pope decided that Rome was too dangerous a city for the Holy See.

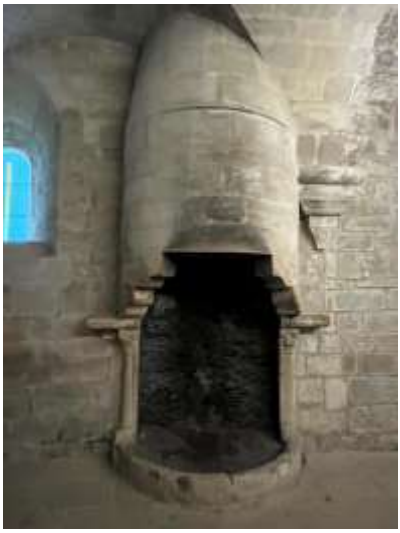
After the fifteenth century, the fortunes of the Abbey of Sénanque waxed and waned. It was sacked in the 16th century during the French Wars of Religion and sold as a national asset during the Revolution. Monks returned when the abbey was recovered in 1854, but were expelled twice before returning again in 1988. Although the building was intended to house 30 monks, during its most prosperous years more than 70 resided there. Currently, there are just 7. As well as spending their time in prayer and contemplation, they cultivate lavender and other herbs and produce honey. The building is open to day-visitors and also to those seeking a retreat at a modest cost of £40 per night for a room.

Monks at Sénanque attend 7 services a day – Vigiles during the night, Laudes at sunrise, Tierce, Sexte and None at 3-hour intervals, Vêpres at sunset and Complies at the end of the day. They sing *a cappella*, with prayer being interspersed with work and sleep.

In Provence, the Cistercians founded 3 abbeys known as "the 3 Provençal sisters", of which Sénanque was the first. The presence of water was fundamental to all 3 abbeys, Sénanque being fed by the canyon of Sénancole. Because of its position in the valley, the abbey faces North rather than East. It is constructed of local stone in the Romanesque style, and is unadorned except for leaves, symbols of Cîteaux, and an effigy of a monster symbolising the devil facing the abbot's seat. There are just a few simple stained-glass windows.



The dormitory where, in the Middle Ages, the monks slept in their habits on rushes on the floor.



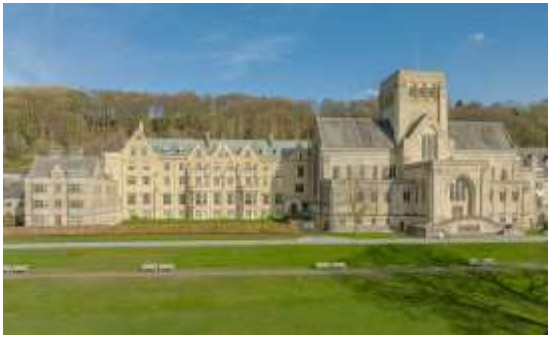
The Scriptorium, where the monks copied and illuminated manuscripts, was the only room in the abbey that was heated.

In the early Christian Church, the notion of monastic life began with the hermits of the third century who wandered the Desert of Egypt in contemplation. In the Western Church it developed with a set of guidelines established by St Augustine in 396, the Rule of St Augustine. This was followed in 529 by the Rule of St Benedict of Norcia in Italy. Benedictine Rule, with 'ora et labora' (pray and work) as its work ethic, was promoted by Pope Gregory around 594 and used to found monasteries. In continental Europe and in England the monasteries became centres of religious life, political administration, economic development and learning — both theological and secular.

Benedictine monasticism reached it height and quasi-exclusivity in the 10th century under the aegis of the Abbey of Cluny in Burgundy. By the 11th century, the Cluny monks ruled over 1200 abbeys throughout Europe. By the end of the tenth century, however, Benedictine monks in France, wanting to return to the source of their monasticism, founded the abbey of Cîteaux, north of Dijon, in Burgundy. The charismatic St Bernard of Clairvaux gave the order its impetus. He focused on poverty and reduced the imbalance between the aristocracy, the clergy and ordinary people by making the last of these "freemen", thereby released them from the type of feudal serfdom in which they lived at the time. This was the beginning of the Cistercian order.

In the fifteenth century, when life shifted to the cities, new orders – the Franciscans and the Dominicans – flourished. The Benedictine monks wore black, the Cistercians white, the Franciscans grey and the Dominicans white habits and black capes.

In Richmond, there were representatives of 4 medieval religious orders. The Friary tower in Richmond is a vestige of a Franciscan monastery, Greyfriars being named after the monks who lived there. St Martin's Priory near the Station was a Benedictine order and Anchorites — hermits who lived in isolation — resided on Anchorage Hill next to what is now Brooke's petrol station. There was also a hospital run by Benedictines at St Nicholas on the outskirts of Richmond.



Ampleforth Abbey today

Ampleforth Abbey is a monastery of Benedictine monks. Rievaulx and Fountains Abbey were 2 of the 4 Cistercian abbeys in Yorkshire. The Canons of Easby, who were Premonstratensian — another religious order with a French foundation — followed the Rule of St Augustine, but lived according to Cistercian principles. They also wore white like the Cistercians. All members of these orders disappeared from Richmond in the 1530's during the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII. After 1760, 95% of the monasteries in Europe had been suppressed or destroyed. Currently, there are 750 abbeys (led by abbots/abbesses) and 1000 monasteries of the Cistercian Order spread across 11 European countries.

Judith MacLeod

HARD QUESTIONS

For this month's Hard Question, **JOHN PRITCHARD** looks at what could seem logically impossible, but which is actually orthodox Christian belief. How do we reconcile this conundrum?

How can Jesus be both Human and Divine?

We've just celebrated one of the most mind-boggling events in the history of Anything. We've been saying that a first century child born in a smelly cave in the back of beyond, who later became a carpenter and travelling preacher, was actually God living among us. That this man was 'of one Being with the Father', as the Nicene creed says. That this Jesus was the human face of God himself. That he was 'true God from true God.' That he was 'begotten, not made.' And so on. Huge claims. Paradoxical claims.

And to some it's nonsense. It's a category confusion. Like saying that cats are of the same substance as fish, or Hamlet of the same substance as Shakespeare. Many people are prepared to accept that Jesus was a magnificent prophet, a great spiritual leader, but not God for heaven's sake: let him just be one in a long line of brilliant moral teachers who came to a sticky end. Today's culture is sceptical about any kind of truth-claims, so 'common sense' says we need to moderate our belief in Jesus' uniqueness.

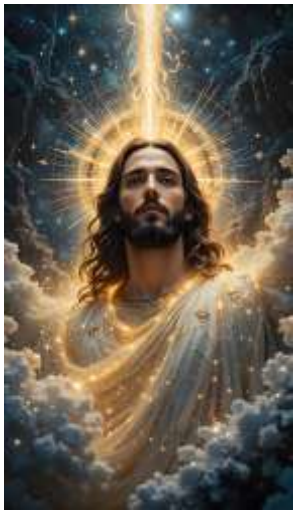
But no, says the Christian tradition. The Church, through its early Councils of Nicea (AD 325) and Chalcedon (AD 451), stoutly maintained that Jesus was one Person in two Natures, divine and human. And we've lived by that central belief for two thousand years.

Christ healing the Blind man

So how shall we understand this? One answer is simply to say that if God decided to do it, to be one person in two distinct natures, he could do it. Why be God if you can't do miraculous things? But we might want to push behind that belief and press the 'how' question a bit further.

Perhaps we might think of Jesus being a man soaked through with the Spirit of God. We are all somewhat 'damp' with the Spirit simply by being human, but here was someone so drenched in God's very Being that he seemed to be

transparent to God. To look at him was to see God at work; to listen to him was to listen to the wisdom of God. Or how else would you describe him? Try 'he was a very good man.' It doesn't quite get there, does it? How about 'he was a very, very good man.' Better, but still nowhere near. OK, 'he was a very, very, very good man.' Eventually you have to give up the 'verys' and accept you're describing someone who was qualitatively different. But still a human being like us!



Christ the Divine

Paradoxical, yes. But it makes sense of the well-known phrase of St Athanasius that God became man so that we could become God, or rather, so that we could be 'partakers in the divine nature.' So Jesus was a human being, as we're supposed to be. He showed us the perfect version of ourselves, open to the very life of God. That's what we want to be like.

Jesus is God's self-portrait. It's a case of 'like Father, like Son.' Jesus was all that a human life could carry of the presence of God without blowing a fuse. Not because he was a sort of 'demi-god' – half-God, half-man – but rather that he was fully God and fully man. It's like a brilliant musician so fully entering the beauty of a piece of music that he's saturated in the vision of the composer; he's playing the music exactly as the composer intended. Jesus inhabited the Father's score perfectly.

Christians want to be as much like him as we can be.

John Pritchard

CONNECTIONS 2026

HAVE YOU REMEMBERED?

Our thanks to all those of you who have kindly returned your order form and subscription for this year's magazine. Your support is very much appreciated. If, however, it got overlooked with Christmas festivities, please do so without delay to ensure that you continue to receive your copy.

CELEBRATING WINTER

With all the 'hype' around Christmas and New Year, it would be easy to imagine that these are the only winter celebrations. In different parts of the country, however, **CHRISTINE PORTER** has found other traditional celebrations, which are perhaps not so well known.

Thousands of years ago in Britain, people were having a good old knees-up in the bleak months of winter. Long before Christians celebrated the Nativity, the winter season in pre-historic times was a time of significant feasting, rituals and song, particularly celebrations of the 21st December winter solstice. This primary midwinter turning point was seen as the most important event of the year, a time of renewal and the "rebirth" of the sun, signifying the promise of longer, warmer days. Light and solar alignment were important in these rituals, so monuments like **Stonehenge** were deliberately constructed to align with the movement of the sun, which sets between the two tallest stones of the inner horseshoe on the winter solstice.

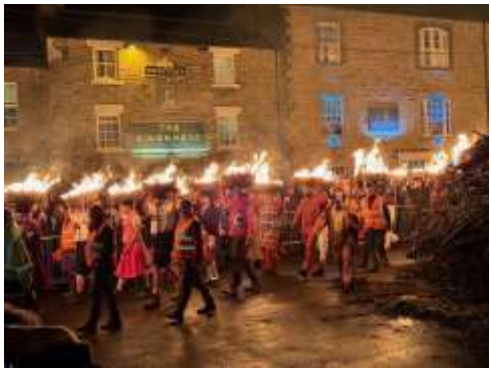
Stonehenge at Winter solstice

Fire often featured in celebrations, to symbolise the sun's gradual return after the solstice. A couple of miles from Stonehenge, archaeological digs at **Durrington Walls**, a shallow valley used in Neolithic times for communal ceremonies, have uncovered evidence of massive mid-winter feasts. This location has yielded some of the best-preserved Neolithic dwellings in Britain and evidence of large-scale feasting, suggesting gatherings of thousands of people. People and animals, particularly pigs, were driven hundreds of miles from as far as Scotland and Wales to these feasts. Huge quantities of pork and beef were consumed, suggesting these were significant social and ritual events. While light and fire were central to ancient festivals, water also played a role in purification, divination, and blessings, with rituals involving salt baths, blessing waters and offerings to water gods. Water was symbolic of life and flow, even in winter's stillness.

These ancient traditions evolved over millennia and symbolised the triumph of light over darkness as the sun returned. Other practices included burning yule logs, a tradition that had spread with the invasion of Vikings. As Christianity spread throughout Britain, winter festivals gradually merged with the festival of

Christmas and, by medieval times, people were enjoying twelve full days of festivities from Christmas through to a crescendo on 6th January, with **Twelfth Night** and the **Epiphany**.

Many New Year and midwinter traditions in modern Britain have roots in these ancient pagan or Viking practices, including the use of fire and feasting to welcome the new cycle of the seasons and ward-off bad spirits. On New Year's Eve in the Northumberland Pennines, Allendale marks the end of the old year with a ritual that has been performed annually for at least 160 years. The **Allendale Tar Barrel Festival** (or Tar Bar'l) is a unique tradition where 45 local men, known as guizers (i.e. in disguise), carry burning whisky barrels filled with tar, sawdust, kindling and paraffin on their heads through the village streets, ending in a bonfire at midnight to welcome the New Year. The origins of the custom remain shrouded in mystery, with no definitive account of how the tradition began. Some believe that the festival has pagan origins stretching back to the Middle Ages, when the burning of effigies to ward-off evil spirits was commonplace.



Allendale Tar Barrel Festival

In Scotland, the **Stonehaven Fireballs** is an ancient ceremony, with fire symbolising the sun, light, and the return of longer days after mid-winter. At midnight on 31st December, locals parade through the town, spinning burning cages above their heads before throwing them into the harbour – a tradition thought to symbolise purification and the burning away of the old year.

Stonehaven Fire balls

Up Helly Aa is a spectacular fire festival held annually from January to March in various communities in the Shetlands. It is a relatively modern celebration which apparently emerged after the Napoleonic Wars, when soldiers and sailors came home with rowdy habits and a taste for firearms. Over the last two centuries, the festival has evolved into a celebration of the region's Norse heritage, marking the

The fiery finale

to

Up Helly Aa

on

Shetland

end of **Yule** (an Old Norse festival) and the return of the sun after the winter solstice. There are torchlit processions of costumed participants (guizers) led by a Viking Jarl (chieftain), culminating in the fiery burning of a replica longship.

Scotland's New Year **Hogmanay** celebrations also have roots in Viking winter solstice festivals. Across Britain, and further afield, many folk now welcome in the New Year by singing **Auld Lang Syne**, one of the most popular New Year songs of all time. Although Hogmanay's roots are tied to Viking and Celtic solstice celebrations, the singing of Auld Lang Syne is a relatively modern tradition. In 1788, Robert Burns sent his poem Auld Lang Syne to the Scots Musical Museum, indicating that it was an ancient song, but that he'd been the first to record it on paper. "Auld lang syne" (literally "old long since") roughly translates as "for old times' sake", and the song is about preserving old friendships and looking back over the past year.

In 1934, the 20-year-old Benjamin Britten composed **A New Year Carol**, setting to music the lyrics of an ancient folk song **Levy Dew**. As with many Christmas and New Year carols, its origins and meaning are a mystery. Britten's carol appeared in *Friday Afternoons*, a collection of songs he'd composed for the school in Prestatyn, Wales, where his brother Robert was headmaster, and where Friday afternoons were reserved for singing. The lyrics had been in print since 1850, and Walter de la Mare had included the poem in his 1931 book *Tom Tiddler's Ground*:

By composing the song for a Welsh school, Britten was taking it back to its roots. The song describes a ceremony that used to be performed in parts of Wales: early in the morning on New Year's Day, children would gather evergreen foliage, draw fresh water from the well, and go from house to house sprinkling water over the inhabitants or on their doors, sometimes in return for a few coins. As they did this, they would sing the ancient song **Levy Dew**.

1. Here we bring new water from the well so clear,
   For to worship God with, this happy New Year.

Chorus:

   Sing levy-dew, sing levy-dew, the water and the wine,
   The seven bright gold wires and the bugles that do shine.

2. Sing reign of fair maid, with gold upon her toe,
   Open you the west door and turn the old year go.

(*Chorus*)

3. Sing reign of fair maid, with gold upon her chin,
   Open you the east door and let the New Year in.

(*Chorus*)

There are various theories as to the meaning of "levy-dew": perhaps the most convincing is that it is a corruption of the French "levez à Dieu" – meaning "raise to God" — referring to the raising of the Host at Holy Communion. The "gold upon her toe" is probably light from the sun setting on the old year; the "gold upon her chin" the light from the New Year's rising sun. The "seven bright gold wires" and "bugles" are widely interpreted as symbolic references to imagery found in the Book of Revelation.

The carol's lyrics mingle older pre-Christian New Year traditions, particularly ceremonies around holy wells or sacred springs, with Christian references. Because of these references, such rituals became acceptable to medieval Christianity, together with the desire to wish one's neighbour well at the beginning of a new year — and by the small monetary payment involved.

As in pre-Christian times, water is an element in some modern New Year celebrations, symbolising spiritual purification; washing away past misfortunes; and welcoming a fresh start. In Britain and many other countries, New Year is celebrated with communal swims in freezing waters, often for charity or as a "refreshing" start. So, as well as raising a glass and singing Auld Lang Syne at midnight on New Year's Eve, we can maybe — just maybe! — choose to celebrate with a refreshing dip in the North Sea at Saltburn or Scarborough on New Year's Day!

Brrrrrr!!

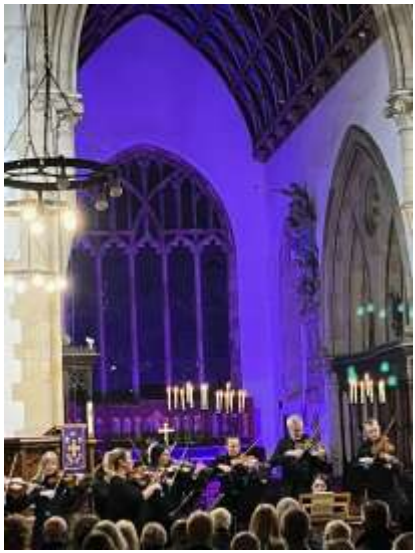
Christine Porter

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S

December saw the Church hosting a number of events with Friends involvement, either through concerts booked into the church (with which we had some involvement in the preparation and hosting) or our own events off-site.

Royal Northern Sinfonia Concert — 3rd December

Following successful uses of the church as a venue for Swaledale Festival concerts, the RNS made a direct booking of the Church as one of the venues for the winter tour of one of its orchestral ensembles. Over 100 people braved a chilly night, but were rewarded with a display of brilliant musicianship by part of the RNS strings section. We could simply marvel at the dexterity of the players and the light and shade brought to each piece through pace and volume. The ensemble really enjoyed their visit to Richmond and have already said they want to return next year. If you missed this one, or were uncertain, do look out for next December's winter concert. As usual, the Friends committee beavered away behind the scenes and with refreshments, helping to make for a good night out.



RNS Concert

This concert also saw the second time in which we used some additional lighting to help to create a more 'professional' concert environment. The feedback on this venture has been very complimentary, so many thanks to Andy Lovell for setting up this temporary lighting array as a backdrop for an excellent concert.

Army Band Concert — 17th December

As ever, a stunningly entertaining evening offered to a full house. We are doubly blessed in having such a talented band on our doorstep ***and*** also that they love the acoustics offered by the church and want to play here at no charge. Friends once again offered hosting support and ran a bar which added to our 2025 funds, as well as dealing with a bucket donation system when audience members departed, which raised much needed funds for the church. This concert followed another well-attended session in the afternoon which was offered by band members, with a series of soloists performing in front of army assessors.

Town Hall Coffee Morning — 20th December

This was the final event of a busy and varied year for the Friends, which saw the return of a fashion show to the calendar, and successful repeats of last year's innovations — a curry night, a quiz night and Blues in the Pews. We also had our first comedy night featuring Paul Karensa and a folk night led by Edwina Hayes. Fortunately, we have first call on the Town Hall for a coffee morning on this final Saturday before Christmas and, after a slow start, the morning became extremely busy. We didn't run a tombola in the summer, which disappointed coffee morning regulars, so Susan and Sarah Scrafton stepped-up to oblige with a fine array of quality prizes to accompany the regular raffle and stalls. Catering, led by David Frankton, was kept busy, and seasonal live music was offered in the background by players Lorna Heatley, Colin Hicks, Rod Hall, Sandy Still and yours truly. The event raised over £500, so thanks to everyone who donated prizes or came along to help. Early indications are that, after meeting all obligations to the Step-Free access fund and works associated with the quinquennial review, the Friends' bank accounts stand at over £17,000, which put us in a great position to support improvements in the Church in 2026.

Events in 2026

Another busy year lies ahead, with coffee mornings, a barbecue, Plant and Produce sale, a folk night with the nationally acclaimed singer/songwriter Jez Lowe on 25 September, curry night, quiz nights and support for concerts given by Station Singers, Richmondshire Choral Society. Other music events are still being discussed, so the full programme will be published with the agenda for this year's Annual General Meeting, which will be held in church after the 10.00 a.m. service on 8th March.

February event

Another of our popular Quiz Nights (see poster opposite) led by the incomparable Dave Tucker, with prizes, Play-Your-Cards-Right and a Pie & Peas supper (vegan/ vegetarian options available) will take place on **SATURDAY 28th FEBRUARY** in the **Town Hall.** Ticket prices remain at **£10 per head** and can be obtained from committee members in church or from the **Book Stop** in the **Market Hall** from the beginning of February. Get them early, as all previous events have sold out.

Jim Jack

Friends of St Mary's Church
Richmond

Quiz Night

Town Hall Richmond
Sat 28th February
7:00 pm

With Top Quizmaster
Dave Tucker

Bar, Raffle,
Play Your Cards Right
Tickets £10 including
Pie and Pea Supper
(Vegetarian Option)
Tickets available in advance from :
"Book Stop" Market Hall Richmond,

Prizes (Top Prize £50)

Call 07974 766020 for Details

www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk

60 SECOND INTERVIEW

This month, it is the turn of **SHARON O'CONNOR,** one of our Pastoral Assistants, to answer the questions posed to her by **John Pritchard.**

First memory: In Aston Park, Birmingham, with my nan.

Favourite meal: Roast dinner.

Favourite music or musician: Vaughan Williams / Paul Simon

Pet dislike: Poor manners.

Best holiday: Pelo camp, Botswana / Arne, Dorset.

Childhood hero: My dad.

Favourite hobby: Knitting (at present).

Luxury on Desert Island: Notebooks and pen.

Recent TV you've enjoyed: The Night Manager (series 1)

Worst fault: Easily irritated.

2 best films ever: The Lord of the Rings / A Few Good Men.

Favourite drink: Luscombe Hot Ginger Beer.

Regret: Not retiring sooner.

Best recent book: Before the Coffee Gets Cold: Toshikasu Kawaguchi.

Favourite charity: Dogs Trust / Practical Action.

Place you feel happiest: Watching waders from a bird hide.

Three dinner companions: CS Lewis, Mary Seacole, Tim Vine.

What do you pray for most: To pray better.

Traditional or new Lord's Prayer: Both equally good.

Epitaph: No guilt in life, no fear in death.

Sharon O'Connor

NOTES FROM THE PAST

If you were to guess how many religious buildings there have been in and around Richmond over the centuries, would you come up with the right answer? This month, **JANE HATCHER** shares her knowledge of the town to enlighten us about some we may not know about.

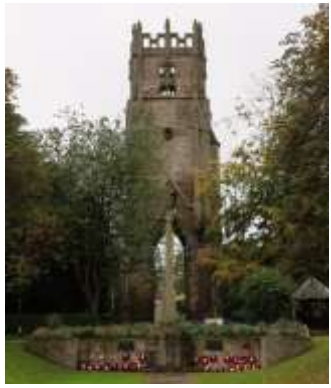
A Plethora of Churches and Chapels

A popular form of fund-raising these days is a sponsored walk, cycle ride, abseil or even parachute jump, usually in aid of a medical charity or similar good cause. Such efforts feature on our local TV news, or occupy column inches in our *Darlington and Stockton Times*. But what was the equivalent long ago?

When I was lecturing in architectural history, and explaining the intricacies of medieval Gothic architecture, students often asked why so much effort had been lavished on our cathedrals, abbeys and churches. It was a difficult task to convey to them just how important religion had been in the Middle Ages. It played a dominant role in the everyday lives of all people, from the highest to the lowest in society. They were willing to make great sacrifices to fund the construction, and beautifying, of religious buildings.

The desire to achieve the very best that technology, craftsmanship and art could produce, for the Glory of God, extended even to areas which could not readily be seen. Superb carvings were placed way out of sight, safe in the knowledge that a rib boss high in the lofty vaulting of a cathedral would be pleasing to God.

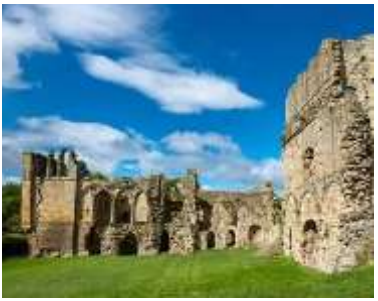
I sometimes try to give people a picture of how medieval Richmond might have looked. The dominant building would of course be the Castle, tall and strong in stone. St Mary's Parish Church would also command the eye, larger than the small timber-framed and thatched cottages lining the streets of Frenchgate, Newbiggin and Bargate. Before the year 1314 we can discount the Market Place, for that was the Outer Bailey, part of the Castle until Scottish raids forced residents to build a defensive wall around that area and move inside it.



Greyfriars' Tower

Other impressive stone buildings had religious purposes. The Greyfriars' house, close to the town, was a relatively late foundation of 1258, but across the river

was the much older St Martin's Priory, there from 1100. And just downstream of Richmond was Easby Abbey founded about 1155.



Easby Abbey

But that was not all. Three medieval chapels stood on the periphery where important roads left the town. One, St Edmund's Chapel, still survives as an almshouse beside the petrol station on Darlington Road. Near the Green Bridge was St James Chapel, still remembered in the name Chapel Wynd. But now completely forgotten was St Anthony's Chapel, where Hurgill Road met Quaker Lane. These three chapels were places for prayer as you either set out on, or returned from, a journey through the hazardous unknown.

Yet another religious building stood on the edge of the town on the road to Brompton-on-Swale. We are still familiar with its name, St Nicholas, and it was a medieval hospital, or place where the chronic sick were accommodated. The person in charge, its Master, was in 1301 by far and away the wealthiest man in Richmond.

This article was prompted by a conversation about Richmond Castle, which had at least four religious buildings, in different parts of the Castle, built at different times, and with different functions. None of these places of worship were churches in the parochial sense that St Mary's is, so we call them chapels.

St Nicholas Chapel
in Richmond Castle

There were three chapels within the area which is now the English Heritage part of the Castle. We'll start with the oldest, which ironically is the best preserved. If you turn left when you enter the Castle, and walk past the keep and continue beyond the cell block where the Conscientious Objectors were incarcerated, you come to a tower in the curtain wall, and a sign indicating St Nicholas Chapel in the lowest part of the tower.

This is not only the oldest chapel, but the best preserved: indeed it survives almost complete from the time when the Castle was first being built, in the late 11th century. It is indeed a very rare survival of a small early-Norman chapel, ingeniously designed for a tiny space. Who worshipped in it? Presumably the many people involved in the construction of this major undertaking. Who knows

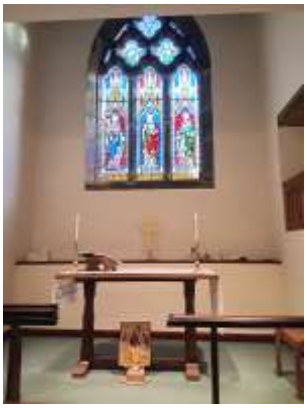
how many priests must have celebrated Mass on its stone altar over the years.

If you continue on a clockwise circuit of the Castle ruins, you walk towards the impressive Scolland's Hall, also one of the earliest parts of the Castle. Before you get there, up to your left is the surviving fragment of another chapel, probably a private oratory, added when a Great Chamber was added to the lord's private apartments at the 'high table' end of the hall. This little chapel was presumably only used when important people were staying here.

The surviving fragment is a piscina, or small arched recess containing a washbasin, set into the wall near where the chapel altar would have been, and used to rinse the precious chalice and patten used during Mass. Of course we have evidence of several piscinas which were installed in St Mary's Church in medieval times.

The Castle's third chapel presents us with problems of interpretation. This one is the best documented, but it is also the one from which least survives. We can't even be sure about exactly where it was located. Some people think the large arched opening up in the far curtain wall was its west window; other evidence suggests it may have stood against the long-collapsed south curtain wall.

This chapel had royal links, for it was endowed by John, Duke of Brittany and Earl of Richmond, who in 1260 had married Beatrice, the daughter of King Henry III. In this chapel he founded a chantry, for six 'white' canons from Egglestone Abbey, near Barnard Castle, to say masses for the souls of himself, and of Beatrice, who died in 1274 and had already been buried in this chapel.



Holy Trinity Chapel in the Market Place

And lastly, the fourth Castle chapel, was Trinity Chapel, with which we are still familiar. It served the Outer Bailey of the Castle, and continued when that area became our Market Place. Trinity Chapel has had a very complicated history, with many phases and uses, both ecclesiastical and secular. The tower houses the town clock, and still chimes for the Apprentice and Curfew bells. Houses and shops were built into parts of it. Other parts became offices and courts for the Archdeaconry of Richmond. Now it houses the Museum of the Green Howards Regiment, but there is still a little chapel used for a service of Holy Communion each Thursday morning.

Jane Hatcher

WHAT GOES AROUND, COMES AROUND

A heart-warming little story with a moral.
The source is unknown, but it is believed to be true.

He was a poor Scottish farmer. One day, while trying to make a living for his family, he heard a cry for help coming from a nearby bog. He dropped his tools and ran to the bog. There, mired to his waist in black muck, was a terrified boy, screaming and struggling to free himself. The farmer saved the lad from what was about to be a slow and quite terrifying death.

The next day, a smart carriage pulled up at the farmer's sparse surroundings. An elegantly dressed gentleman stepped out and introduced himself as the father of the boy the farmer had saved.

"I am so grateful," he said. "I want to repay you for saving my son's life."

"No thank you, my lord," said the farmer, "I cannot accept payment for what I did," waving away the offer. At that moment, the farmer's son came to the door of the family hovel.

"Is this your son?" the nobleman asked.

"Yes, sir," said the farmer proudly.

"I'll make you a deal then. Let me take him and give him a good education. If the lad is anything like his father, he'll grow to be a man you can be even prouder of."

The farmer looked at his son, then back at the nobleman, then back at his son. It was soon agreed.

In time, the farmer's son graduated from St Mary's Hospital School in London and young Alexander went on to be known throughout the world as the noted Sir Alexander Fleming, discoverer of penicillin.

Alexander Fleming

Years afterwards, the nobleman's son was stricken with pneumonia. What saved him? Penicillin.

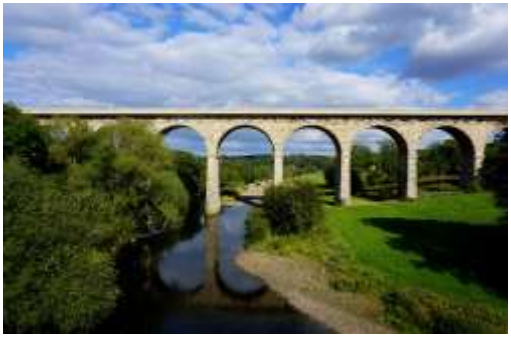
Who was the nobleman? Lord Randolph Churchill. And the son's name? Winston.

Winston Churchill

CAMINO INGLES

Their pilgrimage saga to date has taken **JIM** and **JAN JACK** through historic places, open spaces and local centres of worship. Their journey has been along walking trails already established for other purposes, but this leg challenges them to tread a 'steep and rugged pathway' in the middle. Did they 'tread rejoicingly?' on the route from Bishop Auckland to Witton Park last October? Let's find out.

'Carpe Diem'. Seize the day! And this mid-October morning was definitely a diem to be 'carpe-d'. Our chosen end-point for the day, Witton Park, lay five miles beyond our last finishing-point in Bishop Auckland — or near it. We had ended last time in the Refectory of Auckland Castle, so we started today in the café at Bishop Auckland Town Hall, which can definitely be recommended for its coffee and scones. Thus fortified, already over-dressed for a gloriously sunny day, we set off from the town centre, following our guide notes and a street map, down the old road into 'Bishop' via Newton Cap Bank. This steep-ish downward hill also offered two excellent information boards (another feature of this planned walk) and an excellent view of the 11 arched former railway viaduct to our right. This now carries the road from the North into Bishop Auckland, which was to become a regular 'pop-up' feature of the entire day.



Newton Cap Viaduct

This was another remarkable feat of Victorian engineering, all the more so when we remember that a much newer road viaduct into Gateshead is already having to be demolished as unsafe after only 60 years of its life.

At the foot of the hill, a left turn took us onto a minor road, quickly leading to cut grass fields and woodland close to the River Wear. Alongside the road were large rocks to prevent parking – must be a popular spot for relaxation in the summer — and past Bishop Auckland Rugby Club, before the road petered out. Just in time, we spotted the first comforting Camino way-marker of the day. We were definitely back on track — or so we thought.

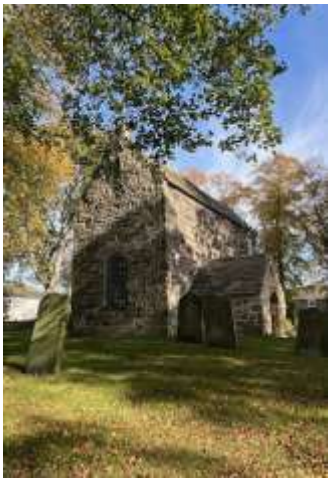
The fields blending into woodland were crossed by a number of paths. Having been warned, both in our notes and by a dedicated community resident, of the

unreliability of a stretch of the designated routes ('it can be dead rough and clarty near the river at Broken Banks' — 'Nuff said!) led us to opt for the safer option offered on higher ground. One steep and rugged pathway to be trod rejoicingly seemed to be the correct one — but then this one on the right and a bit more gently rising looked almost equally popular. No Camino sign to guide us, so we veered right. Now it was a nice walk, and it was again through peaceful woodland **and** I was glad of the hat protecting my balding pate from the abrasive effect of overhead hawthorn branches, **and** it did miss the river bank **and** it was cooler than the open field ... and, and, and. Not much to see, but nature to enjoy, and the trusty Ordnance Survey map was guiding us towards a railway crossing and an acceptable footpath which would get us back on the Camino trail … until we hit the problem.

Spiky Hawthorn!

Quite a small bank, but an incline the like of which I haven't tackled for some time — years in fact. Going up was a real effort, with Jan behind me, pushing my rear quarters as if prompting a beloved but recalcitrant mule. It was finally the thought of returning through the woodland from whence we had come — by now an unattractive prospect — which spurred me on to make a final push and stagger up the last bit, grasping an old discarded railway sleeper for leverage.

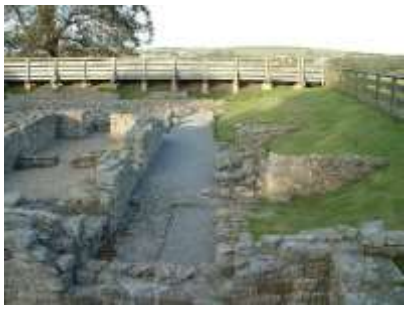
When we reached the summit of our own Everest, we discovered that, firstly, we were a little way from the desired footpath-crossing of the line, and secondly, no disused wagonway this, but a working line judging by the shiny rails. About 100 yards distant however, we could see the boards of the crossing we sought. Praying that no trains came along (An image of a driver on his radio to control centre — "I've just seen two waifs alongside the track mouthing something like 'pilgrims'", leading to a shut-down of the line while the transport police came out to investigate, came to mind), we managed to reach the crossing without further incident.



Escomb Church

Still following our OS map and using easy paths between fields, we eventually re-discovered the familiar Camino way-markers as we entered the village of Escomb, whose main claim to fame is that it

houses one of the only three Saxon churches left in the country. This demanded a visit.



Binchester Roman fort

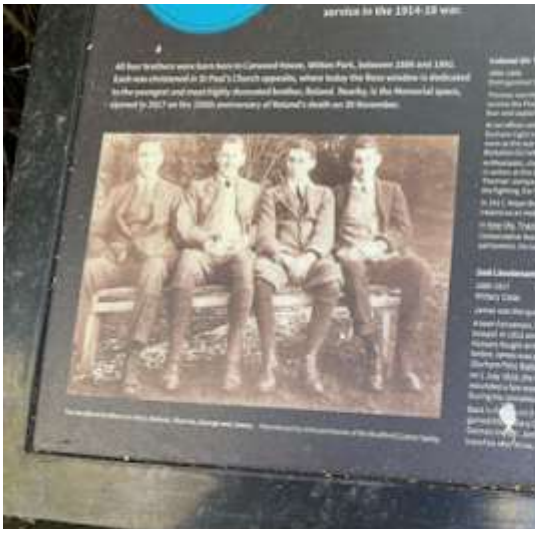
On entering the building, we were able to enjoy its simple splendour and marvel at its ancient architecture and construction skills, whilst a small wedding rehearsal took place at the front of the church. Its many features include its tall, narrow nave and, outside, some of the stones which were dragged from Roman Binchester. Because of the rehearsal, we were unable to seek out such features as markings of chariot ruts; an arch-way from the Roman baths house at Binchester; or a Tree of Life cut into the wall near the altar. This may be the explanation as to why this section of the Camino follows the existing Way of Life trail.

Here we were able to stamp our passports, before leaving to explore the churchyard, to see what is believed to be one of the oldest sundials in situ, high up on the south wall. Sitting on a bench to enjoy the sunshine and be fortified by a Taylor's pie or sausage roll and lemon and ginger tea, provided good sustenance for the next stint. We were now back on the Camino Ingles, which took us alongside some allotments, surprisingly housing a dovecot. Four white doves were sitting comfortably on the apex of a nearby shed roof on a path which led into more woodland, where we met our first fellow walkers of the day — a woman with two energetic boys and an equally energetic dog — who had moved into Witton Park over two years ago from Rochester in Kent. They were relishing the open countryside, freedom and the friendliness of the area and wouldn't go back.

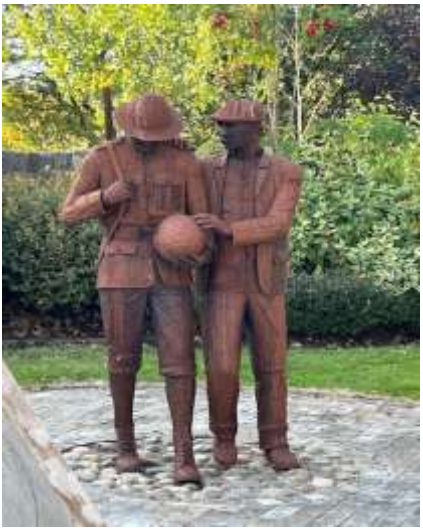
Were we dreaming? Had the sun gone to our heads?

And then we were in Paradise! Not something that many pilgrims can claim after such a short journey, but it turns out that Paradise is the name for this area of reclaimed scrubland, which is now home to extensive fishing lakes.

Heading under a disused railway viaduct, we soon arrived at our destination for the day, which had a remarkable story to tell through a metal sculpture depicting George and Roland Bradford. These two young men were the only two brothers who were awarded the Victoria Cross in WW1. Sons of Witton Park, there were four brothers in all, only one of whom, Thomas, survived the war to die a natural death in 1966 as a knight of the realm. He had also been a Colonel in the British Army with a DSO to his name and a successful captain of Durham County Cricket club, then a Minor County. James, the fourth brother, won the Military Cross, but died from wounds sustained in action in 1917.



The story of the Bradford brothers



George and Roland Bradford

Behind the Memorial Garden there is a tree-lined walk with 73 trees, one for every man from Witton Park killed in action in WW1 — a heavy toll for the families and the community. As for the Bradford brothers, they are commemorated in a rose window in St Paul's Church in the village. Sadly, however, we found this building not only locked, but looking forlorn and probably de-consecrated. The information board in the garden was a solemn way to end this part of our walk, but a reminder of such hard times gone by.

We will resume our walk here later, with time to explore the role which Witton Park played in the very first public railway, recently in the headlines with celebrations of its 200th anniversary. Once again, history is always with us, as we walk this trail through the heart of Durham countryside.

Jim Jack

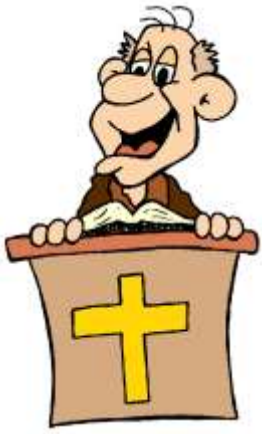
ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

This month it is the turn of **PAUL PERRY** to share with us his thoughts about being our Occasional Preacher and his training for the rôle.

When I was asked if I could write an article about the trials and tribulations of being, and becoming, an occasional preacher, to be honest I struggled to know what to say.

It is an enormous privilege to be given the opportunity to take on any role in the church, and, even though the church must and should look towards its lay members to do more, it is brave of our leadership to place their trust in all of us when they ask us to take on these challenges.

First let's talk about the training process, which can feel a bit intimidating as you begin. I was a little worried about this, as I have never thought of myself as being particularly academic, so the prospect of proving once again how disorganised and slow I was didn't seem particularly appealing. Fortunately, I found the process and the experience to be almost entirely positive. The training was all online and the leaders were very supportive and knowledgeable. It was well paced and quite accessible, although at times it seemed a little slow to me, but then it does cater for a huge range of people and doesn't require any prior experience. It is a quite down-to-earth mixture of theory, theology, shared experience and good practical advice.



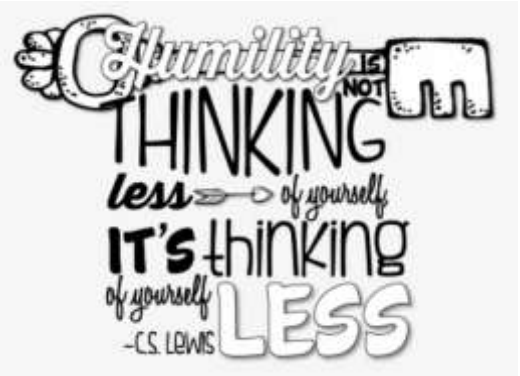
I should possibly add a little context of my own background here. I have been going to church all my life and have spent time in many different denominations: Anglican, Methodist, Congregational, Baptist and a Christian Fellowship with no specific affiliation at all – some quite traditional and others less so. I have been preaching in churches of all these denominations on and off for almost 50 years, and a couple of others in the group I was studying with had similar levels of experience. Most of the group were quite new to it, however, and some had never led anything in church before, so we had a true mix of experiences in the group. This range of

experience was really good and gave us the opportunity to encourage and support one another. It also provided a comfortable environment in which to ask questions of the leaders and one another.

By the end, we all felt encouraged, supported and reassured that this was something we could, and should, do.

Thinking about the preaching itself, there are a few things I struggle with about, and while, I'm preaching: pride/humility, time, nerves, insecurity/confidence, time, imposter syndrome, time, and authority – which seem quite a lot now I've written them down, but don't worry — I'm not going to explore all of these here.

Let's take pride/humility, for instance. Possibly I don't need to tell you that preaching is one of the most visible roles in a church. Because it is so, it can attract an importance it really doesn't deserve, not least in the eyes of the preachers themselves, especially when they are preaching! – or perhaps this is just me. With this comes the danger of pride that I have to battle against continually – and I expect most preachers do – especially when I feel a sermon or service has gone well. We should all understand that it is not what is said by the preacher, but what God does in the heart of each person that is important – hopefully helped by what has been said.



There is a tendency – at least for me – to try to combat pride by playing down what has happened: I may appear a little embarrassed, withdrawn or repressed after a sermon, whether I feel it has gone well or not. This is out of a genuine surprise that God manages to say something useful or significant to someone through me and despite of me, but this is probably not giving proper recognition to what God has done, and at times may get in the way of what He wants to achieve. Don't get me wrong. I do think that preaching is very important for services, churches and the whole community, but it is just one of the tools to help the church achieve it's more important purpose of being the visible, active people of God, supporting the community we are in, continually pouring love, truth and practical action out to those who need it. Being the visible evidence of our invisible God, and, through this evidence of God in our midst, growing His kingdom.

And what about Time? I obviously thought this was important, having mentioned it several times, so let me explain why. Firstly, there are obviously normal time pressures in ensuring I put aside enough time to know what to say on the particular passage or subject and why it is important.

Secondly, running time. When a sermon is going well, it is very easy to lose track of the time, because one is (well, I am!) not focussed on the time passing, but on what you have to say and how you build up to the point, or points, you feel are important. It may be easier to read your sermons, but I find that unnatural. I am mildly dyslexic, so that might be why – or that may just be an excuse.

Thirdly, and finally, length of time. In many of the churches I have been in, a 10 – 14 minute sermon would have been considered unusually short. Would people think that you hadn't done enough preparation to deliver something appropriate? Because of my background in churches where the sermon seemed such an important part of worship that it was given more time, to me It can seem disrespectful to God to restrict the time he has to talk to us or challenge us. Sometimes I feel we would be happy to spend longer choosing a shirt than listening to God's word, which doesn't feel like we have the right balance. I am working on this, for I know that length is not the same as quality. But I also I feel that some of the things we need to explore as a church are difficult and may require extra time, or different ways, to consider them.

I feel we are very lucky at St Mary's, because Martin, Lorna and the team show enormous trust in us: they work hard to support us in whatever they ask us to do and are always happy to hear what we think we can take on to help them and the church.

Paul Perry

"The test of a preacher is that his congregation goes away saying not, 'What a lovely sermon,' but, 'I will do something!' "

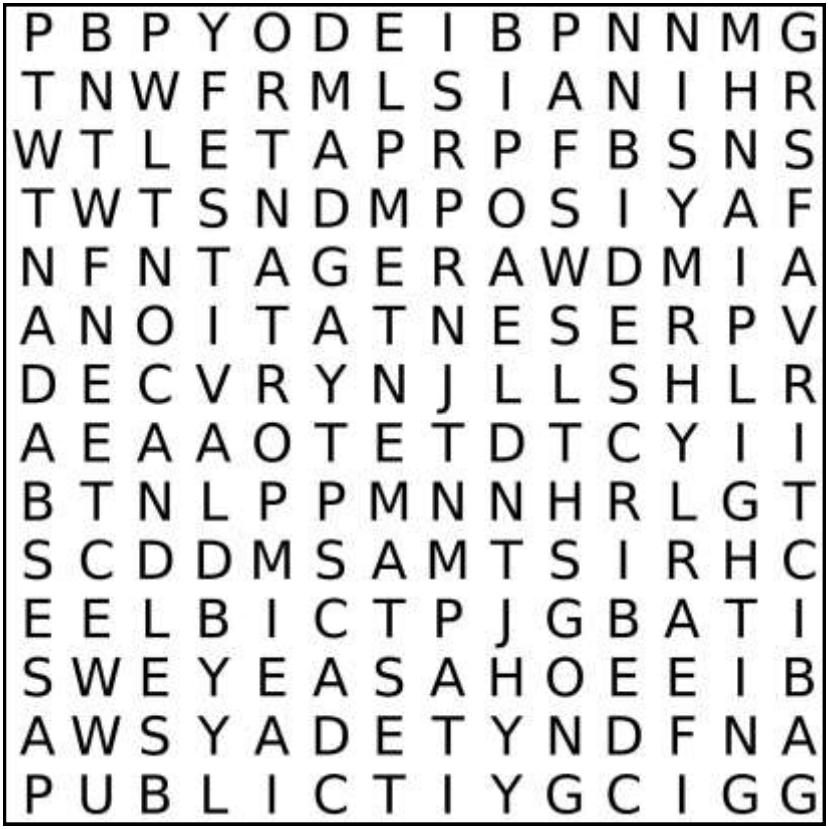
~ Francis de Sales

WORD SEARCH

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple / Candlemas

Candlemas, 2nd February, comes exactly 40 days after Christmas. In New Testament times, 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child — to 'present Him to the Lord'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Luke 2: 22-40). So where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day.

Candlemas
Forty
Days
After
Christmas
New
Testament
Important
Age
Baby
Boy
First
Public
Appearance
Mary
Jewish
Temple
Festival
Presentation
Described
Light
World
Candles
Lighting
Early

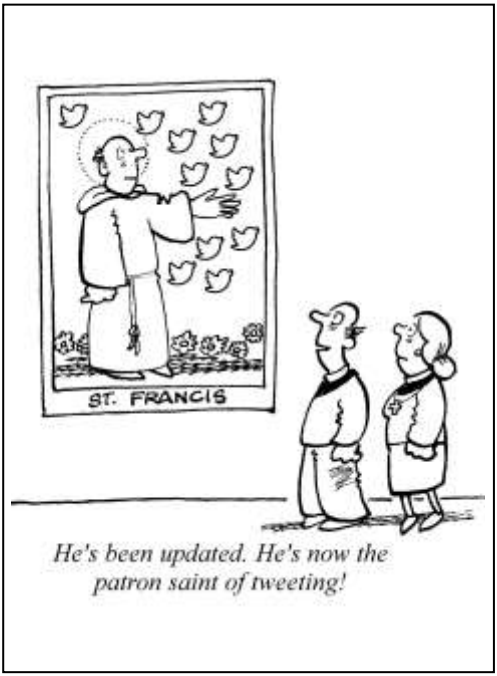


Sudoku - Easy

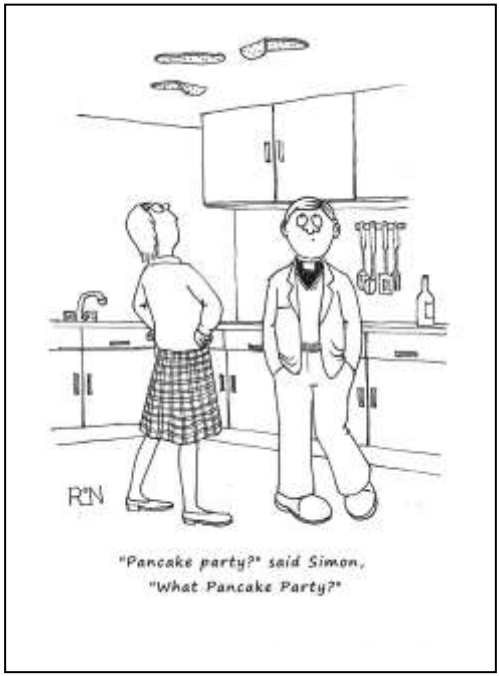
1	9					5		8
	2	6		3	8	1		9
8				7		4		
				9				6
3	4		8		6		1	7
2				1				
		4		8				1
7		3	9	2		6	5	
6		2					8	3

Sudoku - Medium

							7	2
					9	5		3
6	7			3	2	9		
9				1				
4	1	6				7	9	5
				6				1
		3	1	8			4	6
2		7	4					
8	4							



He's been updated. He's now the patron saint of tweeting!



"Pancake party?" said Simon, "What Pancake Party?"

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For more information or to sign up for the Song Squad

Contact Chris Denton 07817 386070

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LOUNGERS!
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Usually, last Friday of each month

From 7.30pm in the BLACK LION
Finkle Street, Richmond
Next meeting:
27th February '26

THIRST!
(The Men's Group)

Meets first Thursday of every month from 7.00 p.m.
Next Meeting at

The Town Hall Pub & Dining, Richmond

5th February '26

Puzzle Solutions

Sudoku — Easy

1	9	7	2	6	4	5	3	8
4	2	6	5	3	8	1	7	9
8	3	5	1	7	9	4	6	2
5	7	1	3	9	2	8	4	6
3	4	9	8	5	6	2	1	7
2	6	8	4	1	7	3	9	5
9	5	4	6	8	3	7	2	1
7	8	3	9	2	1	6	5	4
6	1	2	7	4	5	9	8	3

Sudoku — Medium

3	5	9	6	4	1	8	7	2
1	2	4	8	7	9	5	6	3
6	7	8	5	3	2	9	1	4
9	3	5	7	1	4	6	2	8
4	1	6	3	2	8	7	9	5
7	8	2	9	6	5	4	3	1
5	9	3	1	8	7	2	4	6
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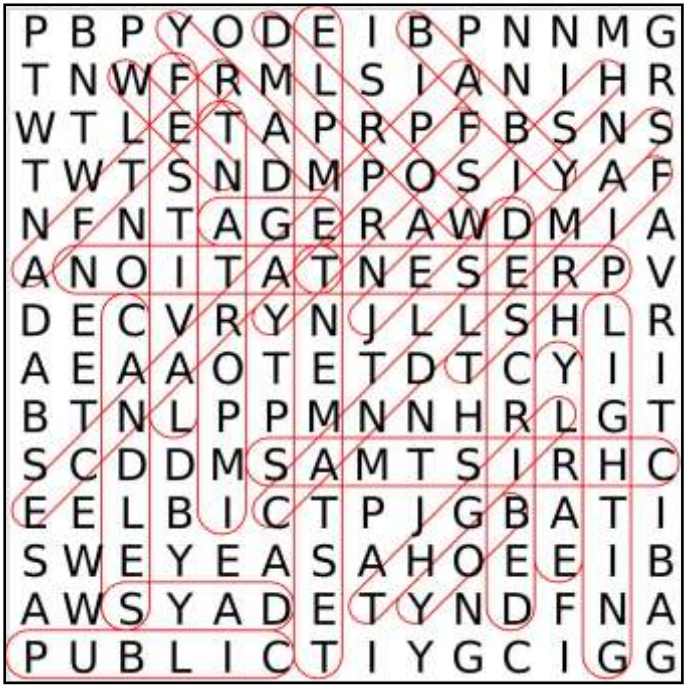
8	4	1	2	9	6	3	5	7

Wordsearch



Deadline for March '26 edition; Monday 9th February.
To contribute letters, articles, etc. please contact connections.ed24@gmail.com or 07866 033263

INFORMATION POINT — ALL ARE WELCOME

There are a number of groups working in the church. All are welcome if you fancy contacting the group and being part of what they do.

Keith Robson reminds us that the Happy Bodgers are operating once more for help with odd jobs. Keith's contact number is (07866) 325843

AFTER THE CARDS AND VISITORS

Bereavement is a very difficult time for the spouse/partner left behind.

Starting again on your own is even more difficult.

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Our informal meetings are on the first Wednesday of every month at the Morro Lounge, Richmond Market Place starting at 1.30 p.m.

Please phone Carrie Stephenson (01748) 850103 if you would welcome any more information. The approach is very informal and relaxed

TELEPHONE SUPPORT IS ALSO AVAILABLE.

Do please get in touch.

PASTORAL CARE — A CONTINUING SERVICE

The St Mary's Church community wishes to do all we can to support, listen and love all in our parish, whether members of our church or not.

We are refreshing the **Prayer Circle,** an email-based anonymous group of church members who commit to pray when specific prayer requests are made, usually for named people. These can be relatives, friends or acquaintances, who may not even live in the area, but who would appreciate confidential prayer. No prayer request is ever too small or trivial. Whatever you wish to share, in confidence, we will support you in prayer.

If you would like prayer (or to be a pray-er), please contact **Anna** via *boyceadl11@ gmail.com*

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The 'Welcome Hub' has now been running successfully for three years.

If you would like to learn more about joining the volunteering team, please contact:

Dr John Ridley,

Welcome Hub Coordinator

on (01748 818653 or

JohnRidley7449@aol.com).

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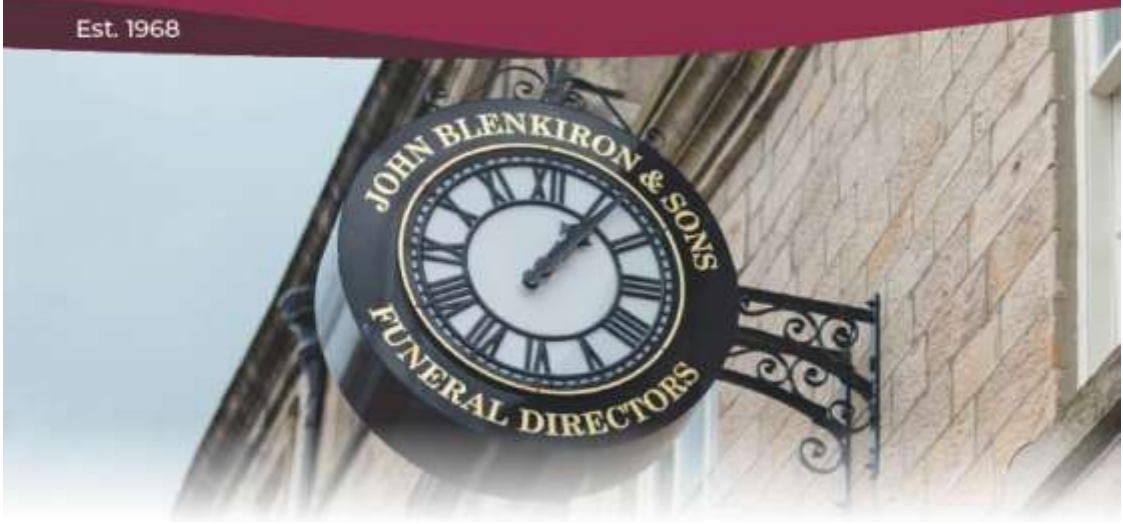

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