

CONNECTIONS

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

March 2026



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Silver Award 2024

THE BENEFICE OF RICHMOND WITH HUDSWELL, DOWNHOLME AND MARSKE

www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk
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MINISTRY TEAM

RECTOR

The Revd Canon Martin Fletcher
martin.fletcher@leeds.anglican.org

The Rectory, Church Wynd, Richmond
07762 440094 or (01748) 821241

ASSISTANT CURATE

Revd Lorna Heatley lorna.heatley@leeds.anglican.org 07783 903156

HONORARY CLERGY

Bishop John Pritchard - Revd Jennifer Williamson - Revd Pauline Shepherd
Revd Martin Clarke - Revd Stewart Ridley

OCCASIONAL PREACHER

Paul Perry

PASTORAL ASSISTANTS

Graham Pearson (07455) 943875 Sharon McCormack (07791) 426659
Sharon O'Connor (07704) 467833 Jan Jack (07725) 574188

PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayer requests to Anna via boyceadl11@gmail.com

CHURCH OFFICERS — ST MARY THE VIRGIN, RICHMOND

Mayor's Warden	Peter Trewby	(01748) 824468	24 Hurgill Road, Richmond
Rector's Warden	Wendy Pritchard	(01748) 850854	
Warden Emeritus	David Frankton	(01748) 823531	8 Allan's Court, Richmond
Director of Music	Colin Hicks	(07498) 299061	
Bell Captain	Susan Welch	(01748) 823700	8 Maple Road, Richmond
Head Verger	John Welch	(01748) 823700	8 Maple Road, Richmond

Parish Administrator & Secretary to the PCC

Colin Hicks (07498) 299061 admin@richmondhudswellparish.org.uk

OFFICERS OF THE PCC (AND OTHERS)

Lay Chair	Peter Trewby	(01748) 824468	24 Hurgill Road, Richmond
Treasurer	Paul Carnell		stmarys@paulcarnell.co.uk
Safeguarding Officer	Jan Beeton	(01748) 823169	beetonjanet14@gmail.com
Magazine Editor	John McCormack	(07866) 033263	connections.ed24@gmail.com
Magazine Advertising	Jim Jack	(07754) 283161	
Magazine Distribution	To be confirmed		
Church Bookings	Colin Hicks		admin@richmondhudswellparish.org.uk
Publicity	Andy Lovell	(07974) 766020	skeeby@skeeby.com

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 from 1st 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

Reader	George Alderson (07487) 257646	68, Brompton Park, Brompton on Swale DL10 7JP
Church Warden	Andra Sison-Ham (07753) 842246	andrakrumins@gmail.com
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

As I write, we seem to have had a succession of damp and dreary days since forever, but, as Revd Lorna says in her letter, let's hope we see some rays of sunshine soon. And to be positive, British Summer Time starts on 29th of this month – definitely something to look forward to.

As usual, we have another cornucopia of articles this month, which we hope will be of interest to our readers. After Lorna's Letter, with its exhortation to take something up for Lent, rather than giving something up, Carole McCormack elaborates upon our choice of front cover picture. Later on, she also offers some reflections on a recent holiday in India. John Pritchard tackles another Hard Question and has also kindly summarised the proceedings of the last PCC meeting. There is the concluding part of Jan Beeton's fascinating visit to Madagascar; the next stage of Jim & Jan Jack's Camino Walk through County Durham; and an appreciation of the quiet work behind the scenes of Keith Robson, who has now stood down from his role co-ordinating this magazine's distribution.

The Friends Committee met last month to plan their activities for 2026 and Jim Jack has kindly listed these out for you. There are so many events that some extra help would be appreciated, so, if you can spare a bit of time, please get in touch. Note also the date of their AGM this month.

Anyone with Irish connections will know that St Patrick's Day is coming up, so Christine Porter has been exploring the background to the celebrations. Jane Hatcher shares her knowledge of local Mills on the Swale, and Jan Jack has contributed a lovely, inspiring story about one of our parishioners. Intrigued? – read on to find out more. Finally, the new Headteacher of Trinity Academy introduces herself; there are details about the World Day of Prayer Service; the Mothers' Union is our Charity of the Month; and there is a poster about a Concert being given by the British Army Band from Catterick in memory of our late Mayor – Cllr Bob White.

Enjoy!

John McCormack

**Cover photo by Wendy Pritchard
*March Hare***



Lorna's letter March 2026



Happy March everyone! I'm trying to remember how often I've written about light in these clergy messages since I got here. I believe it may be light-themed every other time for me, but this time, just to be different, it's going to be light-themed again. Sorry for the bait and switch there, but it's impossible not to do it, as we all reside in a time when we try to remember the last time we actually saw blue sky, let alone the sun. I hope, by the time this message goes out, we will have seen it at least twice more.

You don't realise how much living in darkness can affect a person, until you realise that out of the however many days we've had in 2026, only around three of them have had sunlight. Those little rays of hope that make you realise just how necessary light is for our moods and wellbeing, hopefully giving enough vitamin D when we venture out of our houses, so as not to get rickets.

We add to this being in the period of Lent. Though I hope many of you have been energised by our Lent Course on the Lord's Prayer, this is often a time when most people give something up — something they enjoy. Perhaps it's chocolate, or alcohol, or even perhaps it's being on your phone as much, but something you'll miss (even if at times it's for the better and not for the worse). Although I always advocate giving something up if it's detrimental to your health, and Lent is a good time to micro-dose that giving up, I wonder, in these relentlessly dark times, both in our weather and in our world, perhaps we should be *taking* things up instead?

So what can you take up? It could be donations of time or money. Once a week, donating what you would have spent on your chocolate habit to give to a charity you love, but haven't been able to spare change for, or, alternatively, our Charity of the Month this month — the Mother's Union. It could be volunteering to help out a friend or family member, when sometimes it can feel like a bit of a chore. It's just being a bright spot in someone's day, really, making a small difference any way you can. Being a light in the world.



I realise this is coming at the sort of mid-way point of Lent, so you may be thinking, “Lorna this is simply not possible”, but I feel being a light in our world is not just for Lent, it’s for life. Even if you think that what you do can’t make that much of a difference, try and remember the last time you saw a mere patch of blue sky, and the euphoria that came with that.

We’re fast approaching Easter now, the time when the Light of the World leaves it, leaving all feeling hopeless and bereft, and then comes back again bringing joy and optimism. Let’s not wait until then for the light to return – let’s do it now.

Blessings,

Lorna



FROM THE REGISTERS



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



Stella Birch	
Mohammed Sakr	8th January '26
Philip Emerson	10th January '26
Carol Copeland	12th January '26

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.

COVER STORY

Each month, we seek to find a seasonal or topical image, perhaps linked to local or national events, to use on our front cover. Having not used an animal in recent memory, **CAROLE McCORMACK** provides some background to this month's choice of a March Hare.

We're always looking for a new perspective on each month, with which to illustrate our front cover. Flowers are a colourful sign of the changing seasons, and these often figure on our covers, but for this edition we have used a beautiful image of a 'March Hare' provided by Wendy Pritchard – such a talented photographer.

The common brown hare is a fascinating creature and has generated many legends and much folklore over the centuries. The adult is remarkably large! I



Hares in Spring

I remember the first time I saw a hare – in Norfolk – and it was several seconds before I could make sense of what I was looking at, simply because of its size. Generally nocturnal and shy in nature, hares change their behaviour in the spring, when they can be seen in broad daylight chasing one another around in fields. During this spring frenzy, they sometimes strike one another with their paws, and appear to be "boxing". This is not just competition between males: females may also hit males, either to show they are not ready to mate or to test the males' determination. The animals don't just stand and box – they leap and turn and the display is quite enthralling.

The female nests in a depression on the surface of the ground known as a form, rather than nesting in a burrow, and the young leverets (the off-spring) are fully-furred and active as soon as they are born. Litters may consist of three or four young and a female can bear three litters a year, with hares living for up to twelve years. The breeding season lasts from January to August.

Thankfully, the brown hare is not considered to be endangered. It is herbivorous and lives throughout Europe in grassy open country. Its major protection from

predators, such as foxes and large birds of prey, is its speed, for it is Britain's fastest land mammal.



Nystic Hare!

Its size, beauty, agility and seasonal behaviour have always inspired curiosity and story-weaving. In these myths, the hare is always enigmatic: sometimes it is a goddess or the companion of a goddess. It has also been portrayed as a supernatural messenger; a fertility symbol; and a trickster. Other associations are with Easter and eggs; madness in March; the moon; the elixir of life; the last corn standing at harvest-time; sacrificing themselves in fires; and with shape-shifting and witchcraft. No wonder people find it so intriguing.

Carole McCormack

AND DON'T FORGET — SUNDAY, 15th MARCH



HARD QUESTIONS

This month **JOHN PRITCHARD** looks at a question that must have occurred to most Christians at some stage in their faith journey.

How can we believe in Miracles in an age of Science?

Good question. Surely science now deals with all the questions that the credulous people of previous ages saw as miracles. But hold on; we have some ground clearing to do. What exactly do we mean by ‘miracle’?

First, we need to define our terms. Einstein was once asked if he still believed in miracles. ‘Tell me,’ he answered, ‘what isn’t a miracle?’ So some people, like Walt Whitman in his famous poem *Miracles*, believe everything is a miracle, from first breath to falling leaf.

Second, is the miraculous the same as the supernatural? I’m inclined to think of the supernatural as what someone called, ‘an infinite projection of the natural.’ In other words, if you press ‘natural’ far enough you get to some far-reaching places. Think of a continuum that goes: natural – unexpected – unusual – exceptional – extraordinary – amazing – miraculous.’ Not supernatural, perhaps, but *supra-natural*.

Thirdly, does that mean the word miracle is the wrong word? Not necessarily, if we’re happy with it. But we might prefer to say that the so-called miraculous is what happens when natural processes are intensified or ‘speeded-up’ so that amazing things happen. That’s just the way the world is, and if God’s Spirit is present and active in every part of creation, then this seems pretty reasonable.

Laws of nature

Let’s put some scientific ideas in here. The person-in-the-street’s view of miracles is they mean an event that breaks the laws of nature. But most scientists would prefer to speak of ‘the observable regularities of nature’ rather than ‘the laws of nature.’ In other words, nature isn’t boxed in by iron rules — a closed box of Newtonian physics. The discoveries of the last century have opened up a much more complex interaction of forces in nature.



Chaos theory (the butterfly effect, where a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil contributes to a hurricane in Texas); *quantum theory* with a mind-bending picture of sub-atomic particles flying around randomly in empty space; *string theory* replacing all matter and fundamental forces with one element – ‘strings’. All of this suggests a universe much more open-textured than was previously thought. One where all sorts of strange things can happen.

So miracles aren’t breaches of the rules; they don’t violate the way the universe works. They demonstrate the way the universe *occasionally* works. They don’t violate natural law; they are the natural law of a *deeper understanding of reality*.

How and why questions

Let’s remember also that, broadly speaking, science answers the ‘how’ questions about the universe and about life, and religion answers the ‘why’ questions about the universe and about life. We don’t look to religion to explain the Big Bang, but neither do we look to science to answer the question ‘why is there something rather than nothing?’ or ‘why is *good* good?’

Did Jesus do miracles?

Yes. That’s the overwhelming evidence of his contemporaries, even those who were unbelievers. But we must remember that descriptions of unusual events were bound to be given in pre-scientific terms. As I see them, they give us glimpses of the divine energy of the Kingdom of God (the deeper order of reality) at



work, and it’s this energy that Jesus unleashed in his ministry. As one theologian wrote, ‘Jesus experimented with Omnipotence (the power of God) and let it find its own limits. Maybe there were things that Divine Love would not do, because God loves the order of the world as well as the happiness of people. But Jesus had nothing to fear – he would be shown as he went; he would know in himself what it pleased Almighty Love to do.’

What about so-called ‘miracles’ today? I think that when we consciously draw on that ‘divine energy’ (the Holy Spirit) and align ourselves with God’s life and purposes in prayer, then synchronicities and co-incidences begin to happen. It’s nothing to do with being good or moral or pious; it’s to do with the uninterrupted flow of God’s love being released through us and our prayer.

Or, as Archbishop William Temple put it simply: ‘When I pray, coincidences happen; when I don’t pray, they don’t happen.’

So let's pray!

As a personal example with our son-in-law Ben who has terminal brain cancer, we pray for the ultimate limits of the possible – and then a bit more. I don't mind what we call it, but I pray that the skills of the NHS aligned with the love of God will push the natural healing possibilities in this situation to their furthest limits (and yes, beyond). But I don't know what those limits are. Clearly there are limits in a finite universe, just as you can't have square circles or dry rain, but I want those limits to be extraordinary.

And – to bring the article round to the beginning again – there are miracles in the amazing love and prayer surrounding Ben, and miracles of resilience and courage in the family. Yes, perhaps everything in this kaleidoscopic roller-coaster of life is indeed a miracle.

John Pritchard

A BIG 'THANK YOU' TO KEITH ROBSON

The February edition marked a big milestone in the magazine's history when Keith Robson, who organises the delivery of your magazine as well as doing a 'round' himself, stepped down after over 10 years involvement in the publication. Having started as part of the assembly group who met monthly to collate and staple the magazines (over 200 of them) for distribution, he willingly took on the role of delivery co-ordinator, which involved not only batching the magazines for the delivery team, but also maintaining delivery lists and ensuring all subscriptions were collected.



COVID brought some significant problems, as people couldn't meet to put the magazine together, hence the new challenges of organising the A5 printed booklets we use now. Also, collecting cash 'on the doorstep' became difficult, so keeping an eye on the varied payments by cash, cheque, direct bank payment and payment card provided extra work. He has done a splendid job with efficiency, care, attention to detail and looking after his team. Many thanks, Keith, for your quiet service to our award-winning magazine. It is hugely appreciated.

Connections Editorial team

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER — FRIDAY 6th MARCH '26

An ecumenical service has been prepared by the women of Nigeria, and this year it is the turn of Richmond Methodist Church to host the event. For details, see the poster below.

All are welcome.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

A service for everyone!

Friday 6 March

I will give you rest, come

Nigeria 2026

Please come and support this beautiful service

1.30pm

Richmond Methodist Church

Refreshments afterwards



INFORMED PRAYER PRAYERFUL ACTION

24-7 365 Days a year Prayer movement Ecumenical International Women-led

wwdp.org.uk

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TIME OF MY LIFE (part 2)

Last month, **JAN BEETON** started to recount her experiences and impressions gained on a study tour of **Medicine, Society and Nature in Madagascar** some 10 years ago. You may recall that we left her last time in an Orthopaedic Hospital, where the story now continues.



Donation of crutches

We donated several pairs of modern crutches, which bemused the young doctor until she was shown how they could be modified for height.



Thankfully, adjustable!

Our last visit for the day was to a state-run residential school for deaf children. The children, ranging from five to sixteen, gathered in their assembly hall to greet us, before we were shown their accommodation, classrooms and, for the older children, their workshops where they were trained in woodworking, sewing and useful crafts. In the extensive grounds, children learned gardening skills, growing



In the Assembly Hall

food used for their meals. It was a joyful, uplifting place. We, of course, spent lots of money buying items they had made: for me this included special cloths, which I now use each Christmas to remind me



Happy, smiling children

of those proud children who, I hope, fare well as they leave that lovely place.

We then set out on a long five-hour drive to Ranomafana national park, where we were due to have a break from healthcare, planning to go on a night walk to track nocturnal lemurs and other wildlife. However, we did briefly stop at a desperately poor village and rural clinic on the way. The health worker there described high levels of bilharzia, malaria and dysentery. His examination couch was actually his own bed, and he had few resources. After leaving him with some packs of dressings, we quickly left, as the area felt unsafe.



The way to carry things

Wherever we went, people were on the move, often carrying large packs on their heads.

The following morning, we set off early to trek again in the park with a naturalist guide who not only helped to identify the myriads of unfamiliar plants and animals, but, as we climbed through canyons to the tops, he told us about the burial practices of the local people. We had already seen family vaults outside

villages; seen stalls in markets selling bolts of thin cloth for funereal use; and had been told about the traditions for families to celebrate their dead relatives. Every few years, families gather at the vaults, bringing the bodies out to be wrapped in fresh shrouds, while they were told all the family news and concerns before everyone celebrated with food and drink. Once the tombs were swept clean and repainted, the bodies were returned until the next time.

In the high canyons, this practice varied in that bodies were wrapped and left in family caves until they had desiccated, before being re-wrapped and celebrated in a similar way. Climbing to the caves was a perilous journey!



The group in the mountains

We next headed to Ifaty on the coast, passing areas of sapphire panning which looked like places in the wild west gold rush, full of hard scary men and families. Shanty structures festooned the riverbanks, and we feared for the safety of unaccompanied young children at the water's edge.



Panning for sapphires

In Ifaty, a coastal town on the Mozambique Straights, we visited an NGO school training teenagers from local villages in agricultural techniques. Before showing us their plants and animals, we had an exuberant demonstration of their drumming skills, dances and songs.

South Madagascar is becoming drier due to climate change, with some places becoming deserts. As well as learning to grow food crops, the children planted bushes and trees to take back to their villages to inhibit soil erosion.



Cultivating bushes



A baobab tree

In these desert-like conditions, some plants and animals are wonderfully adapted to thrive, including the indigenous baobabs and others growing in a spiny forest, providing home to a range of birds and mammals.



In the spiny forest

After flying North to the Antasibe-Mantadia national park region, we then had our last professional

visits including a Christian charity dispensary providing ante-natal and post-natal care and dealing with childhood malnutrition. We were impressed by their education programmes and outreach, so we donated boxes of fortified food pouches for their work.



Presenting food pouches at the Christian dispensary

A surprise came at the end of our tour. Government officials had been informed of a medical tour visiting their provision and we were joined for our last dinner and overnight stay by Dr Felix, the technical advisor to the Health Minister. He had recently been to a conference in Geneva and shared his presentation with



Last evening with Dr Felix

us, this time in English, not French! He was very frank about current problems, but described a positive vision of what could be achieved by 2030. He kindly shared his PowerPoint so that we could print it at home and take time to consider the details. HIV was a considerable issue at that time, and I wonder how the country fared during the recent pandemic. One fact that still haunts me was their hope to have sanitation in just 50% of

schools by 2030! I was fortunate to be sitting next to Dr Felix for dinner, and he was wonderfully indiscreet about his government and health funding. He remarked that he wished the Welsh missionaries had stayed as now they would be part of the Commonwealth.

We left this wonderful, but desperately poor, country saddened by the living and health conditions for much of the population.

Jan Beeton

CHARITY OF THE MONTH – MARCH



This month it is the turn of the Mothers' Union to seek our support, with an appeal from **Susan Scrafton & Margaret Clayson**.

Mothers Union is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. It was founded by Mary Sumner, wife of a parish priest, who realised ladies in her parish were struggling to feed and clothe their families. It has now become a worldwide Christian organisation of over four million members, spread across eighty-four countries.

St. Mary's is a very small branch in comparison to many others, but our members do work very hard to raise funds so that we can support various projects locally and internationally. This year, for example, once again we have supported the Warm Hub based at the Methodist Church here in Richmond; Colburn Hub Community Café; and Foodshare Zero Waste.

Within the Diocese, we have donated to the AFIA (Away From It All) project, allowing families to enjoy a holiday in one of two caravans sited at Filey. Donations have also been given to The Big Give; Make a Mother's Day; Summer of Hope; and Overseas Mission.

We have a Coffee Morning booked in the Town Hall on Saturday, 5th September, and continue to be very grateful to all at St. Mary's who generously support our Branch.

Membership of the MU is open to all – male and female, parent or not, and you would be most welcome to join us. Our branch at St Mary's has four meetings a year and church services for Lady Day, Advent/Christmas and Mary Sumner Day. In between, we have occasional social gatherings, usually at the Station.

There are many members of our congregation who "mother" by offering love and support to others. In this way they are doing the work of the Mothers Union, and for this we thank you.



*Susan Scrafton &
Margaret Clayson*

ONE MORE STEP ALONG THE ROAD

Last month, we left **JIM & JAN JACK** arriving in Witton Park, about two-thirds of the way through their journey covering the Durham leg of the **Camino Ingles**. Each has had its own distinguishing features.

This one might be sub-titled 'of war and trains and a surprise encounter'. Let's pick-up the journey in the **Memorial Garden to the Fighting Bradfords** — boys from the same family who all served with distinction in WW1, three of whom won honours but died in the service of their country.

Another day, another bite of the elephant, and this day promised to be interesting in a different sort of way. We returned to Witton Park, a historic village in its own right, which expanded with the discovery of coal and the opening of the first steam railway in the world. Slightly shorter than previous chunks, with more time to take in what we found along the way, we started at the memorial garden to the Bradford



The Bradford brothers

brothers in Witton Park, having left the car once more in Bishop Auckland and caught the no: 87 Hodgsons bus from the stop nearly opposite the hospital.

Having spent a little more time absorbing the information boards, we walked through the gateway the village green, iron posts set on each side, part of the same sculpture work in the garden with symbols of the Bradford boys' lives and service welded into each face of the posts. Once again we found ourselves



Iron gate posts

searching for the comforting Camino waymarks and speculating how early pilgrims on any routes found their way in times gone by. Thankfully, the map provided by the Way of Life information site led us to work out that a diagonal path across the green and a short walk along the tarmac road, passing a white signpost telling us that Bishop Auckland was 2.5 miles in one direction, Crook 4 miles in the other, helped us to continue downhill, before the comforting blue and yellow Camino waymark showed where we needed to leave the road and continue cross country.

After only a few yards, we bore diagonally left up a hill to locate the trail. Where previous legs have featured welcoming, enveloping woodland, here we were surrounded by open farm land with open views across autumnal countryside. Soon we joined a surfaced track and bore left on a walk through Durham's industrial past, for we were on a former wagonway, used by horse-drawn carts to move coal to market. No signs of mines ('pits') any longer, as the land had long since been grassed over. Passing cottages with names such as the Old Forge, however, were ample reminder of the type of works needed to keep the collieries operational in their heyday.

Crossing a minor road, we were greeted by another fascinating information board as we entered the important village of Phoenix Row. Never heard of it? It was here that coal carried by horse-drawn cart was transferred to the new Stockton and Darlington Railway. Phoenix Row is, as its name suggests, a line of terraced houses in the style of

their times — although people have put their individual stamp on their properties. Having gone to the left of the end terrace house, with a hand-painted mural as shown in the photo, we walked along the rear of the properties, all with their 'outside netty' buildings converted to modern use on our right, and open fields where horses grazed or allotments flourished to our left.



Decorated end-terrace — Phoenix Row

Coming to the other end of the terrace, our attention was drawn to some of the corner stones used to build the last house. These had two bolt holes drilled in them and were former sleeper stones, which carried the first rails of the system which 'changed the world.'

Turning to rejoin the Camino route, we were confronted by another piece of significant engineering in the shape of a straight, inclined embankment, going steadily upwards. What struck us was the tremendous amount of earth which must have been dug and built by hundreds of 'navvies' (inland navigators — many from Ireland and Wales), to build this essential part of the new railway

network. Early steam locomotives were not powerful enough to carry the heavy loads of coal up and down the hills to get this vital source of industrial power to the Phoenix Row collection point, so a stationary steam engine was built at the top of the hill to pull the coal-filled wagons up to the top of the hill and then control their release down to Phoenix Row. We could only marvel at the work of the men who made this possible.

This section of the walk was also enhanced by the recent addition of markers and information points related to the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington railway — every reason to learn more of the history and lives of the people who lived and worked here in the past.



Etherley Incline — steeper than the photo makes it look!

A delightfully easy part of the walk took us to the top of the incline, with land recently fenced off on the right. This was the area which had housed the steam engine which powered the incline — ‘an engineering marvel of the age’ and a place to be visited in Victorian times. This was not only to see the engine itself, but to talk with Thomas Greener, a leading engineering associate of George Stephenson, who loved this engine and also sketched local scenes and characters on its interior walls. He served there until the mid-1840s, before he was tragically killed in an accident involving the engine he guarded so lovingly.

And so onwards to the top of the incline. It looked inviting to cross the road and rejoin the incline downwards, but this was not the recommended way. Instead we were directed to walk along the side of a main road, requiring the need to step close to the grass in some places where there was no pavement, acknowledging the many drivers who considerately gave us a wide berth.

Having walked for about half-a-mile back out into the countryside, we found the next stretch of way-marked Camino. This took us off the road southwards towards our destination of West Auckland, across grassy fields once more and alongside Autumn woodland. The track offered easy walking, passing an isolated cottage with an active border collie, who exhibited great hurdling skills across the dry-stone wall surrounding this lovely property.

A slight right turn took us down a hill before West Auckland hove into view, our planned destination for the day. We expected no more learning, no more of the unexpected, as the Manor Hotel was approached on our right — an opportunity at last for coffee, a stamp on the passport, and a bus to take us back to our car.

And then, footsteps behind, approaching at a faster rate than we were walking. ‘Are you doing the Camino?’ the voice above the feet was heard to say. What a random question! Jan turned and asked, ‘Yes. Are you Keith Taylor?’ — a random question attracting an even more random reply.

This was indeed Keith Taylor, the architect and driving force behind the creation of the whole Durham route of the Camino Ingles which we have chosen to walk. A chance encounter? Well, perhaps not chance for a pilgrim on a journey. As Keith joined us for coffee and a most stimulating conversation, he ventured, ‘This meeting is what I call one of my St James’ moments.’ A last minute decision to walk to West Auckland and check the route, rather than take his car.

A retired primary school headteacher in County Durham, a heart attack had motivated Keith to ensure that he walked every day. Having already experienced two Camino walks abroad, and knowing of the tale of St Godric, he brought together a small group with the aim of formalising a Durham Leg of the Camino Ingles, with the aim of eventually ensuring that there would be a linked right-of-way all of the way from Godric’s final home to Southampton, before taking the ferry for Spain and on to Santiago de Compostella.

He and his group are constantly walking sections in Durham to check that the directions and way-marking are up-to-date. With a final reminder of a gruesome murderer and a world cup winning British football team (West Auckland FC — I kid you not. They defeated Juventus to win the first ever World Cup in 1909) we headed for the bus to get us back to our car. Note the statue on West Auckland Green featuring a footballer and a miner — well worth a look where the A68 from the south merges with the road through the village.



Statue on West Auckland Green

Definitely another day of walking through our history. What will the route to Ingleton and on to Gainford unfold? That’s for another day.

Jim Jack

ST PATRICK'S DAY



17th March is celebrated by the Irish community around the world, so **CHRISTINE PORTER** has been looking into how the celebrations evolved.



New Yorkers love razzamatazz, and their St Patrick's Day Parade is one of the biggest parades in the world, second only to the world's largest, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, also in New York. Every 17th March, around 150,000 people march along 5th Avenue in Manhattan on St Patrick's Day (or St Patty, as he is often known in the US). The Parade runs for six hours, with performers, Irish dancers and bagpipes, all in green attire. The Empire State Building is also illuminated in green for the occasion.

Chicago has another massive parade, and both the New York and Chicago parades attract as many as two million spectators. The Chicago River is also dyed green — thanks to the 100 pounds of dye that is poured into the river beforehand. The Chicago parade lasts more than three hours, a jamboree of Irish dancers, bagpipes, and floats. Afterwards, revellers continue celebrating in the city's Irish pubs and restaurants, with corned beef, cabbage, and even green beer.



Chicago River — dyed green for the day.

St Patrick's Day is also celebrated elsewhere in the US, especially in cities with large Irish-American populations such as Boston, Savannah and Philadelphia, with parades, Irish-themed parties and green-themed decorations. The parades include groups such as marching bands, the military, fire brigades, cultural and charitable organisations, voluntary and youth groups, and fraternities, and many of these parades have become more akin to a carnival. Although not an official national holiday, St Patrick's Day is a legal, recognised holiday in places such as Suffolk County, Massachusetts, and Savannah, Georgia.

Celebrating St Patrick's Day stems from a tradition that began in the US in the 18th century. The first parade was held in 1762 by Irish members of the British

Colonial Army to acknowledge their homeland. In the 19th century, millions of Irish people emigrated to the US and, like the soldiers who preceded them, they also wanted to remember the country they'd left behind. As Irish-Americans became politically powerful, St Patrick's Day celebrations spread to the big cities, but these festivities gained popularity with non-Irish Americans only in the latter half of the 20th century, when holidays began to be marketed more aggressively in the thriving post-WWII economy.

I wonder how many participants in the celebrations know anything about St Patrick? He wasn't Irish at all, but was born as Maewyn Succat in Britain into a wealthy Romano-British family around 385AD. His father was a Christian deacon and his grandfather a priest. Most of what is known about Patrick comes from his autobiographical *Confessio*, in which he writes that, when he was sixteen, Irish raiders kidnapped him and took him as a slave to Ireland. He records that he lived there for six years, working as a shepherd, during which time he found God. He managed to escape when God told him to flee to the coast, where a ship would be waiting to take him home.



St Patrick

He returned to his family in Britain and decided to become a priest, adopting the name Patricius (Patrick). Again God called him, urging him to return to Ireland as a missionary, and there to spread Christianity. In his *Confessio*, Patrick says he spent many years evangelising in the northern half of Ireland, converting thousands. In later life, he became a bishop, but little is known about where he worked. He remained in Ireland until his death on 17th March in 461AD, and was buried at Downpatrick. By the 7th century, he had come to be revered as the Patron Saint of Ireland.



A shamrock leaf

It is said St Patrick used the three leaves of a shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity to the pagan Irish. Green ribbons and shamrocks have been worn on St Patrick's Day since at least the 1680s. Although the association of St Patrick's Day with the colour green has become widespread, in art, while some illustrations of St Patrick do show him wearing green, he was originally associated with the colour blue. This was how he was seen in very early depictions, and

when King George III created a new order of chivalry called the Order of St Patrick, its official colour was a sky-blue known as "St Patrick's Blue".

In Ireland, St Patrick's Day was first celebrated in the 18th and 19th centuries as a small religious celebration to honour their saint. Most people observed 17th March by attending church, and Ireland's first St Patrick's Day parade was a relatively small affair in Waterford in 1903, hundreds of years after the first parade in North America. St Patrick's Day also remained a minor holiday in Ireland until the 1970s, and the large, secular celebrations appeared there only after they'd become popular in the United States. Because Ireland's parades were inspired by American ones, they represent a kind of reverse migration, importing the American style of celebration. Since 2010, famous landmarks in Ireland have been lit up in green on St Patrick's Day as part of Tourism Ireland's *Global Greening Initiative* or *Going Green for St Patrick's Day*.

The parades, parties, and practice of dyeing rivers green is a purely American tradition, and it was America, not Ireland, that made St Patrick's Day as most people know it. Lighting public landmarks in green has now spread worldwide, for the Sydney Opera House and the Sky Tower in Auckland were the first countries apart from the US and Ireland to do this. Nowadays, over three hundred landmarks in fifty countries go green for St Patrick's Day, including the London Eye by the Thames and Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square.



The London Eye on St Patrick's Day

Parades now take place in dozens of countries, including Norway, Spain, Bosnia, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Russia. The first St Patrick's Day parade in Russia was in 1992 and there are now annual festivals in Moscow and other Russian cities.



Astronaut Chris Hadfield

In Lithuania, the Vilnia River in the capital Vilnius is also dyed green on this day. On St Patrick's Day 2013, the Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield took photographs of Ireland as he orbited the earth, together with a picture of himself wearing green clothing in the space station. He posted them online,

accompanied by a recording of himself singing *Danny Boy* in space!

Historically, Lenten restrictions on fasting and drinking alcohol were lifted by church authorities for St Patrick's Day, which unfortunately encouraged the holiday's tradition of revelry. There has been growing criticism of the celebrations for their connection to a drinking culture, and for having become too commercialised. More recently, Church leaders in Ireland have expressed



An Irish leprechaun

concern about the secularisation of the Day, and celebrations have been criticised for fostering demeaning stereotypes of Ireland and Irish people. An example is the wearing of leprechaun outfits, which are based on derogatory 19th century caricatures of the Irish. St Patrick's Day celebrations outside Ireland have been described by critics as displays of "Plastic Paddyness", where foreigners appropriate and misrepresent Irish culture or claim Irish identity. In *The Word* magazine's March 2007 issue, Fr Vincent Twomey questioned the need for "mindless alcohol-fuelled revelry" and wrote, "It is time to reclaim St Patrick's Day as a church festival". He concluded that "it is time to bring the piety and the fun

together". If this can be achieved, doing so would certainly restore the pious 5th century priest, St Patrick, to his rightful place: foremost in the celebrations held in his honour.

Christine Porter

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).

WELCOME HUB
FREE WARM WELCOMING SAFE

Richmond Methodist Church
Dundas Street Entrance
Monday: 9.30am – 12.30pm
Friday: 9.30am – 12.30pm
Free hot drinks and snacks

Warm Welcome Spaces

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S

Busy 2026 ahead

The Friends have had a welcome breather to start 2026 — although Andy Lovell and team kindly supported a town Mayfest Quiz to raise money for the 2026 event — naturally enough in May! A nice church contribution to a community event raising well over £1000 to help to cover the costs of this expanding occasion, which has quickly established itself as part of town life.

Our own first Quiz of the year will have taken place too late to report on in this edition. but it is expected to be another success, both socially and financially, to kick off another busy year.

Our major confirmed events this year (diaries out!) will be:

- 24th April — Blues in the Pews
- 16th May — Crook Choral Society Performance
- 26th June — Musicality Concert
- 9th July — Town Hall Coffee Morning
- 11th July — Annual Church Barbecue
- 29th August — Plant and Produce Sale
- 25th September — Jez Lowe; internationally known Northern folk singer
- 29th October — Fashion Show
- 21th November — Northern Sinfonia Concert
- 19th December — Town Hall Christmas Coffee Morning

We will also be supporting the Swaledale Festival events on 26th, 30th and 31st May, 2nd, 5th & 6th June; a Dementia walk on 20th June; a Ryedale Festival event on 20th July with bar, refreshment and hosting duties — so another busy year ahead. If you are willing to offer help with these events, please contact Jim Jack, Peter Trewby or Wendy Pritchard. Your time would be most welcome

Could you run an At-Home Coffee Morning at your house?

..... on a Saturday in late April, any time in May, or September, please? These are great social events for people to get together for a chat over coffee/tea and cake. It would be great if you would be willing to give it a go, please.

Again, a word with Jim, Peter, Wendy or any of the Friends Committee would let you know about what's involved and how our group can help you to get one of these events off the ground in your neighbourhood.

Friends Annual General Meeting

This will take place straight after the morning service on Sunday 8th March 2026. As a member of the church community, you are automatically a Friend and can attend the meeting and ask your questions, cast votes and offer your services as a committee member or officer of the Friends. This is a separate charitable trust, whose aims are to support the development and enhancement of the work of St Mary's in the community. A full agenda and papers are available to be collected from the table at the back of church. Do come along and support, please.

Jim Jack

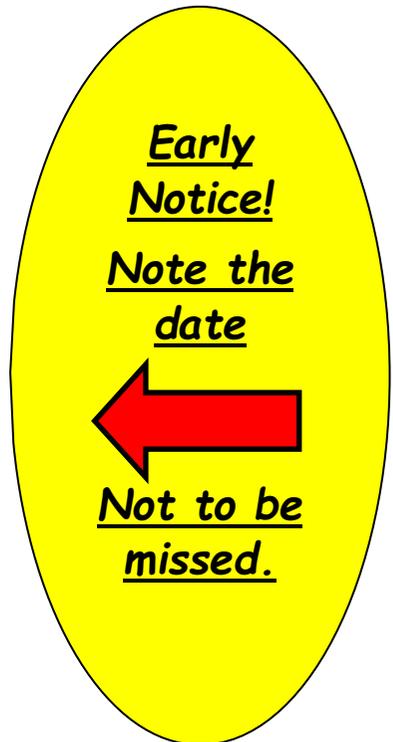
Friends of St Mary's Church Richmond
and
Found the Note
present

Pat Fulgoni
with
Henry Botham
Keyboards

Plus Support
Drystone Blues Collective

Friday April 24th
St Mary's Church Richmond
7.30pm for 8.00pm
Bar

Tickets £10 adv (£12 Door) from :
The Bookstop Market Hall Richmond
or contact :
foundthenote@yahoo.com



THE 200 CLUB

Congratulations to our latest Winner

February — no: 191 — Luke McCormack



SCHOOL REPORT

At the start of this term, Trinity Academy in Richmond was delighted to welcome a new Headteacher. The article below is taken from a press release and serves to introduce **Marie Mann** to the wider community.

THE appointment of a new Headteacher is proving to be music to the ears of children at Trinity Academy in Richmond, for Mrs Marie Mann has recently been appointed to the full-time position, after working at the school for one day a week since September.



Trinity Academy's new Headteacher, Marie Mann, enjoys reading with some pupils

When she was interviewed, she noticed that the children were clearly passionate about music. They had several rock bands and a ukelele club, and had also written songs around the school vision. As a musician herself, the children's passion was infectious and she had already started a choir, which had its debut performance at The Mayor's Christmas Concert in Richmond.

Mrs Mann always wanted to be a teacher and started her career in York, teaching in a city school. She moved to Richmond 21 years ago and has worked in several

schools in the area, including East Cowton, which, like Trinity, is also part of the Dales Academies Trust. As a local resident, she knew about Trinity and attends a local church which has links with the school.

The school has been on an impressive journey in recent years: the standard of education is exceptional, and this is reflected in the KS2 SATS results. Mrs Mann feels that it is a really welcoming school and is looking forward to working with the whole school community. “There is such a calm atmosphere around the whole setting and the care that pupils show for each other and their work is evident as soon as you step into the school,” she says.

Trinity Academy currently has 115 pupils on roll, ranging from two-year-olds in the nursery to 11-year-olds in Year 6. Its current Ofsted rating is Good; the SATS results are the highest on record; and the multiplication check is above the national average. It has a new art room and library and is renowned for its SEND provision, featuring The Nest — a KS1 and Early Years facility, with specialist skilled staff who support children with additional needs — and a nurture room for KS2 children who find it difficult to study in the mornings.

Any children looking to start school in September are invited to visit Trinity. For more information, please visit www.trinityr.dalesmat.org or contact Mrs Middlemiss in the school office on (01748) 822104.

Editor



The Parable of the Mustard Seed

'Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the biggest of all plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and make their nests in its branches.'

(Matthew 13 vs. 31-32)

NOTES FROM THE PAST

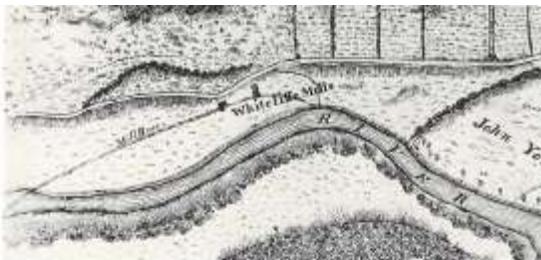
Surprising though it may seem, there were once four **Mills** in Richmond, so this month **JANE HATCHER**, with the help of some illustrations found in Richmondshire Museum, tells us something of where they were and their different uses over the years.

There will be a decreasing number of people who can remember the old mill which stood on the Batts. This was anciently called Church Mill, which is why I thought it deserved a mention in our *Connections* magazine. It was a large building, of three storeys, with a projecting wing which served as the miller's house. It had been built to grind corn into flour, by a waterwheel which was powered by the River Swale, but latterly it had been used as a saw mill.

It was demolished in 1969, before I came to Richmond, though I later made a major study of watermills. There had been an unsuccessful local campaign to try to preserve Church Mill, which had led to the establishment of Richmond and District Civic Society. After it had been demolished, on the grounds of safety, a few token remnants of its machinery were placed around the newly-landscaped Batts, where they can still be seen, a cast-iron cog wheel which had transferred the power from the waterwheel to the machinery, and two old millstones.



Mill-stone on the Batts

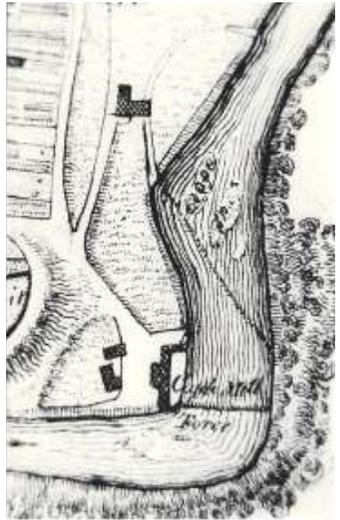


Whitcliffe Mill — the furthest west

There had once been four watermills on the north bank of the River Swale within Richmond Borough Boundary. That furthest west had various uses, for corn grinding, and textiles, before it became a Paper Mill. Next was the Green Mill, which had two uses, it

ground corn, and also fullled locally-woven cloth. The wet cloth was dried on large frames called tenters, and the hillside below what we know as Culloden Tower was called Tenter Bank. The Green Mill was demolished when Temple Grounds were fashionably landscaped in Georgian times. Then there was Castle Mill next to the Falls, a prime site for a watermill, which also produced paper after it ceased to grind corn.

And so to the Church Mill. But I need to mention at this stage that there was also another watermill, on the south bank of the river just below Richmond, about where Richmond Swimming Pool is now — and we hope will continue to be! This belonged to St Martin's Priory, a small outpost of the large Benedictine Abbey of St Mary in York, the ruins of which still stand in York's Museum Gardens. Having a succession of mills along a watercourse was a situation which frequently caused disputes when water power was heavily relied upon to supply essentials for everyday life, such as flour. And of course the livelihoods of those working with it depended on suitable water being available, so times of flood or drought caused major problems.



**Church Mill (top centre),
as shown on 1724 map,
with Castle Mill below.**

You might be wondering why Church Mill had that name, for the mill I've mentioned was some way upstream from St Mary's Church. Well, that is part of its highly unusual story, for this was a very rare example of the site of a watermill being moved. Constructing water courses was a complex business. Unless there was a convenient waterfall close by, it was necessary to build an artificial weir across a stream or river, which was a challenge to say the least.

Taking advantage of a period when the stream or river was low, the flow had to be held back by a temporary dam, so that the weir could be laid in the stream or river bed. Early weirs were usually formed by driving wooden stakes into the bed, and piling up stones behind them. If the river bed was rocky, a stone weir might be built instead. As well as the weir, a channel had to be formed to convey water to the mill's waterwheel, and another channel had to be made to take the water away from the wheel, back to the stream or river.

And so to the original Church Mill. John Speede's Map of Richmond of 1610 shows two little buildings, each with a waterwheel, at the bottom of Lombards Wynd, so roughly where Mercury Bridge is now. One is labelled 'Kirke Mill', and this was of course quite near the church; the other is called 'Fulling Mill', and indeed tents are shown on a little island, which was part of the watercourses.

We first hear about this Church Mill in a Chancery Court case in 1537, when one Henry Cogell said that in 1530 he had bought a piece of land and built on it two

watermills, which had cost him £80, quite a large sum. One was obviously for grinding flour, and the other for fulling cloth. It will be noted that there must have been a lot of cloth weaving in Richmond at one time.

Unfortunately, shortly after Cogell's investment, John Matthew, the last Prior of St Martin's before it was dissolved in 1539, "bearing inward malice and displeasure" to Cogell, had claimed that the new mill infringed on the water supply of St Martin's Mill, which was entitled to one half of the river flow, the Richmond boundary running down the middle of the river then as now.

And so, following arguments, Cogell set out in his deposition, that the Prior had, in 1534, ordered the destruction of Cogell's dam, thus making it impossible to work his mill. Exactly what happened we can only surmise. Had the Prior sent a very burly monk to wade into the river with a sledge hammer? Anyway, poor Cogell was now attempting to seek legal redress. There is no surviving record of the outcome of the court case, and it must have been complicated by the fact that after 1539 there was no longer a St Martin's Priory to bring to account.

Somehow, however, Church Mill did continue to operate on that site, as is shown by various maps and drawings of Richmond. Whether Cogell was able to find the money to repair his dam without, presumably, having obtained damages from St Martin's Priory, we do not know. Perhaps someone with more money bought him out, for Tudor Richmond saw a new class of wealthy merchants settle in the town. But a mill was still working on that site into the Georgian period.

About 1790 the old Church mill was replaced by the larger one on the Batts. By that date, the mechanism driving the corn-grinding machinery had become much more sophisticated, benefiting from the introduction of cast iron. And of course the greater and more prosperous population of Georgian Richmond would have increased the demand for flour.



'New' Church Mill (far left) prior to demolition in 1969

The water supply to this new site was never very satisfactory. A makeshift weir stretching halfway across the river took advantage of the swift stream which is generated by the drop of the Falls, and also by the slope of the land. But work that mill did, for more than 150 years.



PCC MEETING

St Mary's PCC last met on 21st January '26. **JOHN PRITCHARD** has kindly summarised the Minutes of the meeting to keep us all informed.

Finance: 76% of Parish Share had been paid for the past year, with the aim of 80% of the £95,023 request for 2026. Reserve of £25,000.

Hudswell: The new Lodge is doing well and the graveyard extension needs to be cleared ready for use. The Village Hall Committee is active.

Lent: The congregational survey would guide future plans for worship and nurture, but there would be a central Lent course on the Lord's Prayer.

Welcome leaflet and Stewardship pack: Both are available at the back of church and should be used and promoted.

Back of church: Needs to be made more attractive and less cluttered, with the Who's Who board progressed.

Morning Worship on the first Sunday of the month needs to be better publicised with more leaders, as an attractive 'shop-window' for church.

Verger team: Needs to be built up, as shown by Christmas busyness.

Team structure: Needs to be optimised with new Welcome and Social Teams.

Parish Vision Team: Needs to look 10-15 years ahead, as the reduction in parish clergy and consequent benefice changes take effect. The vision so far emerging is for spiritual growth to be central to it, rather than simply growth in numbers. St Mary's is attractive if we do the right things, but the building must be fit for purpose and made to 'work harder'. A helpful 'mind map' was emerging. These general directions were affirmed by the PCC.

Churchwardens report: The heating survey had disclosed that downward-facing fans were not viable. The Friends need a decision on whether the church needs painting, which will be done one scaffolding area at a time, costing £2-7000 depending on the damage found. The toilets need renovating. Both were approved.

Teams: Many reports were received, including from Schools, where it was reported that the new Head of Trinity Academy is intending to develop further ties with the church.

Next meeting: 18th March 2026.

COME DANCING

There are probably a few readers who can hark back fondly to earlier times on things they used to do and enjoyed. Tales of bygone days to entertain the grandchildren, which may sometimes be heard somewhat sceptically by the generation twice removed from the story teller.

JAN JACK went along to meet **Christine Stedman**, whose love of dancing runs as a golden thread through her life — a thread still being woven today at the Station in Richmond.

A lovely lifetime story of getting up and doing, so read on.

On a particularly unpleasant day in early January, I was walking past the house of Christine and Dennis Stedman when I thought I would pop in and see if they needed any shopping. They didn't, having just had a Tesco delivery but, in the course of a brief conversation with Christine, she happened to mention that she was learning ballet! Well, I couldn't leave it at that and said I would be back to hear about her dancing life — and her life has certainly been a dancing one!

Born in 1942 in Redcar, one of Christine's first recollections as a child was her mum telling her to stop jigging about. She used to say, "Anyone would think you had St Vitus Dance." This of course was a recognised disease, and it was only in later years that Christine discovered that St Vitus is the patron saint of dance.

At about the age of four, her mum took her to a lady's house where a very small tap-dancing class was held. She thinks it was just four little girls and the lady's son, Ronnie, who, according to Christine, was very delicate, had extremely thin legs and wore little brown boots to tap in. Christine wore some old school shoes that she had out-grown. As well as fixing tap plates underneath, her dad cut the toes out of them with a razor blade — they were more like tap sandals!

When she was five, Christine went to Miss Vera's School of Dancing for ballet and tap lessons. This sounded quite posh, but actually it was held in the upstairs room of a fruit and veg warehouse. She remembers her mum being given a paper sewing pattern and a piece of black fabric — blackout material left over from the war. From this,



A younger Christine

Christine's gran made a little tunic with matching bloomers. She remembers the marks left by the bloomers, just above her knees, as the elastic was a bit tight! Anyway, along with her pink kid ballet shoes and shiny red tap shoes, she was in heaven. She very quickly realised that she much preferred tap, so she persuaded her mum to let her stop the ballet. Had she realised that she might take up ballet in her 80s, she may well have kept it going!



The Red Lion Hotel, Redcar — a roller-skating venue

Christine merrily tapped away until about the age of ten or eleven, when a friend invited her to go roller-skating with her family, for apparently the Red Lion Hotel opened its ballroom on a Friday evening for roller skating. Well, she loved it, especially as she realised, when watching the adults, that they were actually dancing on skates.

Christine says, “The older skaters used to take us youngsters and teach us the steps — it was just magic.” Initially, Christine could hire some old brown roller skates but, quite soon, a birthday brought her own pair of white leather boots with skates attached and a skating dress with sequins on, made by her gran. Sadly her roller skating days did not last very long, as the town council decided to build an open-air skating rink on the seafront — probably not the wisest of decisions on the North East coast. It was closed eventually.

At about the age of twelve, Christine started to go to children's ballroom classes, which were held in the pier ballroom on a Saturday afternoon. She found these

great fun and learned dances like the Military Two Step, the Eva Three Step and, of course, the St. Bernard's Waltz. As time went by, Christine outgrew the ballroom classes, but an older cousin, Bobby, who had been taught to jive at his youth club, decided she would be a good candidate to practise with. So, one weekend, they bribed a younger cousin with sweets and a new comic to keep putting the record player on to play the Everly Brothers singing, 'That'll Be The Day' and, by the end of the weekend, Christine could jive!

There was nowhere Christine could show off her new found dance skills, but a little while later she discovered that the local Methodist church youth club sometimes had dance nights, whereas her church youth club, in Christine's words, 'Did ping-pong!' In order to attend their youth club, you had to go to the Methodist Church so, for the next few years, Christine attended her Anglican Church on Sunday mornings, where she took communion, and the Methodist Church in the evenings, so she could dance at their youth club! This went on for a few years until Christine was old enough, again in her words, 'To go dancing proper!'



**Former Coatham Hotel in Redcar,
home of the Jazz Club**

Friday and Saturday nights Christine would be out dancing, and the arrival of a discotheque in town in the basement of a shop opened up new dances to her. She also went to the Redcar Jazz Club — which was where you went to meet the nice boys! Sure enough, on her first visit there, she met Dennis and the rest is history! Cleo Laine and Johnny Dankworth were on the bill that night and neither Christine nor Dennis can remember

what they sang, they were so busy chatting to each other! Christine was delighted that Dennis enjoyed dancing as much as she did and, when they moved to Richmond, they could always find a dance somewhere — usually The King's Head on a Friday night and the CB pub on a Saturday.

Once their children arrived, dancing was put on hold for a while, but Christine and Dennis would still dance around their kitchen to the radio — much to the delight of their family. Many years later, when Christine's daughter was at her ballet class, the teacher said that she was thinking about starting an adult tap class and was she



interested? Well..... what do you think?!! For about the next twenty years, Christine tapped away every week and loved it, performing in shows at the Georgian Theatre and Richmond School. Around this time, Christine also took up line-dancing at the Civil Service Club in Catterick, but sadly, at the age of seventy, she had some health problems and felt it was time to hang up her tap shoes and cowboy boots. She and Dennis kept up the kitchen dancing, however, and soon they both joined the Station Singers — not dancing, but still music.



Those dancin' shoes

Recently, Christine’s daughter persuaded (bullied?) her into doing something for herself. This something was to be whatever it was that made her happiest — so it just had to be dancing. With a bit of research online, Christine’s daughter actually found an adult ballet class in Richmond at The Station so, just before Christmas, Christine had a taster session. When she got home, Dennis didn’t need to ask how she had got on — he could tell by the look on her face that she had loved it, so she has now got her pink ballet shoes and her tuile skirt. She also heard of a tap class at The Station, running just before the adult ballet class, and so inevitably she went along. Towards the end of the session, everyone wondered what the little bits of material-like debris were around where Christine had been tapping – her antique tap shoes were disintegrating around her feet! Tap is currently on hold, but watch this space. Fortunately, Christine is not disintegrating, but what an inspiration she is. From aged 4 to 84, dancing has shaped her life and is still doing so, as well as bringing her enormous pleasure.



Christine — ready for action!

In the words of Strictly —

Christine, “Keeeeeep dancing!”

Jan Jack

JUST A THOUGHT....

It is sometimes said that travel broadens the mind and provides a fresh perspective on various things. That was certainly the case for **CAROLE McCORMACK**, and prompted her to share her impressions of the contrasts between life here and in southern India.



Flowers everywhere

There is something about warmth and beauty which encourages reflection. In our recent holiday in Kerala, South India, as I felt my body relaxing, I felt my mind filling – with thoughts connected to the people and culture which surrounded me. My reflections are personal to me, of course, and you may well not agree with them, but I feel that they are worth sharing, since I returned a happier and more peaceful person.

Firstly, being immersed in beauty brings you face to face with God. Since all good things come from Him, to observe those good things nurtured my wellbeing and re-directed my mind from the mess that humankind has created in the world to the marvels of nature.

Secondly, one cannot be unaware of the extreme poverty in India, but what struck me very powerfully on this return visit was the level of acceptance shown by the Indian people. They happily accept what is unavoidable. If a vehicle blocks their transit of a pedestrian crossing, they smile: if they have to form an endless queue to access the innermost part of a temple, they chat and laugh together. The pent-up anger that we see so frequently in Western society was not evident during our stay in Kerala.

Thirdly, only this morning I heard a person comment in a television interview about how much time we spend in life just *waiting*. And following on from that, it is not just the waiting itself, but *how* we wait that matters: do we wait with joy, in peace; or in frustration and impatience? So evident in this comparison between Eastern waiting and Western waiting.

Lastly, there did not appear to be a ‘blame culture’ in India. And because of this, there was an absence of over-prescriptive rules. In the coach in which we



Paddy fields at sunset

travelled, for instance, there were seat belts, but we were not reminded again and again that they had to be worn. We were trusted to be responsible. River traffic was chaotic — and road traffic certainly was! — but we didn't see any accidents or road rage. I thought how, when people are given permission to exercise their free will and are given freedom of choice, frustration and anger at being constantly told what to do and what not to do are not given the chance to grow.

Eye contact and ready smiles were everywhere. It was as if these people do not fear. If others seek interaction with them, they readily interact; if they do not, they smile anyway and carry on with their own life.

Indian culture is vibrant, ancient, surprising.

An ayurvedic herb specialist explained the theory of preventative cures, rooted in nature, as a powerful way of living. Who would have thought that black pepper — here shown in its vine form growing with another spice — had so many health benefits?



Black pepper vine



The two performers, with story-teller behind

The performers in Classical Theatre; the story teller; and the drummer who accompanies the telling of the story with a dramatic and atmospheric series of rhythms, all train in their art for eight years. Gestures are based on mudras and expression lives in the eyes of the performers — their range of movement is extraordinary!

There is so much to mourn in India — the poverty and disease and extraordinarily basic living accommodation for many being the most evident. But if Indian people carry with them such joy of life, if they keep their ancient cultural traditions and religious beliefs so vividly alive, then surely we should respond in kind and try to see beyond the material poverty to what inspires these people.

Carole McCormack

A Concert in Memory of Bob White

*Former Councillor and Mayor of
Richmond, North Yorkshire*

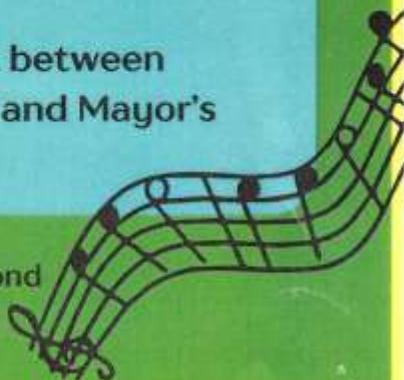
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Information Centre
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WORD SEARCH

Love and serve one another

On Maundy Thursday, we recall the final command that Jesus gave to his disciples before his death. After the Last Supper, He rose and washed his disciples' feet. This was astonishing for a 'teacher' to do, but He had a firm purpose in mind: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." His disciples were to love through service, not domination, of one another.

In Latin, the opening phrase of this sentence is 'mandatum novum do vobis'. The word 'mundy' is thus a corruption of the Latin 'mandatum' (or command). The 'washing of the feet' ceremony was an important part of the medieval church's liturgy, symbolising the humility of the clergy, in obedience to the example of Christ.

Maundy
Thursday
Final
Command
Jesus
Disciples
Death
Last
Supper
Washed
Feet
Astonishing
Purpose
Teacher
As
Loved
you
Must
One
Another
Service
Domination
Latin



Ceremony

Medieval

Humility

Obedience

Sudoku - Easy

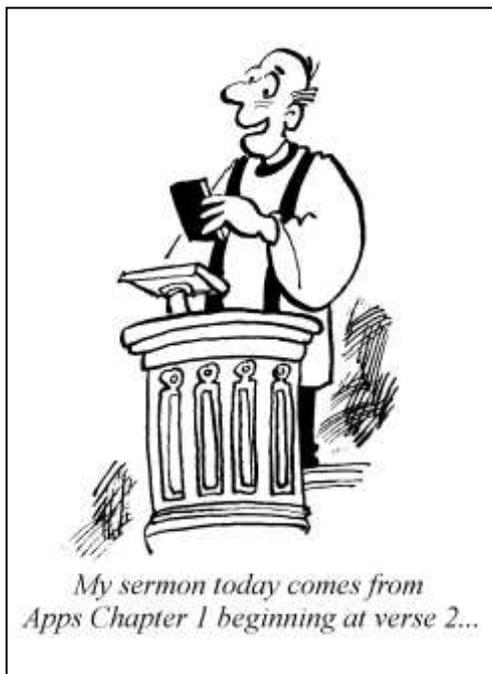
7		9				8	3	
5	4		9	3	1			
			2					4
4	5			1		8	2	6
	6						3	
8	9	2		6			4	1
9					3			
			5	8	6		1	9
6	3					2		8

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Sudoku - Medium

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

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Are you at school? Love Singing? Want to learn to read music?

Join the St Mary's Song Squad

We meet on **Mondays during term time**, 4-5pm in St Mary's Church, Richmond
As well as having lots of fun singing and learning a wide variety of songs, there will be opportunities to perform at occasional services/events and to participate in the

Royal School of Church Music's highly acclaimed 'Voice for Life' Scheme.

Juice & biscuits will also be available & tea / coffee for any parents / guardians wishing to stay during the rehearsal time.

For more information or to sign up for the Song Squad

Contact Chris Denton 07817 386070



Usually last Sunday in every month
Next service — **29th March '26**,
For children and the young at heart.
Why not come and join us?
www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk

LOUNGERS!

(The Ladies' Group)

Usually, last Friday of each month

From 7.30pm in the **BLACK LION**
Finkle Street, Richmond

Next meeting:
27th March '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 March '26



Puzzle Solutions

Sudoku — Easy

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

Sudoku — Medium

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

Wordsearch



**Deadline for April '26 edition; Monday 16th March '26.
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.

Carrie and friends would like to help you with the next step.

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 boycead11@gmail.com



"All are welcome
in this place."

Reverend Matthew Hutchinson's Charity

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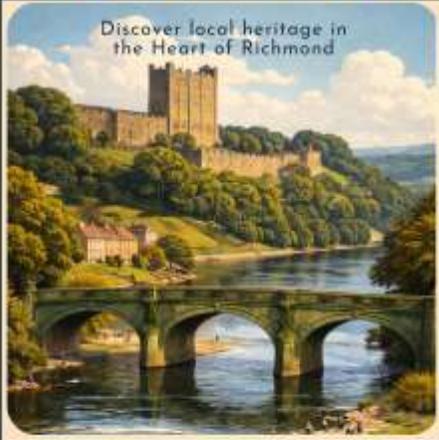
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