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TOWER AND TOWN

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Past, Present And Future

As this edition of Tower and Town contains a disparate group of articles, I have opted for the catch-all title of “Past, Present and Future”, reflecting the rich past of our town, the beautiful historical and natural surroundings we have today and hopes for the future.

Ilse Nikolsky introduces us to an exceptional aspect of the town’s history in The Vicar’s Library, our own set of books - some rare and unique, and as a group, so important they are kept in the Bodleian library. Past and present are intermingled in the first part of David Chandler’s fascinating virtual walk through the town explaining the origin of many of our familiar street names; Charles Ponting, the architect of the Town Hall, sometimes preserved elements of previous buildings in his designs; and Richard Jefferies’ love of nature in Victorian England strikes a chord with present concerns about the value of the natural world.

Present and future are intrinsically linked in the environment. Millie Carmichael explains the wittily named Bee Roadzz, a network of joined up habitats with Marlborough at the crossroads. Gareth Harris introduces us to barbastelle bats and James Bumphrey reminds us of the importance of housing estate back gardens as wildlife habitat.

And finally, John Osborne describes the gem that is St Katharine’s Church in Savernake: a rich history, a beautiful setting and a place for quiet contemplation now that churches are open again for private prayer.

Sarah Bumphrey: Editor

Cover: Marlborough Town Hall staircase, showing columns possibly from the previous Town Hall building.

A Virtual Tour Through Marlborough And Some Of Its Place Names (Part 1)

David Chandler

I would like to start my tour at the end of **Tin Pit Lane**, which was given its name because there used to be a corporation rubbish dump there. **Tin Pit Lane** is off **St Martin's** which gets its name from the chapel of **St Martin** which stood at the bottom of **Cold Harbour Lane** from 1254 until 1549. The name **Cold Harbour** suggests a building where travellers could find shelter for the night. The end of **Tin Pit Lane** becomes a footpath and overlooks on the right hand side the valley of the **River Og**. Across this valley is a bank which used to contain a pond which supplied fish to the castle in medieval times.

Tin Pit Lane comes out onto the edge of "**The Acres**" housing estate built by Marlborough Borough in the late 60s & 70s. The roads are named after burgesses of the Borough who owned strips of lane for agriculture in the 17th century. The five roads include one named after **Thomas Baylie** who owned the Merchant's House in the High Street. Also on "**The Acres**" is **Rogers Meadow** named after **Sgt Maurice Rogers** of the Wiltshire Regiment who lived in **St John's Close** and was awarded a posthumous VC at Anzio in 1944.

Walking up the footpath from the end of **Tin Pit** you come to the top of **Blowhorn Street**, so named because the Corporation herdsman used to walk up here blowing his horn to alert the burgesses to look to their cattle grazing on the Common.

Another road crossed is **Chiminge Close** named after the chiminge tax which is a toll that used to be paid by townspeople for passing through the forest. **Robert Somerfiled** (Mayor in 1477) gave this land to the town so the income could pay these tolls. The Borough built Marlborough's first council houses, **Chiminge Close**, on this land from 1912 to 1923.

Across from **Chiminge Close** is **Piper's Piece** which borders onto **Herd Street**, so named because the burgesses drove their livestock up here to graze on the Common. **Piper's Piece**, comprising eight unusual and interesting houses, was the first modern "spec" development in the town in the 1930s and named after the building company of **Piper & Sons**.

Across **Herd Street**, **St David's Way** leads into **Kingsbury Terrace**, an attractive row of twelve cottages with pedestrian access only, which in turn leads onto

Kingsbury Street. This street used to be the boundary between St Mary's and St Peter's parishes and also a ward of the medieval borough.

Almost opposite Kingsbury Terrace is **Blackwall Footpath** with a brick wall which has been tarred for protection. This footpath leads to **Back Lane** which is parallel to the High Street and originated from one of the terraces stretching east/west and from the River Kennet to the Common. There are several alleyways leading from Back Lane to the High Street and from east to west they are **Ironmonger Lane, Chandler's Yard, Halfpenny Lane** and **Castle and Ball Yard**.



On the first two of these alleyways there are “kinks” which are on the line of the earliest east/west road through Marlborough. This came in from St Martin's, along **Silverless Street** (the Borough's Jewish quarter), headed west and across Hyde Lane.

It was down these alleyways that the besieging royalist army came during the siege of Marlborough in January 1642 to capture the town which was held for Parliament.

One of these alleys, **Chandler's Yard**, used to be called **Horsepassage Lane** and that name commemorated the event. The present name is from my great great grandfather, Thomas Chandler, who owned the saddlery shop on the High Street in the late 1800s which is now the White Horse Bookshop.

[A longer version of this article is available in the extended online edition]



Entrance to Kingsbury Square from Kingsbury Street

Saving Wiltshire Bees

Milly Carmichael, chair of Transition Marlborough



Transition Marlborough has joined an ambitious national project to save our pollinating insects. Bee-Roadzz, a Transition Marlborough project, is now encouraging everyone to support the national charity Buglife. They aim to join up the best existing pockets of great pollinator habitat across the country with their project, B-lines (biodiversity lines) [see p.19 for map]. This will create a network of joined-up habitats so insects, including threatened species in small isolated populations, can move more freely around the British countryside, becoming more resilient and building up their numbers. As many as 70 percent of insect species could go extinct if they are stuck within ever decreasing fragments of habitat.

“Imagine trying to travel around Britain if nine out of every ten miles of road just didn’t exist – life would be impossible,” explains Buglife spokesperson Hayley Herridge. “Bees and other pollinators are disappearing from our countryside in part because three million hectares, 97 per cent, of the UK’s wildflower-rich grasslands have been lost since the 1930s”.

Three quarters of fruit and vegetables are insect pollinated. Without them, we’d be stuck with beige, bland food with limited nutrients. But this isn't just about us. There are over 250 species of wild bees in the UK and countless species of other pollinators, most of them we know very little about. We want to help people know more about them, support some 'citizen science' to help monitor them and encourage everyone to join in the effort to join up the landscape for them.

Marlborough is in a crucial position, at a crossroads in the Swindon to Salisbury and Hungerford to Chippenham B-lines insect network, so can all play an important part.

Bee-Roadzz and Wiltshire B-lines needs more participants of all sizes to connect and restore wildflower-rich grasslands, from private and community gardens, allotment associations and parish councils, to farmers and large estate owners and corridors such as canals.

If you have a garden, or are a landowner or farmer and would like to take part, please contact us at transitionmarlborough.org, go to our Bee Roadzz facebook page and find out more at buglife.org.uk/resources/publications-hub/b-lines-resources/



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The Vicar's Library Of St. Mary's Marlborough

Ilse Nikolsky

In 1677 Cornelius Yeate (1651-1720) was appointed vicar to St. Mary's, Marlborough and this turned out to be fortuitous for our town. Yeate had been acquainted with, perhaps even a friend of William White (1604-1678) one time Master of Magdalen College School in Oxford and later Rector of Pusey, then in Berkshire. On his death in May 1678 White bequeathed his considerable collection of books to the Mayor and Corporation of Marlborough in trust for the use of the Vicar of St. Mary's and his successors; adding *“that every one of the vicars would give one good Book to the study that is not there allready, to the end It may bee a convenient Library for any minister of whatsoever abilityes and Inclinations”*.

This quite remarkable library contains books on history, law, medicine and science. Three books were printed in 1484, 1487, and 1498 respectively, and others are rare or unique. The collection is known as ‘The Vicar's Library’, is deposited on permanent loan and looked after at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

We owe thanks to E. G. H. Kempson, (1902 - 1987) who taught at Marlborough College and was Mayor of Marlborough in 1946. He saved the books from destruction at a time when their existence had been forgotten, and later researched and documented the fate of the collection. A longer article about Kempson and the rescued library can be found online.

With the plan to make the library better known locally, a few volunteers from the Merchant's House visited the Bodleian Library. The Head of Rare Books, Sarah Wheale, showed us the store rooms where the books are kept in custom made acid proof boxes and in temperature and moisture controlled conditions. Several were opened for us and their content and importance explained. One of the books, which was once kept on a lectern in a church, still has the original chain!



For anyone interested a list of the books is at the library in the Merchant's House, there is a report of some items from the library on <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/primo-explore/search?sortBy=rank&vid=SOLO> and further information is available in the Bodleian online record.

Charles Edwin Ponting FSA (1850-1932)

Andrew Bumphrey

Marlborough is lucky to have a very fine Town Hall. It was built in 1901/2 on the site of an earlier building and was designed by a successful and prolific local architect Charles Ponting. He was born in Collingbourne Ducis, the son of a forester. He began his training in the office of Samuel Overton, an architect in Burbage, and spent part of his apprenticeship in the masons' and joiners' yards at Savernake Estate gaining both practical and theoretical skills.

Initially he was employed as an agent on the Meux estate at Overton (broken up by sale in 1906) working on many small buildings there. In 1878 he designed St



Michael's at West Overton which was paid for by the estate. This must have established his reputation because in 1883 he was appointed diocesan surveyor for the Wiltshire portion of the Salisbury Diocese and later for Dorset and Bristol. Over 50 years he restored many churches and designed and built 15 new ones.

Ponting was an Anglo Catholic and served as churchwarden at St Mary's in Marlborough. His high churchmanship may well have informed his apparent belief that gothic was the only appropriate style for church buildings. He was eclectic in his approach to style in his designs for secular buildings however. These were many and varied including Lockeridge and Dauntsey's schools. The two houses he designed in Marlborough at Hyde Cross and Clements Meadow show the influence of the 'arts and crafts' style which came to the fore in the late 19th century.

He was also the architect for Marlborough College where he designed the new gym on the site of the old Bridewell Prison incorporating some of the old prison windows into the design. This propensity for re-using features from previous buildings is also evident in his design for the new Marlborough Town Hall where I believe that he may have incorporated columns and possibly the cupola from the old building into the new one.



Ponting lived and worked in Lockeridge and latterly at Wye House in Marlborough. Tragically his wife died in childbirth at the age of 20 although his twin daugh-



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ters survived and lived with him for the rest of his life. It is said that ‘he had great energy and business skill but was a quiet and modest man equally at home with builders and aristocrats’.

With thanks to Tony Nicholson:

Wildlife Superstars Of The Savernake Forest

– The Barbastelle Bat: Gareth Harris, Wiltshire Bat Group & Wiltshire Mammal Group (*cont. p.10*)



The Barbastelle bat (*Barbastella barbastella*) is one of the rarest bats in the UK and Europe, with a wide and patchy distribution; in the UK it is confined primarily to the counties of southern England. It can be a tricky species to study and it remains one of the most poorly understood bat species in the UK.

The Barbastelle bat is unlike other bats found in the UK – its fur is a glossy black, often white-tipped (giving a beautiful frosted appearance); this, and its characteristic ear structure, makes this species almost unmistakable. Its scientific name, *Barbastella*, comes from the Latin for “starry beard”, and indeed its “beard” is frosted, like stars in the night sky.

The Barbastelle bat is a species of wooded landscapes; small colonies typically roost in trees, within splits and cavities, often utilising multiple trees and moving between them regularly, perhaps every couple of days. When foraging, however, Barbastelle bats leave the woodlands to forage across the wider landscape, using corridors such as rivers, hedgerows and woodland edge to move rapidly to their preferred foraging area; amazingly, radiotracking studies in the UK have recorded them foraging 30km away from their roosting site – that’s a long way for a bat weighing 7-8 grams!

These habits, however, leave the Barbastelle bat at some risk from mankind’s incursion into the natural environment. They are very averse to artificial lighting; new developments and lit infrastructure such as roads can block their access to important foraging areas. They prefer older woodlands with abundant standing

deadwood within which they roost and breed. The veteran trees of the Savernake Forest, and the surrounding landscape, provide important roosting sites for them.

Wiltshire Bat Group has studied the Barbastelle bats and other bat species of the Savernake Forest and Marlborough since the early 1990s. This has involved long-term study of a Barbastelle maternity group at the southern end of the Forest. During July 2019 the Group undertook a week of intensive study, catching and radio-tracking bats to learn more of where they roost and breed, where they forage and the landscape features they use to access their foraging areas.

With thanks to the Forestry Commission for supporting our work in the Savernake Forest, and to Bat Conservation Trust and Buglife for providing funding via Back from the Brink's *Ancients of the Future*.

Further information

Wiltshire Bat Group & Wiltshire Mammal Group:

<https://wiltshiremammals.wordpress.com/>

Richard Jefferies (1848-1887) and Marlborough – Part 2

John Price

Richard Jefferies moved away from Swindon in his twenties, to be nearer to London, and later he moved to various parts of Sussex for health reasons; from 1882 to 1884, living in Hove – in a house he named “Savernake Villa”. He had clearly not forgotten Wiltshire, and indeed, many of his later essays written in Sussex were about the Wiltshire countryside and the Marlborough Downs.

In *Round About a Great Estate* he describes coming to Marlborough to try to find an old “History of Overboro” “After some consideration, however, he thought there might be a copy at the Crown, once an old posting-inn, at Overboro’ : that was about the only place where I should be likely to find it. So one warm summer day I walked into Overboro’, following a path over the Downs, whose short sward affords the best walking in the world.” There follows a wonderful description of the old Inn, inside and out. Could this have been the Castle and Ball – or The Ailesbury Arms?

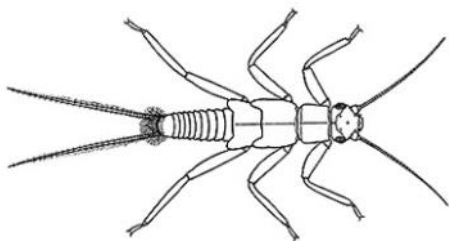
The final reference worth mentioning is in a letter Jefferies wrote to the Swindon Advertiser in 1871. In this he states “Passing leisurely down the High Street, Marlborough, one lovely day last summer, I paused in front of a window when I caught

sight of a little green book with the title; *The Birds of Marlborough*. Jefferies then continues to reflect on his own experiences; but this little book was written by an 18 year old still at Marlborough College named Everard Im Thurn, who went on to have a very distinguished diplomatic career. As to the bookshop, there were two in Marlborough at the time, and it would be very fitting to think that the one young Jefferies saw was the earlier incarnation of the White Horse Bookshop, which now very generously supports an annual award, together with the Richard Jefferies Society, for the best book of nature writing in a given year.

Rebirding by Benedict MacDonald (Pelagic Publishing) won this year's prize. It impressed the judges by its ambition and scope. Macdonald said: "My wise grandfather gave me a copy of Jefferies' *Wild Life in a Southern County* when I was eight years old. Today I am humbled beyond measure to have won this literary prize."

And if you haven't read it yet, I would also strongly endorse last year's winner, "Wilding" by Isabella Tree. Apart from that I would recommend any books by Richard Mabey, who I consider to be by far the best of the modern nature writers.

Stonefly Larva



Mayfly Larva



Denizens of the Kennet (see p.22 and in colour online)

RECORD OF A LOCKDOWN CONVERSATION

Neighbour 1 I was sorry to hear about the death of your relation.

Neighbour 2 Oh, thank you. How did you know?

Neighbour 1 During our Service on Zoom they were mentioned in our prayers

Neighbour 2 A Service? But I thought that the Church was closed during Covid 19...

Neighbour 1 The building is closed but we have many digital services, prayer groups, daily meditations etc..

Neighbour 2 Really? How interesting. Where can I find the links for these?

Neighbour 1 Try emailing lovemarlborough@gmail.com

Recent estimates indicate the current housing shortage in the UK is greater than one million homes. These homes need to be built somewhere. However, the planning and construction of housing across the country is often delayed by local opposition: an attitude of *‘Yes of course everyone has the right to have a decent place to live, so long as it does not change the views from my back garden, or along my favourite dog walking route.’*

On a local level the extension of existing settlements generally makes the most sense. This enables connections into existing utilities, and access for future residents to amenities and sustainable transport options. Inevitably, existing local residents often oppose such developments with protection of the environment and existing ecology often cited as a key reason for objection.

These concerns are of course understandable and not without foundation. The UK is already one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and biodiversity is continuing to decline. Arresting this decline is vital for ensuring the functioning of healthy ecosystems that provide the associated services (e.g food, water, clear air) on which people rely. Believe it or not, strategically planned, well designed development is one of the methods by which this can be achieved.

Existing national policy has a presumption in favour of ‘sustainable development’ that is required to deliver a measurable biodiversity benefit and further requirements are to be enshrined in the emerging Environment Bill. Of course, policy needs to be effectively applied by local government and appropriate sites have to be selected. In locations such as Marlborough there is little land available for development other than farmland.

Whilst sensitively managed farmland has value for some important species (e.g skylark), it can be of limited value for many. On land such as this, well-designed housing projects that incorporate networks of multifunctional green space can have significant benefits for people and nature. The inclusion of green spaces, incorporating fruiting trees and shrubs, wildflower meadow areas, drainage ponds and even green roofs, provide food and refuge for a range of species. These spaces may also provide opportunities for existing residents to enjoy nature and maybe even a new place to walk the dog!

John Osborne Visits St Katharine's, Savernake

At the southern end of Savernake Forest there is one the loveliest ensembles of trees, meadows and buildings in our neighbourhood. This is St Katharine's Church, with the local primary school just one field away and one or two houses nearby. Little seems to have changed here in the last 150 years.

We expect churches and schools in centres of population, in a village, at least, but it is heartening in our time of dwindling church attendance and falling numbers in rural primary schools that both church and school at Savernake are flourishing, with nearly 100 pupils at the school, for instance.

A sign off the Durley road points to the church, with its prominent spire. In the spring and summer sun there is greenery all around and magnificent mature cedars in the churchyard, shadowing the graves of the Brudenell-Bruces. The boundary wall is hidden in a 'ha-ha' to give you a clear view of the building and its surrounds.

The proportions of the church are striking, but the details of the materials and the workmanship are outstanding and show that no expense was spared. The architect was TH Wyatt and the Dowager Countess of Pembroke, the Russian Katarina Voronzova, whose daughter, Mary, became the 2nd Marchioness of Ailesbury, provided the funds. The Dowager Countess died in 1855 and her daughter had the completed church dedicated in her mother's name in 1861.

Look at the stonework and the carving of the details on the windows outside; inside, look at the amazing screens that flank the nave, at the brilliant marble and again at the quality of the carving; and note that the builder and the mason were local men. Look at the wonderful Minton tilework and at the stained glass windows in the apse. There is an extraordinary memorial to the Marchioness of Ailesbury, designed in the 1890's by Sir Alfred Gilbert, famous for 'Eros' in Piccadilly. The delicate figure of the lady half hidden behind the screen of



foliage is thought to be another Mary, the Virgin herself.

We are lucky to have a church at all. One of the ammunition dumps in Savernake Forest exploded in July 1945. Although a mile away the explosion did such serious damage to the fabric of the church that the demolition of the whole of the nave was proposed. Local feeling was so strong that this was successfully resisted and after restoration the church was reopened in 1952. Rightly, the visitor will say.



A Good Read

Debby Guest

There is nothing as peculiar as the recent past, and Ysenda Maxtone-Graham is a genius at capturing it. *Terms and Conditions*, about girls' boarding schools, was full of reminiscences about green mince, chapel cloaks, and the Correct Knickers. Now in *British Summer Time Begins* Y M-G has turned to what happens at the end of term, when weeks of blissful (supposedly) idleness (ideally) loomed.

Anecdotes of 'holidays' from the 1930s to the 80s are recounted with the author's sharp eye for the telling, comic or border-line tragic detail. Some holidays were just a day-trip by coach to the seaside, other people spent six weeks in Scotland with feral cousins, or endured a visit to Granny, who ate the family pets. (No, really! Chapter 10.) Agonising, sick-making car journeys had children and luggage packed with military precision by fathers for whom this was the one annual engagement with domestic life. Summer could mean horrible/baffling/life-changing exchange trips with foreign pen-pals, or dingy, mildewy tents or boarding houses, or a day out to somewhere 'interesting', with packed-lunch sandwiches in greaseproof paper. For some there were long trips on a succession of ever smaller aircraft which took boarding-school children 'home' for the holidays, where they were decanted into blinding Equatorial sunshine, wearing school blazers and itchy socks. Whatever your own summers were like, there will be something you recognise in this wittily

observant and faintly poignant book.

And after that, do read *The Fortnight in September* by RC Sherriff. First published in 1931, and revived by Persephone Books, it's a lovely novel about a family enjoying their annual holiday, undramatic, loving, and with a slightly wistful air of things inevitably starting to change.

V for Victory by Lissa Evans is a sequel to *Crooked Heart* and *Old Baggage*, continuing the story of Noel and Vee, now living in Hampstead in the final months of the war. This author goes from strength to strength, her characters and dialogue are spot-on, the narrative threads and coincidences are all plausibly tied together, and it's done with such heart and warmth. My enthusiasm for LE is a standing joke in the bookshop, but I honestly think she's written a trilogy that stands comparison with Jane Gardam's *Old Filth* series, and I can't come up with higher praise.

I'm late to the party, not unusual for me, but I finally read and absolutely loved *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernadine Evaristo. I was put off by the Booker Prize-ness of it, and the unconventional prose style. I was wrong, it's fabulous and captivating. Read it even if you don't think it's your kind of thing. In fact, *especially* if you think it's not your kind of thing.



St Katharine's Tiles

Where Do We Go From Here? Janneke Blokland

*Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,
as more of heaven in each we see;
some softening gleam of love and prayer
shall dawn on every cross and care.*

John Keble

After six years in Marlborough, I am writing this last clergy letter for *Tower and Town* amidst packed moving boxes, in front of the computer screen used for leading Sunday worship in the past three months, when our Churches were closed.

As for many others, these weeks of lock-down have given me a lot of time to reflect – or to overthink, depending on the day. There are two thoughts that keep coming back to me. Firstly, how lucky I have been to have something to be looking forward to: a new job, and a new place, new challenges and opportunities. Secondly, how my time in Marlborough, spent with you, has made me so much better prepared for whatever lies ahead of me.

Having something to look forward to as well as feeling prepared are different from the certainty and safety that we, including myself, so often try to find. Indeed, sometimes certainty and safety can be stumbling blocks in truly being prepared and finding our purpose and fulfilment. The difference lies in our readiness to trust.

Being able to trust is hard. It requires a spiritual discipline, but also practical help. It requires us to let go of expectations without letting go of hope. However, we also need a community to help us see that when we trust, there is hope. The ‘softening gleam of love and prayer’ about which John Keble writes in his famous hymn is firmly rooted in real, supportive relationships.

Therefore the challenge to us, as we adjust to a new way of living, is twofold. We need to prepare ourselves and others well for an uncertain but hopeful future. Spiritually, we can do this by remembering the stories of our ancestors, how God worked in the lives of those who have gone before us. Practically, we do this by looking after each other: making sure that the prospect of losing a job does not mean having no livelihood, and that losing our health does not mean losing our human value and dignity.

These last months have made us acutely aware that none of us knows what the future will bring. However, if we are honest, we never knew that. So instead of retracing our steps to the false security of this world, in hope and trust let us try to prepare ourselves and others for a future in which true riches abound.

The midst of May: nature's parade. My son, mock-revising (and himself a biological marvel, inching ever upward to the sun), enthuses at the brilliance of plants – every leaf a factory at peak, puffing out its perfect equation of elements

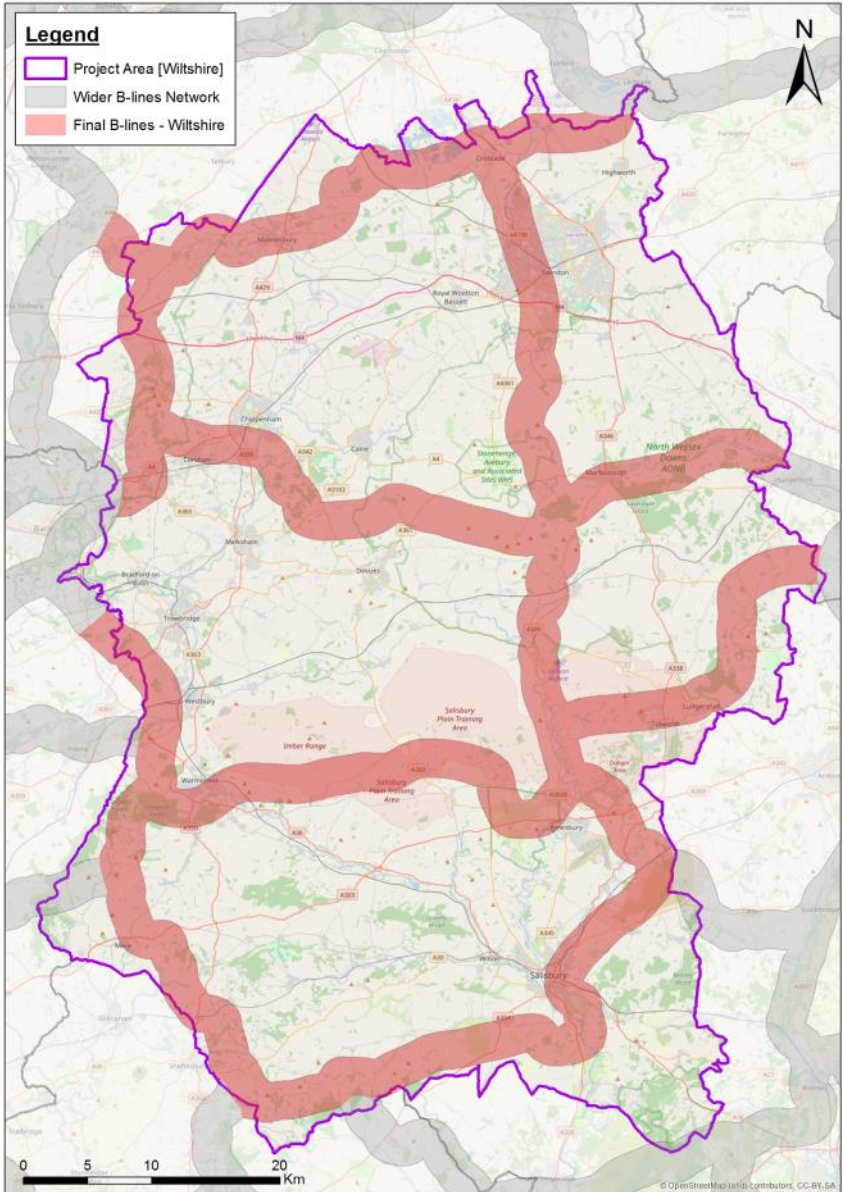
This photosynthetic month is ideal for discovering the Savernake – seven square miles of antique woodland and perhaps our most precious scrap of primeval forest. Hitherto, my encounters with this enchanted plateau have been limited to rushing through the verdant corridor of the A346 on my way to Salisbury: dodging cadavers of deer and the portly tangle of the Big Belly Oak, reputedly the nation's oldest. This behemoth is thought to be eleven hundred years old, having cracked through its acorn when the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms finally united under King Athelstan, in whose annals the forest is first recorded – as 'Safernoc'. Like a snarling cyclops, restrained by a steel collar to prevent it collapsing (or running amok), the Big Belly is an icon of England, and roughly the same vintage. Its shock of leaves in spring brings to mind lines from George Herbert: 'and now in age I bud again: who would have thought my shrivelled heart could have recovered greenness?'

Red-bricked relics in various stages of decay decorate the lanes hereabouts: the former Forest Hotel, whose last guests left in the late nineties, remnants of the high and low level rail stations (the platform of the former now a sunken garden) and corroded gateways to absent avenues. The Savernake has stayed privately-owned since 1548, when granted to the Seymour family of Wolfhall – favoured as a hunting lodge by Henry VIII when pursuing his dubious quarry. Although the original hall wasted away soon after that other obese oak, a sole stained window was recovered and illuminates Great Bedwyn Church, all Tudor flowers and faded feathers. Hilary Mantel's dazzling novels have sparked such interest in the site that the current, crumbling pile at Wolfhall Farm now bristles with archaeologists. I watched them briefly: waist deep in the Seymour sewer system, brushing off the rock of ages.

At its largest extent in the thirteenth century, the Savernake Forest covered an area ten times its present patch – reaching to Hungerford in the east and south nearly as far as Salisbury Plain – becoming so large that, in order to prevent it merging with the other eight Wiltshire forests into one arboreal conurbation, two clauses in the Magna Carta were needed explicitly to limit its spread. By the time Capability Brown arranged his scheme of radial parades and pleasing bowers, the forest had been pollarded down to pretty much its present size.

A very human wilderness, then. Yet wild it is, nevertheless – and if men and

women withdrew, an unbound Savernake would soon reclaim whatever ground has been lost. Its oldest oaks provoke an awe bordering on fear, certainly. Strolling up Long Harry – a path worth walking for the name alone – I approach the Cathedral Oak, a spreading millennial with a hide like Durer’s rhinoceros. Before its chancel of branches you can either stand, transfixed, or slowly retreat.



*B-lines
(see
p.4)*

How quintessentially English is the oak! Regardless of the great elms and pines essential in building the Victory, the Mary Rose, the Golden Hind, it is the oak we cherish as the timber that defended our nation in sea-borne conflicts of old. It is so deep within our psyche it would not be amiss centred on the England flag, and though Savernake Forest contains many mighty trees, only the oaks are deemed worthy of naming... however they are not as 'English' as one might expect.

When I first explored Savernake I visited the named oaks and was intrigued by one called Cluster Oak. It had no name plate so I looked for something grand like Ayers Oak or an ancient remnant like Big Belly - but there was nothing, just a small cluster of respectable trees that I assumed was a *cluster of oaks*, but I was wrong. A Cluster Oak is a particular subspecies on which the leaves grow in dense twisted clusters, and yes, our Cluster Oak does exist - a rather small, sad specimen now boasting its name board. The King Oak was the same species and the Replacement King, another poor specimen, was grown from one of the old King's acorns. The whole species was first discovered in 1917 in, yes, Savernake.

I was also wrong about Turkey Oak, not named after a Christmas dinner but the common name of a tree that comes from Turkey. It is perhaps the finest looking of our oaks and identified by its bristly acorn cups, but the timber shatters too easily for construction purposes.

The oak that we like to think made our 'men o' war' is the Common or English Oak also known as the Pedunculate Oak because its acorns grow on long stalks or *peduncles*, however it is not so common as one might imagine in Savernake. Of the twenty-six named trees only Cathedral Oak is pure English. The other supposedly common oak is the Durmast or Sessile Oak with its acorns *sessile* or closely seated on the twigs and only five of these trees have been named in Savernake.

So what of the other seventeen named oaks? All are hybrids of the English and Durmast and oddly, though very common, have no common name. The scientific name is *Quercus* (Latin for oak) \times (meaning hybrid) *rosacea* (made of roses - though it's not, nor is it red!). Even Big Belly is such a hybrid. And to further confuse, there are also some American oaks.

If six local species seems too daunting, consider the fifty plus species in Europe alone! Even so, the Oak is *our* tree and we love it.

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FROM THE REGISTERS

Funerals - we pray for the families of:

9 June – Catherine ‘Kate’ Helen Moseley (65) of Kingsbury Street, Marlborough

North Wilts Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett

17 June – Sarah Ann Porter (70) of Edwards Meadow, Marlborough

St George’s, Preshute and North Wilts Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett

19 June – Dorothy Prentice (91) of Highfield Residential Home, Marlborough

North Wilts Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett

27 June – Mary Gordon Fiorita (88) of River Park, Marlborough

South Oxfordshire Crematorium

22 June – Maurice Percy Cooper (80) of High Street, Manton

North Wilts Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett

30 June – June Lilian Eva Whant (88) of Hungerford Care Home, Hungerford

Marlborough Cemetery

7 July – Sally ‘Gillian’ Watson (79) of River Park, Marlborough

North Wilts Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett

Anyone observing the crystal-clear water of the Kennet would presume that it is an extremely clean river. Rainwater seeps down through the chalk into deep aquifers before returning to the surface via springs such as Swallowhead, near Avebury. Sadly, even this source water is contaminated by nitrates and phosphates, the legacy of fertiliser use on the Downs. Further downstream, the river has to cope with a battery of pollutants such as run-off from roads, silt from ploughed fields and water coming out of the sewage treatment plants dealing with all sorts of waste from our homes.

In order to assess how clean the water really is, it is possible to carry out chemical tests but these are expensive and time-consuming. A much cheaper method is to take a sample of the creatures that live in the riverbed. The presence or absence of certain “indicator species” is used to determine the water quality.

Coordinated by *Action for the River Kennet* (ARK), 62 sites in the Kennet catchment are monitored every month, the volunteers recording the numbers of freshwater shrimps, mayflies, caddisflies and stoneflies.

These invertebrates are very sensitive to pollution and, like canaries in coalmines, can be used as effective early indicators of pollution events. If invertebrate numbers drop below a certain level, the Environment Agency is notified so that the problem can be identified and action taken. In July 2013, ARK’s monitors were the first to discover a catastrophic pesticide pollution event which eradicated the invertebrates over a 15 km stretch of the river.

So, how clean is the Kennet? Students from the University of Reading took water samples on 11th February 2020 at 8 sites from West Kennet to Reading. Only two sites had phosphate concentrations which would meet Good status as defined by the Water Framework Directive, whilst at every site nitrate levels were alarming, all falling into the categories of High and Very High levels of pollution defined by the Freshwater Habitats Trust.

In the first week of July, *The Guardian*, working with the Rivers Trust, revealed that through 2019 untreated sewage flowed into the Kennet catchment for more than 12,200 hours in 2,798 combined sewer overflow incidents. These discharges of untreated sewage are usually consented by the Environment Agency to allow treatment works to deal with unusually high flows, but it seems incredible that they happen so frequently, and not always after heavy rain.

[This article is accompanied by four colour illustrations in the online edition and by two black-and-white versions on pages 12 here in this printed edition]



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News From The Churches

St Non's Retreat

Because of the restrictions caused by the Covid 19 virus, we have had to cancel the retreat this September. Next year's dates are September 14th (Tuesday) to 17th 2021, and those who booked this year will get priority for next year when we hope that Lynne Busfield will lead us.



Church Websites, Prayer Support and Contacts

Prayer support is available for individuals or for your loved ones. Please contact the clergy, in confidence, contact details below or see page 21.

Marlborough Quakers (marlboroughquakers.org.uk/)

have conducted their Sunday meetings for Worship online with Zoom for the past weeks satisfactorily and would welcome visitors.

More information from Rachel or Barney Rosedale (512205)

Christchurch (christchurchmarlborough.org.uk/)

We will not be opening the church building until September, and continue with pastoral telephone care and Sunday service on U tube. Worship material is being made available each week that people may find helpful for private devotion. If you would like to use this material yourself please go to the link on their website.



St Thomas More (marlboroughandpewseycatholics.org.uk/notice-board/)

St Thomas More, George Lane, is now open for worship (also Holy Family Church, Broadfields Estate, Pewsey). Please refer to the Parish Website for news and information or contact Father John on 513267.



Emmanuel Marlborough (emmanuelmarlborough.org/)

You're welcome to join in Sunday services by searching for the Emmanuel Church Marlborough channel on YouTube. You're welcome to contact our pastor, Reuben, with any concerns during this time of crisis and for the likely changes to our worship. If anyone is unable to obtain any essential items or needs help getting prescriptions, etc, please feel free to post a request on our Facebook page or email us. Let's find ways to show love in our community!



We are grateful to St John the Baptist Church Mildenhall for allowing us the use of their grounds for some Sunday morning events during July.

Marlborough Anglican Team Worship **(marlboroughanglicanteam.org.uk/)**

We welcome you to our churches for individual prayer daily, 9am-5pm at St Mary's and St John the Baptist and 9am-6pm at St George's.



- For St Mary's opening times please look at the website and/ or the notices.
- Our new summer service schedule will be running until the end of September:
- On Sundays at 9am there will be a zoom communion service, which is a great way to stay connected for those at home. Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8536813793> ; Meeting ID: 853 681 3793
- From August 2nd live services will resume at Minal at 9am on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of the month.
- At St George's and St Mary's live services will continue each Sunday at 10:30am. Please note the new times for these services.

Holy Communion will take place during August:

- St Mary's on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month at 10.30am.
- St George's on the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 10.30am.
- St John the Baptist on August 2nd and then communion on the 1st Sunday of each month at 9am.
- August the 30th is the 5th Sunday of the month and there will be communion at Minal and Preshute.

More details in the church notices or website:
<https://www.marlboroughanglicanteam.org.uk/>

Wednesday prayer meetings – do come:

8am in St Mary's Church and in the afternoon via a zoom meeting at 5pm.
Please contact Chris for zoom details or you can call in by phone too: 0203 051 2874 or 0203 481 5237

Please do be praying for our world and the church at this time.

Socially Distanced Church on Sundays

If you come to church you will notice a few differences to help keep us all safe, please respect the Covid-19 requirements:

- Use the hand sanitisers when you arrive and leave.
- Come early to avoid queues: we will need to take your name and contact details, which we will keep securely for 21 days, in case of NHS test and trace.
- **Orders of service – please take them away afterwards.**
- Please choose a pew or seats with a 'green tick' that suits the size of your

party, these are sited a safe distance from other people – please keep to this in the service.

- Please consider giving through the parish giving scheme - we can't take collections yet.
- The organ will play before and after the service and there will be a solo; but we can't sing together yet.
- The toilet will be closed, except in case of an emergency. Children are welcome - but we can't get the toys out!
- After the service we will need to leave promptly, and perhaps go home for coffee.

Tony & Sue Skaife d'Ingerthorpe

After a lot of uncertainty during the lockdown, Tony and Sue have now moved to their new home. They are sad not to have been able to share goodbyes with us all; we thank them for all they have given to St Mary's and the wider community during their time in Marlborough and wish them every blessing in their new home. They write :-

Well we made it! Thank you all so much for your kind gift and good wishes for our move to Horsham. We were sorry not to have been able to say goodbye to everyone but in a strange way the lockdown did prepare us for leaving you all. We had many happy times in Marlborough and will miss you all. There is no "church" here at the moment but we look forward to being involved again

The Bishop of Ramsbury is pleased to announce that he has appointed the **Revd Pete Sainsbury** to be half-time Team Vicar in the Marlborough Team.

At the same time, Revd Chris Smith is pleased to announce that Pete has been appointed half-time Worship Director for the Marlborough Team. Together this means a new full time priest in Marlborough, which is wonderful news. Please pray for Pete and his family as they prepare for this next stage in his ministry. Pete will be licensed in September. The date, time and location of the licensing will be confirmed in due course.



"Shakespeare's Music"

**A live-streamed concert by GreenMatthews for
The Merchant's House, Wednesday 5th August at 7:30pm**

£12 (£9 for Friends of The Merchant's House) available to buy online via the Events page of The Merchant's House web site.

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