

# CONNECTIONS

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

November 2025



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# THE BENEFICE OF RICHMOND WITH HUDSWELL, DOWNHOLME AND MARSKE

[www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk](http://www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk)

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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 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**

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#### **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**

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PCC Secretary	Andra Sison-Ham (07753) 842246	<a href="mailto:andrakrumins@gmail.com">andrakrumins@gmail.com</a>

#### **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**

Into November, and it's hard to believe that the year is steadily drawing to a close. After a glorious Summer and a relatively mild Autumn, so far, we have been blessed with glorious colours in the leaf fall and bounteous fruit from the trees, so let's be thankful for the wonders of Creation.

In his Message this month, Canon Martin invites us all to consider our commitment to Stewardship, and his words are supported by a rather worrying graph from Paul Carnell, our treasurer. John Pritchard then welcomes the appointment of a new Archbishop of Canterbury and provides a flavour of the enormity of the task facing her. This month, too, we are thinking about Remembrance, with an article from the Green Howards and an appeal from Colin Hicks for Combat Stress, our Charity of the Month. We also continue with three items begun last month – John Pritchard's 'Why believe in God?'; the next stage of Jim & Jan Jack's Camino walk; and the concluding part of the Rowan family's road trip in America this Summer.

Mention of Escomb Church last time prompted a poem from Daphne Clark, and there is a pilgrimage link, too, with a contribution from Anne Clarke about the Legend of St Kenelm, from her husband's parish in Worcestershire in the 90's. Judith MacLeod shares her impressions of another Cathedral – this time at Wells in Somerset – and Christine Porter reviews a powerful book, which is both moving and thought-provoking. Jim Jack has kindly provided another 'Friends' report, helpfully supported by Andy Lovell's poster for the upcoming 'Quiz Night'; Bob Hill is the subject of our '60 second Interview', and finally Jane Hatcher's delve into the past tells the sad story of a local family afflicted by tragedy.

We hope you have enjoyed reading **Connections** this year, and will wish to continue to support us by subscribing again in 2026. To this end, this month you will also receive an envelope and renewal letter confirming that, unlike almost everything else, the price is unchanged for the fourth year running and an annual subscription represents a 20% saving on the cover price. Please complete this form, even if you have an existing Standing Order, and return it to the box at the back of the church to ensure you are on our distribution list for next year.

Thank you for your support.

*John McCormack*

**Cover photo**  
**'In Flanders fields the poppies grow ...'**



## Martin's message

### November 2025



### Stewardship Matters

As I write, it is early October and we have just entered the final Quarter of the year. We are about to celebrate 'Stewardship Sunday' – the Sunday following our Harvest Festival. Having decorated our church with God's good gifts as part of our Harvest Thanksgiving, these same gifts were shared with those around us who are in need.

And having acknowledged all that God has given us, it is only right also to consider how best to share from what we have received. This time of year, then, it is good to review prayerfully our personal stewardship of the time, talents and finances with which we have been entrusted.

As Christians, we are invited to be generous in every aspect of our lives. It is not only about giving money, but offering hospitality, giving time, and using our skills – in our churches, our homes, our communities, and our workplaces. Giving is the outworking of faith.

This [Stewardship Summary](#) offers a framework for a personal review:

#### ***Give thanks:***

- Give thanks for everything with which God has blessed you.
- Do this regularly, as the more often we give thanks, the more we realise how much we have been given.

#### ***Give regularly:***

- Commit to giving money regularly to the church and to other charities through Planned Giving. Joining the Parish Giving Scheme is the simplest way – and any Gift Aid claims are made automatically.
- For any tax payers not signed up to the Parish Giving Scheme, complete a Gift Aid form.
- Review your giving in other areas, such as time or hospitality.

#### ***Give generously:***

- General Synod has challenged church members, as an initial target, to give 5% (or £1 in £20) of their after-tax income to and through the church, and a similar amount to other work that helps to build God's kingdom.

### **Give yourself:**

- Be involved with the organisations you support.
- Spend time praying for the work of your church and that of other causes you support.
- Keep up-to-date with what they are doing, so that your prayers and your giving are properly informed.

Also, you can find various resources on the Stewardship page of our website:

[www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk/Giving](http://www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk/Giving)

## **Safeguarding Matters**

Nationally, the third Sunday of November is now kept by many churches as 'Safeguarding Sunday.' Safeguarding is our collective responsibility, and part of that responsibility is making sure the churches of our Benefice remain safe places for all. On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November, our Safeguarding Team (Jan Beeton (Safeguarding Officer), Pamela Holland (DBS Administrator), Revd Jennifer Williamson (representing Downholme and Marske), and myself) will be raising our awareness of our responsibilities towards each other and towards anyone who visits our churches. Do contact any of us if you would like to know more about Safeguarding, or visit the Safeguarding page on our website:

[www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk/Safeguarding](http://www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk/Safeguarding)

## **November:**

**Looking back with thanksgiving, looking forward with hope.**

November features the annual season of remembrance. All Saints' Day on the 1<sup>st</sup> is followed by All Souls' Day on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, although we tend now to observe them both on 'All Saints' Sunday,' the first Sunday of the month. This is followed, of course, by Remembrance Sunday, when we give heartfelt thanks for those who 'for our tomorrow gave their today' and commit ourselves to maintaining the way of peace. It is always moving to observe how the careful marking of this day is being passed on to those who will come after us.

Whilst All Saints' Day celebrates the people in whose lives the Church has seen God's grace at work, All Souls' Day allows us to remember with thanksgiving those whom we have known more directly: the people who gave us life and who nurtured us in faith.

The short period between All Saints through to Advent, sometimes known as the Kingdom Season, culminates with the festival of Christ the King. This is a time

both to recall the present-day reality of God's Kingdom around us and to affirm our hope in its coming fulfilment. We will take this hope with us into Advent Sunday, which this year falls on 30<sup>th</sup> November, when a new Church Year begins.

### 'St Peter and the Angel'

This Michaelmas (29<sup>th</sup> September, 'St Michael and All Angels'), I was struck by a poem with the above title, written by **Denise Levertov** (1923-97). It is a reflection on the Bible passage which tells of Peter being led by an angel from prison to freedom (Acts 12:1-11).

*Delivered out of raw continual pain,  
smell of darkness, groans of those others  
to whom he was chained —  
unchained, and led  
past the sleepers,  
door after door silently opening —  
out!  
And along a long street's  
majestic emptiness under the moon:  
one hand on the angel's shoulder, one  
feeling the air before him,  
eyes open but fixed . . .  
And not till he saw the angel had left him,  
alone and free to resume  
the ecstatic, dangerous, wearisome roads of  
what he had still to do,  
not till then did he recognize  
this was no dream. More frightening  
than arrest, than being chained to his warders:  
he could hear his own footsteps suddenly.  
Had the angel's feet  
made any sound? He could not recall.  
No-one had missed him, no-one was in pursuit.  
He himself must be  
the key, now, to the next door,  
the next terrors of freedom and joy.*

As the theologian Sarah Rowland-Jones suggests, powerful experiences of God's love are given to inspire, encourage and equip us to go forwards, confident in him – however daunted we may be by circumstances or our own capacity.

May the coming year be full of hope, freedom and joy for the Church and for the world. God is with us!

With every blessing for the times and seasons ahead,

*Martin*

## FROM THE REGISTERS



### Baptism

On Sunday, 5th October '25

**Archie Thomas**

was welcomed into the Church through Baptism



***You have received the light of Christ;  
Walk in this light all the days of your life.***



### Wedding

On 10th September 2025

At St Mary's Church, Richmond

**Megan Smalley to Jack Rafferty**



***Wishing you both a long and happy marriage.  
May God guide you along your journey and bless you each day.***

## PARISH FINANCES

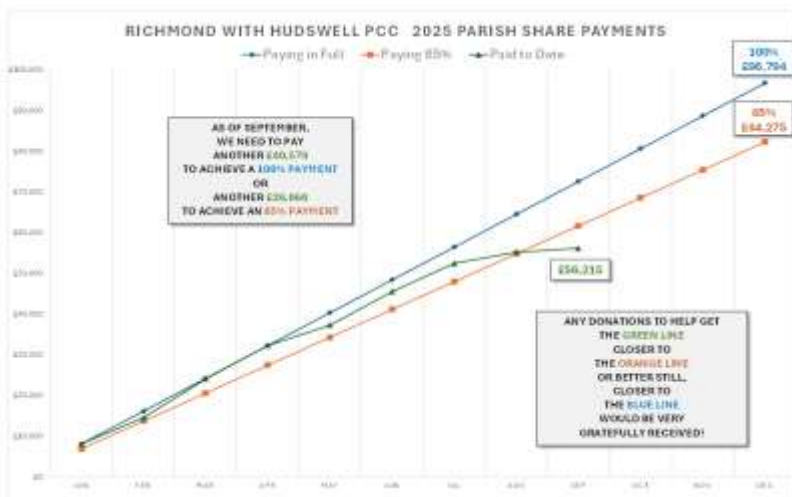
Our treasurer, **PAUL CARNELL**, is rather concerned about our Share contribution and wishes everyone to be aware of the current situation.

Parish Share is the financial contribution that St Mary's is asked to make to the Diocese of Leeds to support the mission and ministry of the Church, primarily covering the costs of clergy stipends and their housing. It presents an opportunity for each church community, according to their ability, to participate in the financial costs of ministry throughout the Diocese. In this way, ministry can be sustained in poorer communities, where otherwise it wouldn't be possible. At its heart, the Parish Share is a part of our response to the extraordinary generosity we receive from God.

The amount we have been asked to contribute in 2025 is £96,794. Up until July we were trading a path (the green line) that wasn't far short of where we would need to be (the blue line) in order to achieve a 100% payment of the Share. In August, however, other costs, such as the full restoration of the organ pedal board, meant that our cash funds were depleted a little and we ended up slipping behind, falling onto the path (the orange line) that heads to an 85% payment. Then, in September, we even fell below that!

I know that times aren't easy financially for lots of people right now, but any extra donations, be they by bank transfer, by taps on our contactless devices, or with an extra pound or two in the wall safe to help get that green line back on track would be greatly appreciated.

*Paul Carnell*



## A NEW ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

In welcoming the appointment of a new Archbishop, **JOHN PRITCHARD** reflects upon what is involved in this pivotal role in our church, and the challenges facing her during her tenure.

Who would ever want to be Archbishop of Canterbury? We have to hope Bishop Sarah Mullaly, currently Bishop of London, does, or at least was prepared to take on this most onerous of responsibilities without too much pressure being put on her. This is the church post most often called 'impossible' because the range of responsibilities is so wide; the expectations so high; and the scrutiny so deep.

Let's remember first that the Archbishop of Canterbury is the focal point of the worldwide, 85 million strong Anglican Communion. She's also the Primate of All England, the diocesan bishop in Canterbury, and the voice of the Church of England in the nation. +Sarah will have to be a person of prayer; a pastor; a theological resource; a reader and thinker; a good speaker and writer; a mediator; a manager of the Church; a collegial leader of the House of Bishops (42 diocesans and others) and the College of Bishops (over 120). And she needs a day off!

She will have to travel to other parts of the Anglican Communion; be an ecumenical leader (visiting the Pope for instance); an active participant in the House of Lords; relate well to the King and the Prime Minister; a trouble-shooter; and, to some extent a visionary, and certainly an inspiration to the Church. To complicate matters she will have a relatively small staff and little actual authority through which to get things done. Authority is very dispersed in the Church of England, shared between the Archbishops' Council; General Synod; the Church Commissioners; Diocesan bishops in their individual fiefdoms; PCCs; patrons of livings; and a host of special interest groups with historic legal powers.

So, let's look at the new Archbishop's in-tray. First will have to be **safeguarding**, the issue that forced (unfairly) the resignation of Justin Welby. General Synod



**Bishop Sarah Mullaly**

only partially out-sourced safeguarding to a new independent body at last July's meeting, but there's no clear time-line for it to get off the ground and there's a lot of mistrust in survivors and church commentators.

Next up is **same-sex relationships**. Again, General Synod has only allowed a delayed roll-out of blessings of such unions, and a structural settlement acceptable to opponents that would keep them in the Church is still far off. Getting a breakthrough in these issues will take all of +Sarah's persuasive skills, and the Church is fractious on this issue.



The major concern behind all others, of course, is the **decline in church attendance**, in spite of many exceptions (notably cathedrals) and reports of a 'quiet revival' among Gen Z. Justin Welby has been associated with 'big-ticket' centrally-funded projects that dioceses have had to bid for, and the push-back from, among others, the Save the Parish movement has been considerable. The archbishop has surprisingly limited power over strategy, because of the dispersed authority (mentioned above), but will still have to be the public face for the Church and how strategy and statistics are received.

The **Central Structures of the Church of England** are in serious need of reform. Words often used (sometimes fairly and sometimes not) have been 'centralised,' 'managerial,' 'bureaucratic,' even 'dictatorial.' Changes are already underway, but are unlikely to be able to effect major change because of the many interests involved. The new 'Church of England National Services' replacing the Archbishops' Council might moderate that criticism of a dictatorship somewhat.



**Bishops in the House of Lords**

Another ever-present issue is how the archbishop engages in **the political arena**, at a time when the media is only interested in what the two archbishops have to say. The paradox is that the archbishop is constantly asked for an opinion on national issues and constantly criticised for doing so. The Lambeth Press Office is bombarded with interview requests, and journalists will ask the archbishop's views on, for instance, the Middle East conflict; migration; and assisted dying legislation (+Sarah's views as a

former Chief Nurse are well known). The Daily Mail will then tell her to stay out of politics.

Rumbling along all the time, and getting rather louder recently, are calls for reform of the settlement the CoFE reached on **women clergy and women bishops**, which profoundly irritate many in the Church. Moreover, the majority of member churches of the Anglican Communion, particularly in Africa, are opposed to the ordination of women and deeply opposed to same-sex relationships. They have already declared that they will not be able to accept the new Archbishop's authority, and have over the last few years set up alternative structures to run parallel to Lambeth and the Anglican Consultative Council.



Lambeth Palace

Bishop Sarah, are you sure you want to do all this?

The Church, however, has made a good appointment. Bishop Sarah is used to senior responsibility. She was Chief Nurse in the NHS while still in her 30s, and her achievements in that role were long ago recognised in her being made a Dame. Her episcopate in London has seen her take major roles nationally in safeguarding, same-sex relationships and a host of significant pieces of work. She is collegial in style; moderate in tone; and wise in judgement. Inevitably she will get some things wrong – and some of them may be because she is over-worked. But we trust she is the right person for these next seven years, both to steady the ship and to chart some ways ahead.

Welcome to our new Archbishop! And pray for her.

*John Pritchard*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### THE 200 CLUB

Congratulations to our latest Winner

October — no: 179 — Nigel Pickersgill

**STOP  
PRESS**

**Lunchtime — Wednesday, 17th November,  
in St Mary's — British Army Band Recital (not  
the Concert). Watch out for further details.**

## REMEMBRANCE



In this month when we are thinking particularly of those who were killed or injured as a result of conflict, **STEVE ERSKINE**, researcher at the Green Howards Museum, shares the tragic story of one member of the regiment, who lost his life 80 years ago.

### Within touching distance of home....



It is important to remember that, for many, VE & VJ days did not mean the end of the war. For many families their loss of a loved one would forever be represented by an empty chair. For other families, the anxious wait went on until



their father, son or brother returned home from PoW camp. For some, even that wait was cruelly ended.

For example, 4751822 Private Samuel James Bayston, a native of Southwark in London, but who served with the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Green Howards. He was captured following the decimation of the Battalion at Got El Ualeb and the loss of 150 Brigade in late May 1942 during the fighting in north Africa. Sam was originally held in an Italian PoW camp at Macerata, south of Ancona on the east coast of Italy, before being moved to another camp at Capua near Naples. In 1943, when the Italian government sought an Armistice, many PoWs were transferred to Germany — in Sam's case to Stalag VIIA at Moosburg in southern Bavaria.

Once liberated, he made his way to France and, on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1945, the day after the Armistice was signed, he, along with 25 other liberated PoWs, boarded Lancaster RF230 of No. 514 Squadron at Juvincourt aerodrome, bound for home.

Shortly after take-off the pilot radioed that he was having trouble with the controls. The aircraft was seen to bank to port and dive to the ground: all

Previously reported Prisoner of War in German Hands  
(Germany) now reported Accidentally Killed after  
being Released by Allied Forces

4th Bn., Green Howards  
4751822 BAYSTON Pte. 825 S.J. & Co. died  
(Date of death - 9.5.45.)

948 Western Desert



aboard, including the 6 crew, were killed. So near to home.

Sam Bayston lies in Clichy Northern Cemetery on the outskirts of Paris. His parents had an inscription placed on his headstone: *Sweet is the spot where you are laid, our memories of you will never fade.*

The Green Howards Museum has a small exhibition in the entrance to the museum telling the story of just a few who made it back and, sadly, others like Sam who did not. As our minds turn to November 11<sup>th</sup>, think of Sam and his family.

Original Grave marker for some of those lost

Steve Erskine



## FROM THE REGISTERS



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



Robert Neville Russell  
Doris Edna Blackburn

7th August '25  
27th August '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.*

## CHARITY OF THE MONTH — NOVEMBER

In support of

**COMBAT  
STRESS**  
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

In this Remembrance month, it seems appropriate that **Colin Hicks**, whose memories of the time he served as a Bandmaster/Ambulance Section Commander during the Gulf War over 30 years ago are so vivid, should invite our support for a charity which continues to help those affected by conflict, wherever it occurs.

**Combat Stress** is the UK's leading charity dedicated to supporting the mental health of military veterans. Established in 1919, the charity has over a century of experience in helping former servicemen and women struggling with mental health conditions, especially post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. Former servicemen are often cast adrift on completion of service

and have a higher-than-average rate of homelessness, suicide and depression, often related to the mental damage from things that they have seen and done which were not addressed at the time, relying on 'the stiff upper lip' approach. Many service-personnel harbour deep trauma for many years after service in combat zones, by not wanting to speak about their experiences; sometimes waiting until it is too late; or through a lack of understanding from the civilian medical service, causing life-changing and sometimes life-ending consequences.



**Aerial view of the Basra road , Iraq in 1991  
— the so-called 'Highway of Death' .**

**Very unpleasant for all those who had to clear-up  
the aftermath.**

The charity offers a range of free specialist services, including psychiatric and psychological treatment, occupational therapy, and peer support. These services are designed to help veterans rebuild their lives and regain control after the emotional and psychological challenges of military service.

Combat Stress primarily supports veterans who have served in the British Armed Forces and who are dealing with complex mental health issues, often stemming from traumatic experiences during service in places such as Northern Ireland,

Iraq, Afghanistan and many other theatres of operation. Their approach involves not only clinical treatment, but also long-term support that acknowledges the unique challenges faced by those who have served in the military.

**COMBAT  
STRESS**  
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH



Relying heavily on public donations and fundraising, Combat Stress plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between the often-dismissive NHS services and the specialist care that many veterans require. Through their dedicated work, they aim to ensure no veteran is left to suffer in silence and that they receive the care, respect, and understanding they deserve.

*Colin Hicks*

**Friends of St Mary's Church  
Richmond**

# Quiz Night

**Town Hall Richmond**

**Sat 8th November**

**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 07974766020 for Details**

**[www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk](http://www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk)**

## FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S

### QUIZZING AHEAD — SATURDAY 8th NOVEMBER

With another Curry Night behind us, providing warmth as the chills of Autumn descend, and a Blues in the Pews extravaganza adding something to our social and musical calendar, thoughts turn to mists, mellow fruitfulness and another **Quiz Night**. (See poster opposite)

These evenings in the Town Hall, which attract church members and people from the wider community alike, have become a regular fixture in our calendar, not to mention the accompanying Pie and Peas supper. All previous quiz nights have sold out, but there may well be a few tickets left on sale for this one if you visit the Book Stop in the Market Hall, or contact Andy Lovell or any committee member. This evening is on **Saturday 8th November**, once again in the Town Hall in Richmond, whose staff are brilliant in setting-up and removing tables and chairs for us. Do support and enjoy.

### OTHER EVENTS COMING UP...



December will bring another fantastic **Army Band Concert on Wednesday 17th December**, as well as our annual **Christmas Coffee Morning** in the **Town Hall on Saturday 20th December**, for which donations of raffle prizes, tombola prizes and home baking, as well as hand-crafted gifts for



sale would be most welcome. Look out for further details in next month's issue.

### ... AND THOSE BEHIND US

A big 'thank you' for your continued support. Whilst there is always a social and community aim in what we do, the money raised also contributes towards church improvement and development — witness the much admired Step-Free Access and the less obvious, but equally important improvement works recommended by the independent Quinquennial review. The final sum raised by the Plant and Produce sale came in at £2,735.02 — great work by all, and the new venture which was the Edwina Hayes Folk Night was attended by nearly 200 people and added £1,133 to our funds. In total, Friends activities have raised over £9,000 this year. Thank you very much indeed. If you want to help the Friends in a more active way by bringing your time, skills, energy, and work to the table, please let Peter Trewby (Chair) or me know.

*Jim Jack — Hon. Sec.*

## POET'S CORNER

Reading Jim Jack's and John Pritchard's 'pilgrimage' accounts last month reminded **Daphne Clarke** of a visit she also made with her grandson to the Saxon Church at Escomb and of a poem she wrote afterwards.

### *Ed at Escomb Church*

*Christian calm, Saxon cool.  
Two thousand years of pilgrim prayers.  
Built from stones brought from Binchester.  
Light through narrow windows shafts  
on high-walled Latin superscription: 'LEG VI'.  
From York that Legion tramped.*

*Aunt of seventy, son of seven,  
alike in awe and wonder.  
Altar lilies fill the air,  
suffuse the ancient stones with distant memories.  
The moving story of St Cedd,  
preaching the Christmas story  
to animals kneeling in worship, brings tears.*

*The following day, we return.  
Ed needs his sister to feel this place.  
Bede, a 7<sup>th</sup> century boy,  
Ed, a 20<sup>th</sup> century lad,  
alike in finding Saxon cool  
and Christian calm compelling.*

*Daphne Clarke*



## TO BE A PILGRIM?

The October edition told of Jan and Jim Jack's completion of Stage 1 of the newly instituted Durham leg of the Camino Ingles. Now they undertake Stage 2 of their walk along this pilgrim trail. This stretch of the walk uses the already established Way of Life and Northern Saints Trail and makes the most of a peaceful byway very close to busy highways, mixing unseen parts of glories of the natural world, with evidence of our religious, agricultural and industrial past.

Having successfully negotiated the short stretch from Finchale to Durham Cathedral last time, we were more than ready to tackle stage 2, using the very helpful guide notes provided by the Camino Ingles organising group. As a linear walk, this once again involved researching bus times, which this time made starting and ending stage 2 quite easy.

We planned to finish today at Tudhoe, originally an old farming settlement outside Spennymoor, so we duly headed up there to leave our car, following the sat-nav. This took us to the centre of a beautiful, peaceful old village with the longest green in County Durham (beats West Auckland by 3 metres!).

Back down to the main road, we were able to park right next to the bus-stop to join the 20 minute service into Durham City bus station on a sunny Saturday morning. This local service was clearly well used — people shopping in Durham, a group perhaps going to a wedding — all chatting and laughing. Also, markedly, every single person thanked the driver as they were leaving — great to see.

A right turn out of Durham Bus Station took us to the bridge over the Wear at the foot of Silver Street, where we descended the steps to rejoin the walk we had left some three weeks before. This missed the short section between the Cathedral and Prebends Bridge, but we felt that this was acceptable, so we took this short cut, along by the river flowing gently by, with the occasional rowing boat lazily enjoying the magnificent view of Durham Cathedral.



We picked up the well-signed Camino path at the end of Prebends Bridge, with part of an old spire of the cathedral on our right. This proved to be a gathering point for a guided tour, which we 'earwigged' for a couple of minutes before moving on.

The path continued to follow the river's course, before going steadily upwards to a short flight of steps leading to St Oswald's churchyard. Here was the first indication that this part of the pilgrimage would not suit people with mobility difficulties.



An ancient church, which I remember best from my student days as being the first hiding place for convicted armed robber, John McVicar, on his escape from Durham Prison in 1968, St Oswald's looks impressive, but unfortunately it was locked. There is evidence that a Christian community existed here before the

**John McVicar** Norman Conquest.

And so we progressed across the road, past houses and then university buildings, before joining a piece of woodland parallel to the main road. Rising steadily up a hill known as Mount Joy, this was the point at which northward walking pilgrims would get their first sight of the magnificent Norman cathedral. With the trees in full leaf, however, this view was denied to us.

If the short run of steps into St Oswald's churchyard was the first challenge to the mobility impaired, the locally named 'Steps of Doom' would probably prove impossible. 224 steps going steeply downward, still through lovely woodland and free from traffic noise, but with bird song in abundance and the fruits of early autumn decorating the route.

We are beginning to appreciate the notion of pilgrimage as we moved across the Anglo-Saxon named Houghall — 'water meadow by the hill spur.' This walk is going somewhere to a destination we are seeking. Apart from fences and steps, it is free from evidence of modern habitation and leads us to talk of what things must have been like for the pilgrim in Medieval times or earlier. How did they know the way to go? Refreshment on the way? Did these woods conceal 'ne'er do wells'? We knew from the notes we were using for this journey that monks farmed the land, grew barley and oats and reared sheep towards the end of the 13th century, and



**Footpath on wagon way**

that the meandering River Wear changed course many times. Certainly no sign here, as we crossed the fertile silt-meadows, with the agricultural college of Houghall hidden from view on our left by mature woodland.

It was not only agriculture which provided wealth here, but the later discovery of coal. Suddenly we found evidence of the industrial past, for we were walking along an embankment which linked two local collieries by a wagon way.

This stretch of the route had joined a better surfaced path being used by runners and walkers, but we soon left the straight and easy way to re-enter woodland, then up a hill to open fields, recently harvested. Then we dived back into woodland, down an earth track and more steps, across a small footbridge and then up again to pass a circle of stones. Some of these carried cup and ring markings, whether original or replica we do not know. What we do know was this was an excellent picnic stop at a junction of a number of pathways maintained by Low Burnall Woodland Trust.

It was here that we also appreciated the peace and quietness of this particular stretch of the Camino, an atmosphere creating time for reflection. Appreciated also because it was here, in this woodland clearing, we were once more aware of steady traffic noise of the unseen A167. Refreshed by lemon and ginger tea and a Taylor's pork pie, we had time to greet passers-by and their dogs using this cared for woodland, before moving off for our afternoon leg.



**Features of Stage 2: Woodland steps; the peaceful River Wear; and ‘The Miner’s Wife’**

The path out of our clearing, always well way-marked, suddenly took a left turn away from the road, but, with the sounds of road vehicles still in the air, we walked downhill to rejoin the River Wear and, by turning right, followed its meandering route, with sunlight dappling through the trees on its banks. A large black bird rose from the still waters. A cormorant? It had the look of a heron — but black? We would never know, but we were once again aware of the solitude, as we moved on towards our goal for the day. Suddenly, on our right a figure appeared — not a person, but an interesting wicker sculpture (The Miner’s Wife), reminding us once more of the industrial history of the area. Indeed, this whole section has a number of well-written information boards, bringing our pilgrim route alive with visions of figures of the past.



**St Bartholemew's – a church for all in Sunderland Bridge**

Suddenly we found ourselves on the footpath right alongside the A167 near Croxdale, before being taken away from the fumes to the tranquillity of Sunderland Bridge village (oft passed in the car, never visited). Another well-tended churchyard and another locked church — St Bartholemew's, a Roman Catholic church, paid for by the owners of Croxdale Hall, the Salvin family, but used by the whole mining community. We are beginning to understand

why visitors to St Mary's often say what a pleasure it is to find the church open.

Through the grounds of Croxdale Hall, our route took us under another impressive feat of Victorian railway engineering in the form of a lofty viaduct carrying the main East Coast main line, before entering more light woodland. The path followed the river before turning uphill alongside the delightfully named Nickynack Beck, with us still enjoying the return of peace in a wooded area. The trickling beck made its way downwards as we headed up towards the outskirts of Croxdale village. Over three tricky stiles across open fields with horses grazing and a tractor working in the late afternoon sunshine, we emerged onto the hidden beauty of Tudhoe village green, with the varied ages of the set-well-back housing telling their own story of the history of the village. Named after St Tuda, Bishop of Lindisfarne in 664, ancient documents about Tudhoe name the houses on each side as East Raw (Row) and West Raw.

Probably like many pilgrims, we sought out the local inn, the Green Tree, for refreshment, before walking the length of the green in the evening sunshine and down to the main road to rejoin our car for the journey home.



**The Green Tree Inn**

The first stage of our journey had felt like a walking day-out. This section of 'eating the elephant' was starting to feel a little more like a pilgrimage. A linear walk; learning more about the communities passed through on the journey; an enjoyment of peace and tranquillity of nature; and a keener observation of the trees and rivers, as we passed through at walking pace. Time to talk, think and reflect as we take more steps towards a distant goal. We'll explore Tudhoe village a little more next time, before heading off to Bishop Auckland for Stage 3 of the Finchale Camino.

*Jim Jack*

## HARD QUESTIONS

This month, **JOHN PRITCHARD** continues to develop his exploration of that most fundamental question that all believers, and unbelievers, should consider and offers some suggestions and arguments that might help.

### Why Believe in God? (2)

Last month I did some ground-clearing on this basic question. Essentially, I made the case that, in simple logic, you can't prove the existence of God. Knowledge of God is different from 'scientific knowledge'; it's 'personal knowledge' and you don't prove people, you meet them. For most of us, belief in God is an instinct.

There are arguments, however, that make belief in God a reasonable conclusion. Here are some of them:

#### 1. **Why is there something rather than nothing?**

To say that the universe just 'is' and has always been there is a cop-out. But God isn't just the first cause in a chain of cause and effect (though he is); more significantly he's the Ground of Being, what's been called 'the condition of possibility' of any existence at all. God isn't on any map of existence, but is the reason there's a map at all and why there's anything on it. God isn't in the story; he's the one who thought of the story.

#### 2. **Why is the universe so 'fine-tuned' for existence such that any tiny change in the basic constants would have caused the universe either to expand too fast and be shot to pieces, or go too slowly and collapse in on itself?**

In any case, why is the universe intelligible to us at all? Why does the rationality of the universe correspond to the rationality of our minds, so that we can think about any of this? Science answers 'how' questions, but religion answers 'why' questions.

#### 3. **Where does our sense of good and evil, and right and wrong, come from?**

Why do certain things matter and have a right to matter? Why do they make a demand on us? Some things aren't just a matter of preference, but are objectively right and objectively wrong. When a gunman shoots innocent schoolchildren, we don't just say we don't like that sort of thing and wouldn't

choose to do it ourselves. We say it's WRONG! Where does such moral objectivity come from, but from a moral Mind behind the universe?

**4. Why have the vast majority of human beings on earth, now and in every age, had an instinct for the transcendent?**

Even now it's estimated that 80% of the world's population believe that life is both spiritual and religious. This sacred fire burns with us, and every other basic instinct (hunger, sex, belonging), has a reality that corresponds to it (food, partners, human groups). Why not this instinct for God?

**5. What is suggested by the universal experience of awe and wonder?**

Who among us hasn't been stopped in our tracks by some sight so amazing that we simply had to stop and keep silent? These moments can take our breath away: they take us beyond ourselves. There's something more than getting and spending and surviving. These shining moments point to 'something more'. What is the shimmering reality of which these moments are just distant echoes? Who put the wonder into wonderful?

**6. Was Jesus wrong?**

I believe in God because Jesus did! This life has intrigued, inspired, provoked, and thrilled more people than any other human being in history, but he focused his life completely on his relationship with his heavenly Father. He was so right in everything else he said and did; could he have been so wrong in the one thing on which he staked his life?

**7. What makes most sense of everything we know?**

If I'm looking for a Grand Unifying Theory (scientists sometimes call it a GUT), I look towards theoretical physicists and to theologians, and I find that their 'big thoughts' are often surprisingly similar. Or perhaps not surprisingly, because God's world is one world, for which we have different languages. I'm fascinated by the scientific descriptions, but to give a final account both of the universe and of my own life in all their richness, I find myself saying 'I believe in God.'

Remember, I'm not claiming that these arguments are in any sense proof of God. There are no 'knock-down' arguments for the creature to prove the Creator (Harry Potter can't prove JK Rowling), but these approaches to the question of God give good reason to believe. They don't 'make proof', but they do make sense.

*John Pritchard*

## CELEBRATING CATHEDRALS

In her travels this Summer, **JUDITH MacLEOD** managed to fit in a visit to Wells, where she discovered that its cathedral has some unique architectural features.

This lovely cathedral is situated on the western slopes of the Mendip hills in Somerset. The town takes its name from the water in the nearby springs. Like the Cathedral, the most northerly spring is dedicated to St Andrew. Every day, 4 million gallons of water still flow down the High Street of this small town in a shallow, open channel.

As with the Cathedrals of Durham, York, Salisbury and many others, I expected to see this one from a good distance, but we had to weave our way through the narrow streets until we passed through an archway into the spacious cathedral green surrounded by historic buildings. It is here that you first see the Cathedral in its broad splendour and it takes your breath away!

You are standing at the West front, with its depiction of the Day of Judgement in



the central panel – statues of Christ on high, flanked by seraphim (six-winged creatures, whose role is to declare God's holiness and transmit divine light), apostles, angels and saints. In the Middle Ages, the façade would have been painted, but almost 300 of the original 400 sculptures remain. Currently it is covered in scaffolding, so the view shown here is of the north

front, which nevertheless evokes the character of the building from the outside.

A church was founded on the site in c.705 by the Saxon king of Wessex, but what you see now is the first Gothic style cathedral in England, dating from 1175.

Once inside the visitor is immediately struck by the calm, light atmosphere. The scissor arches at the top of the nave, which were built between 1338 and 1348 as a medieval solution to the problem of sinking tower foundations, are so simple and solid, you could be forgiven for thinking that they are modern.



Here is a view of the scissor vaults at the point where the nave meets the transepts: we particularly liked the design of the furniture, intended to emphasise the curves.



The Chapter House, an adjoining octagonal structure on the north side, pre-dates the scissor vaults by a few decades (1286 — 1306). 32 ribs stem from the central shaft, creating over 40 seats — an ideal space with perfect acoustics for the clergy to discuss cathedral business. The decorations include delicate flowers on the window surrounds; beautiful leaf designs on the vault bosses, and carved humorous faces

in the corners.

The fourteenth-century Lady Chapel at the East end of the Cathedral is of similar design, with star-shaped vaults and medieval stained glass. The nearby Quire and Retro-quire are also of the same period.

During the Reformation, the walls of the Cathedral were whitewashed and a pulpit



was installed, as preaching was a Protestant custom. The building suffered further damage in 1643 during the English Civil War.



It is not only the architectural beauty of the building with its cloisters and library, in addition to all that has been mentioned so far, which attracts the visitor's attention, there are some additional features to enjoy. One is the medieval astronomical clock, the second oldest working clock in the world. On the half-hour, as jousting knights go round in tournament, the same figure has been knocked down for 600 years!

Another feature is the fan-shaped cope chest made of local oak in c.1160 and originally part of the Saxon church. It is still used to hold the ecclesiastical garments.



After leaving the Cathedral in the south-east corner, we crossed the Cathedral Green to see another famous feature. It is the Vicars' Close on the north side of the Cathedral, built in the fourteenth century to house the men of the Cathedral choir (Vicars Choral). There are 42 houses, each with their own front garden, running east and west of the Close. The Vicars read and studied downstairs and slept upstairs. Washing



facilities and a latrine were at the back. The Vicars used a connecting passage to a Hall which leads to the stone staircase by the Chapter House, thereby keeping them dry on their way to the Quire – ingenious!

Entrance to the Cathedral costs £15 and lasts for a year. Dogs are welcome in both the Cathedral and the coffee shop in the adjoining cloisters.

*Judith MacLeod*

## 60 SECOND INTERVIEW



With the success of the Edwina Hayes Concert now behind him, our intrepid impresario, **BOB HILL**, kindly agreed to tackle the questions put to him by **John Pritchard**.

**First memory?** Family holidays in Rhyl, and the early morning sound of bells around the donkey's necks as they were walked to the beach. (Age 3)

**Favourite meal?** Our daughter's Sunday lunch.

**Favourite music or musician?** Ella Fitzgerald, Michael Buble

**Pet dislike?** Arrogance, rudeness.

**Best holiday?** Cornwall

**Childhood hero?** Biggles

**Favourite hobby?** Photography, Musical theatre

**Luxury on a Desert Island?** Good coffee — and the occasional tot of Spanish Licor 43!



**Recent TV you've enjoyed?** The Guest, Passage to India with Rob & Ryland

**Worst fault?** I will leave that to others to tell me.

**2 best films ever?** Rain Man, The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

**Favourite drink?** Good red wine.

**Regret?** Not studying harder at school.

**Best recent book?** The Shadow of The Wind – Carlos Ruíz Zafón

**Favourite charity?** Alzheimer's Society



**Place you feel happiest?** A Spanish restaurant with family and friends.

**Three dinner companions?** Richard Ayoade, Shirley Bassey, Andrés Segovia

**What do you pray for most?** An end to greed in all its forms.

**Traditional or new Lord's Prayer?** Traditional

**Epitaph?** He could have tried harder. As true today as it was when written in my school reports!

*Bob Hill*

## THE LEGEND OF ST KENELM

Some 30 years ago, Revd Martin Clarke had a parish in Worcestershire with an ancient legend associated with it. Recent articles about pilgrimage prompted **ANNE CLARKE** to tell the story.

### **King Kenulph, the King of Mercia, is dead.**

The year is sometime around 790AD when Kenulph dies, leaving two adult daughters, Quendrida and Burgenhilda, and a 7 year old son, Kenelm. Quendrida is angry that her young brother succeeds to the throne, so she hatches a plot to destroy him and take the throne for herself. Quendrida turns to Askobert, her loyal courtier, with the promise of marriage and a share of the throne. Askobert hatches a plan to take Kenelm hunting: there's no need for attendants, as he is a trusted servant, but he plans to kill Kenelm and bury him in the woods.

Meanwhile ... Kenelm is troubled by a dream. He is at the top of a vast tree, when the tree is felled with a huge crash and Kenelm is carried up to heaven on white wings. His nurse tells him it is a warning of his death.



**The legend of St Kenelm**

Kenelm, however, is not afraid and he joins Askobert on the hunt. After several hours, he is tired and asks to lie down to rest. While he sleeps, Askobert digs a grave and, when Kenelm wakes, he picks up his axe and prepares to strike. Kenelm opens his eyes and sees the axe, but instead of using his staff to defend himself, he plants it into the ground, whereupon the stick immediately bursts into leaf. Askobert wields his axe and beheads Kenelm, throwing the body into the grave and quickly covering it up. At that moment, he watches in amazement as a white dove rises from the grave and soars into the sky. He flees from the spot and rushes to tell Quendrida that Kenelm is dead.

The dove flies across the sea until it arrives in St Peter's in Rome and settles on the altar, where the Pope is celebrating Mass. The Pope sees a parchment in the dove's beak, which he unrolls and reads:

“In Clent, in Cowbach, Lieth under a thorn,  
His head off-shorn, Kenelm, King-born.”

The Pope immediately sends monks to solve the mystery. After many months of travelling, they find the hills of Clent and, in the forest, a spot where the sun always shines and a thorn bush stands.

They dig and, as they gently lift Kenelm's body from the grave, a spring of clear water gushes forth. A red cow appears and drinks from the spring that has formed on the spot of Kenelm's grave. The cow grows fatter and gives the best, creamiest, milk the herdsman has ever known. The monks carry the body of Kenelm to Winchcombe in Gloucestershire to his final resting place. People then start to visit the spring and find the water has healing powers, so, removing their ragged bandages, they dip them in the water and their wounds are healed. In thanks, they hang the bandages on the thorn tree.



**St Kenelm's Church**

In Clent, in a narrow valley in the hills, pilgrims visit the site of the thorn tree. They build a shrine, then later a church, dedicated to Saint Kenelm, is built. A village grows up around it, which is later abandoned after a plague, and Chaucer mentions the legend in the Nun's Priest's tale.

Believe this story or not, for over a thousand years people have visited this spot, a place of pilgrimage, dipping hands in the water, and leaving offerings hanging in the trees.

In 1995, Martin Clarke was serving as the priest in Romsley. His parish church was St Kenelm's. The area of the spring had become overgrown, so a grant was obtained and the spring and land revamped to make it more accessible. The whole community, including the local school, became involved in the venture.

Today, St Kenelm's Church is classed as a pilgrim church. Many people visit this beautiful, peaceful spot part-way down the side of the Clent Hills in Worcestershire, now a countryside park managed by the National Trust.



**St Kenelm's Spring**

On the notice board at the Lych gate a prayer reads:

***"Here is forgiveness,  
and with forgiveness, peace"***

*Anne Clarke*

## MEMORABLE MANUSCRIPTS

Our book reviewer this month is **CHRISTINE PORTER**, who found this fictional account based on the author's personal experiences a hard read at times, but one that really chimes with what we see so often in television news bulletins.

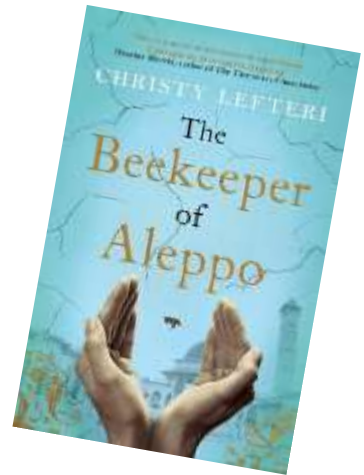
**Book: The Beekeeper of Aleppo**

**Author: Christy Lefteri**

**Publisher: Manilla Press**

Asylum seeking is nothing new. The most famous asylum seekers in history were Joseph and Mary, with their new-born Christ child, fleeing from danger in their homeland to safety in Egypt. Eventually, when it was safe to do so, they were able to return home and resume their normal life. In recent decades we have seen enormous displacements of people, many leaving behind homes totally wrecked and livelihoods destroyed, with no hope of ever returning. Leaving behind one's roots and family traditions and to travel through many different countries and to arrive in a place where it must seem totally bewildering, must be one of the hardest things in life to accept

Although fictional, Christy Lefteri's book *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is based on her own experience, as she witnessed first-hand the plight of refugees and heard their stories, while working as a volunteer at UNICEF's Hope Centre in Athens. She was born in 1980 to Greek Cypriot parents, refugees themselves, who had met in London after fleeing the 1974 invasion, and for six years, she worked as a psychotherapist at a central London hospital. Then, in response to the Syrian war and refugee crisis, she volunteered to work with refugees in Athens during the summers of 2016 and 2017. This was a time when huge numbers of people were trying to escape from war-torn Syria, Afghanistan and various African nations.



Her book tells the story of a traumatised Syrian couple, Nuri who is a beekeeper and his wife Afra, an artist. They are forced to leave Syria when their city of

Aleppo is destroyed and their only child, a nine-year-old son, dies in tragic circumstances. The book is a harrowing account of their horrendous journey from Aleppo via refugee camps in Turkey and Greece, in their attempt to reach England. On the way they experience great hardship and danger. Afra has been blinded, and Nuri is only sustained by the thought of joining his cousin Mustafa, a fellow beekeeper, who has already been granted asylum in Yorkshire.

During their journey, Nuri and Afra grapple with immense grief, loss, and psychological trauma, their relationship strained by the weight of their experiences. Throughout the book, bees are a symbol of vulnerability, life and hope, and Nuri is encouraged in his quest to reach the UK by the fact that his beekeeper cousin has already reached Yorkshire and is teaching fellow refugees how to keep bees.



Despite all the misery of their journey, the author finds hope in Nuri's determination to survive and in the way that the couple gradually rebuild their strained relationship. Afra's sight shows some signs of recovery; Nuri overcomes the hallucinations that he has struggled with since the bombing of Aleppo; and eventually the couple find Mustafa again.

The narrative explores themes of resilience, hope, and the search for meaning amidst unimaginable suffering. It tells the story of ordinary people persevering through war-torn times: human beings like us and their everyday bravery in extraordinary circumstances, using the conventions of the novel while sticking to the truth. At no time is it sensationalised or sentimentalised, but the story is told with hard truths and with sympathy.

This beautifully written book is moving, powerful and compassionate, and the author has really got into the mind of refugees escaping the horrors of war. It reminds us of the importance of recognizing the humanity of those forced to flee their homes, and the need for a more inclusive and compassionate world. We all must learn to be more tolerant with each other, to try and create a harmonious world to live in.

While this is a difficult read at times, the book inspires a belief in the human spirit and courage to overcome tremendous suffering. It is a book I enjoyed reading, and a story that will stay with me for a long time to come.

*Christine Porter*

## TIME OF OUR LIVES — Part 2

Continuing her account (begun last month), **HELEN ROWAN** shares more of her family's experiences this summer on their epic 1400 mile drive through 4 American States — Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee.

Waking up in Memphis, our first stop was to visit the Peabody Hotel, which has a curious tradition, dating back to 1933, known as the March of the Peabody Ducks. In a ceremony led by a uniformed “Duckmaster”, the 5 resident ducks are escorted from their palace on the roof, down the lift and through the lobby to the (indoor) hotel fountain. This was all great fun and the children enjoyed feeding the ducks and exploring some of the historic features of the hotel, which still has its original telephone booths and wall phones. Continuing downtown, we walked to the famous Beale Street, which is synonymous with the emergence of blues music, then headed for lunch.



**The Duckmaster**

The next day we were back on the trail of Elvis Presley with a visit to Graceland. Perhaps I am too young to fully understand the magic of Graceland: certainly it was the place most often mentioned by our older friends when we first described our trip. Even to someone born after Elvis' lifetime, however, going there was quite a special experience — from the cinema-type visitor centre to standing in the (surprisingly modest-sized) house itself. I found it fascinating to see the perfectly preserved 1970's décor; to read about the highlights of Elvis' career; and to see shots taken from his home videos. The umpteen domestic documents containing his signature, however, were probably more of interest to his superfans!



**Graceland, Memphis, Tennessee**

Now we had our next big drive (around 5 hours), in our new SUV — Stuart having dropped the first one off at Memphis airport due to the tyre issue. Let's be clear: driving on American motorways (“Interstates”) is quite an experience. Often, there is a huge number of lanes — up to 7 on each side in cities — which split off

both left and right. On long distance routes, the road tends to be flanked by forest, so there is little scenery, bar the odd house or business cut into the forest. Then, suddenly, you near a town and huge advertising boards line the route.



**Exploring the Natchez Trace Parkway**

For our next destination, Nashville (pop c.712k), north east of Memphis, we decided to drive a less direct route. This was so that we could pick up the Natchez Trace Parkway, a single-carriageway road, which roughly follows the "Old Natchez Trace," a travel corridor dating back to the American Indians. This was much more relaxing and gave us the chance to stop at points of interest en-route, including picturesque picnic sites and an historic trading post.

Our two days in Nashville — a really attractive city — began with breakfast in the cute neighbourhood of Hillsboro close to Vanderbilt university. This was our first chance to try the southern specialities of biscuit (a bit like a scone), fried tomato and grits (somewhere between porridge and bread sauce) and to pick up some Tennessee wine. We had a two-day pass on the Old Town Trolley Tour bus which was great fun, although we did become almost word perfect on the tour commentary!



**Breakfast in Nashville**



**Downtown Nashville**

Nashville is, of course, famous for its music scene and we drove past the recording studios on "Music Row", where artists including Elvis Presley, Dolly Parton and Johnny Cash have recorded, as well as past famous live country music venues such as the Station Inn. We picked up some live music in downtown and enjoyed Nashville's famous hot chicken at Hattie B's. Apparently, you used to have to sign a disclaimer before you could try their hottest sauce — and we could see why!

Our next stop after Nashville was Dollywood, a theme park just outside the Great Smokey Mountains National Park, but, following a recommendation, we stopped at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage on the way. Andrew Jackson was the 7th US



**Andrew Jackson's Hermitage**

president, who held office in the first half of the 19th century. This was a fascinating visit with a historic house, beautiful garden and grounds to visit. As well as hearing about the president's life, we gratefully took a horse drawn carriage ride (as it was scorching hot) and learnt a little more about the slaves who lived on his property. Interestingly, Jackson was the only president in US history to have paid off the national debt!

After lunch at Edley's, a delicious BBQ chicken spot, we continued our drive around 3.5 hours east to the Dollywood resort. Here, the children were excited to get their first glimpse of the Smokey Mountains, which were the backdrop to many of the books they had been reading on our trip. Dollywood is named for Dolly Parton, and the resort and parks celebrate the landscape and culture of the Smokies as well as having some high thrill rides. We had a fantastic two days at the theme park and waterpark — both very clean and friendly. An interesting cultural moment for us was when The Star Spangled Banner was played over the tannoy system at the start of the day — a moment for everyone to pause.

Continuing in the National Park area, our next stop was a lodge overlooking the Smokeys (on the wonderfully named "Buckeye Knob Way"), where we stayed for three nights and visited the National Park. The views were incredible. To give you an idea of the atmosphere, here are some words that I wrote one evening during our stay: "The Smokey mountains — a panoramic view of wooded hills, each fading into shades of grey green. The loudest noise is of the insects — one starts with a rhythm like a steam train, another with a rising and falling "shh" chorus. One nearby, sounds like the fizz of a fire and another like a child's rattle."



**The Smokey Mountains, Tennessee**

Staying in the lodge gave us the chance to do some self-catering and we enjoyed visiting the local supermarket, where being issued with carrier bags (for free!) and having the cashier pack them for us, felt like stepping back in time. We had hoped to get a glimpse of bears during our stay, but had to settle for wild turkeys, huge cobwebs hanging from the trees and a woodpecker investigating the corner of the lodge.

Now came the last leg of our stay. We got up early on Sunday morning and drove around 2 hours south-west to Chattanooga (pop. c.191k), a key location in the American Civil War. Having passed many chapels on our trip (we were in the Bible belt after all!) and conscious of the key role of church music in the history of country and blues music, we were keen to experience an American church for ourselves.

Our journey led us to Ridgeway Baptist Church in the suburbs of the city. What an experience visiting a church with several hundred regular members! From the moment we walked in, we were welcomed by members of their staff; shown how to enrol the children in Sunday school (they were even issued with barcoded stickers so that we could safely collect them afterwards); and introduced to members of the leadership team. We had arrived in time for the more traditional service; and it was fascinating to see how slick it was (with videos explaining the success of their 20's-30's programme, plans for outreach and the start of 40 days of prayer) and to hear their music and preaching (on Jesus's prayer for his disciples — John: 17:6-12). We left really encouraged by the people and life of this church.



**Ridgeway Baptist Church**



**Driving back to Atlanta, Georgia**

Chattanooga has a fantastic aquarium and children's museum, and these, together with some delicious Latin American food and encounters with lots of lovely people (often admiring our bucket hats!) made a great end to our trip.

America — thank you. We will be back!

*Helen Rowan*

## NOTES FROM THE PAST

A tale of old with modern parallels is the story **JANE HATCHER** relates to us this month, using some additional material provided by a fellow writer, who is descended from the Bowman family of Richmond.

### An Ill-fated Family

Some families do seem to have to endure more than their fair share of tragedy, and this has doubtless always been the case. Old records tell of infant mortality, the modern press, too, often reports the criminal deaths of toddlers, and our Dales roads regularly see motor cyclists come to grief. Not long ago there was a spate of fatal accidents caused by newly-qualified young male drivers recklessly over-estimating their driving skills.

Schoolboys have, it seems, always played games which risked their lives, and this is a story about the tragic consequences of one such escapade in Victorian Richmond. But this tale also brings in the village of Gainford, just across the River Tees a few miles upstream of Darlington, as well as the Welsh slate-quarrying industry. As railway lines started to criss-cross the country, Welsh slates became the ubiquitous roofing material used for both new and old buildings, including many in Richmond.

The story begins with the wedding of Mary Margaret Ward, the youngest daughter of a prosperous Gainford farmer who had died some years previously. She was in her mid-30s; her groom was John Brewer, a widower in his 40s from Seaton Carew, a seaside resort near Hartlepool.

They were married, by Licence, on 23rd November 1852, by Revd. George Macfarlan (1780-1862), who had been the Vicar of Gainford since 1824. A native of Richmond, his father Philip, an attorney, was a person of some substance in the town. George Macfarlan, having won a place at Richmond Grammar School in the time of the elder James Tate, had become Tate's first 'Invincible' at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was later a Fellow of the College. Tate remained friendly with



Church of St Mary, Gainford

Macfarlan, and this may have played some part in our couple getting together, for fashionable and select Seaton Carew was where James Tate took his numerous children for seaside summer holidays.

The newly-weds set up home in Darlington, and there had two sons, George Ward Brewer and John Ward Brewer. John Brewer then acquired a Welsh slate quarry, and the family moved to Caernarvon in north-west Wales, where they lived in some style, with a live-in cook and nurse. It was not long, however, before tragedy struck, for John Brewer died at the age of 55 on 5th April 1864, in Knightsbridge. Had he, perhaps, gone to London on a business trip? The address would not seem to be in an area suggesting a medical consultation.

Mary Margaret Brewer, although now widowed, was left comfortably off. She decided to move back north, but to Richmond, rather than the Darlington area. She took a house in West Terrace, and enrolled both her sons at Richmond Grammar School, where there had recently been significant changes. The younger James Tate, who had taken over from his father when the latter moved to London in 1833 as a Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, had died in 1863, and his replacement was Thomas Henry Stokoe.

Stokoe was a successful headmaster, reviving the School's academic reputation which had suffered latterly due to the younger Tate's frequent absences due to ill health. Moreover, management of the School had changed, from being under the jurisdiction of Richmond Corporation, which had been the case since its Elizabethan re-foundation in 1567, to a charity, with ten trustees referred to as Governors, a situation which was to continue until 1946.



By moving into Richmond, Mary Brewer was able to enrol her sons George and John as day boys at Richmond Grammar school. It was looking as though this was a successful new start for the family, but unfortunately tragedy soon struck again. After lunch on the afternoon of Tuesday 9th November 1869, a group of nine lads, including both Brewer boys, decided to play truant from their respective schools, and headed up onto West Field Pasture. As the Brewer brothers were living at West Terrace, on the way to the West Field, one may be tempted to think they were the ringleaders in this escapade, perhaps led by the older boy, George, who was then about 14.

The gang started playing in a disused sand quarry, bedding themselves down in a cavity from which sand had been excavated, and amused themselves poking with

sticks and pocket-knives at the overhanging quarry face. Unsurprisingly, as there had probably recently been heavy rain at that time of year, a sudden fall of sand and earth engulfed most of the lads. Two were able to run and alert a young man who was working not far away, and he fetched two men who immediately came to try to rescue the seven boys all completely smothered by the collapse.

The men were able to pull out five relatively unscathed. They then turned their attention to George Brewer, who had been completely buried, and was lying below 18 inches of debris above his head. When he was eventually dug out, he was dead. Last to be retrieved was eleven-year-old John Brewer, who was found to have broken his femur.

The Borough Coroner, Wensley Hunton, held an inquest the next day. He made a recommendation that the Corporation, who were responsible for the sand quarry, should take steps to prevent such a disaster occurring again, and noted that the boys were not under the charge of their school authorities at the time.

George Brewer's funeral was held the following Monday, not in Richmond, but in Gainford, as his grieving mother had decided to bury him near his maternal grandparents. Anne Bowman, the Richmond authoress, noted in her diary for 15th November 1869: "Fine and dull. The poor Brewer buried at Gainford – a long procession of boys and masters following the hearse out of town." The whole Grammar School was obviously devastated, but no doubt boys from many other Richmond schools had been given a strict telling off that weekend, warned against playing truant, and above all playing in potentially dangerous locations.



**Front Street, Seaton Carew, in times gone by.**

John Brewer continued his education and by 1881 had become a marine architect, living with his mother in Front Street, Seaton Carew, the area from which his father had come. He was presumably working in the once prosperous shipbuilding industry on the Durham coast, either in Hartlepool or Sunderland. He died,

however, aged only 25, on 11th March 1882, at St George's Square in Sunderland. Poor Margaret Mary, having outlived her husband and both her sons, now moved back to Darlington, where she died at No. 6 Stanhope Road on 31st December 1887, leaving an estate of over £3,000.

*Jane Hatcher*

## WORD SEARCH

St Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland, although his only connection with the country is that some of his bones were reputedly transported in the 8<sup>th</sup> century to Fife and preserved at a church in a place now named St Andrews.

Andrew was one of the first disciples of Jesus, and the very first to bring someone else to Christ - his own brother. Like many fervent Jews at the time, Andrew and an unnamed companion had been drawn to the prophet John the Baptist. When one day John pointed out Jesus to Andrew and his friend, and described him as the 'Lamb of God', the two young men assumed that the next stage of their spiritual search was about to unfold. So, as Jesus made off, they followed him.

When Jesus turned and asked them what they were 'seeking', all they could come up with was a lame enquiry about his current place of residence: 'where are you staying?' The reply of Jesus was the most straight-forward invitation anyone can receive: 'Come and see'. So they did, and the results of their response were life-changing. Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus, and soon the little apostolic band, who would carry the message of Jesus to the whole world, was formed. And right at the front of the column, as it were, was Andrew, the first disciple of Jesus. His Saint's Day is 30th November.

Andrew  
Patron  
Saint  
Scotland  
Fife  
First  
Disciple  
John  
Baptist  
Lamb  
God  
Followed  
Jesus  
Come  
See  
Peter  
Apostolic  
Band  
Message  
World



## Sudoku - Easy

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

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## Sudoku - Medium

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

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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 — **30th November '25**,  
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[www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk](http://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:  
**28th November '25**



## 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

**6th November '25**



## Puzzle Solutions

### Sudoku — Easy

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

### Sudoku — Medium

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

### Wordsearch



Deadline for Dec '25/Jan '26 edition; Monday 17th November.  
To contribute letters, articles, etc. please contact  
[connections.ed24@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:boycead11@gmail.com)



"All are welcome  
in this place."

## Reverend Matthew Hutchinson's Charity

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Dr John Ridley,

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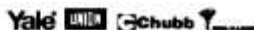
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