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THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES



Christmas



December 2024

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TOWER^{AND}TOWN

THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES

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CHRISTMAS

This edition has contributions from the parishioners of St Thomas More, Marlborough and Holy Family, Pewsey. These congregations reflect the original meaning of the word “catholic”: universal. We are a thriving universal community with parishioners hailing from Ghana, the Philippines, Vietnam, Iraq, Kerala, Ukraine and Rumania.

In this edition we explore Christmas and New Year traditions in Ukraine through families who are friends of parishioners Nic and Claire Allott. You will find poems celebrating Advent and the Epiphany whilst other articles reflect on the joys of dog walking or enjoying a subscription to a weekly journal.

An interview with our much-loved parish priest Father John asks about “The Man Behind the Collar” as we learn about his interests and passions. Parishioners greatly appreciate having a local, dedicated priest to say daily Mass and provide sacraments, spiritual guidance and support. However, when the average age for a Catholic priest in the UK is around 70 and numbers of vocations are plummeting it means there is little likelihood of a resident priest for small parishes in the future. As time goes by, we know we will be linked to another parish, sharing a priest and with greatly increased roles for the laity. “Wanted: More Priests” explores one of the possible reasons for the decline in vocations: the mandatory rule of celibacy.

Gill Macdonald

Front cover: Gill Macdonald

Ukraine Christmas

Hello my name is Lana.

We are from the southeastern part of Ukraine, the city of Kryvyi Rih, where our president was born. Our city had been 'Russified' for a long time, so our traditions of celebrating Christmas were a little different than in western Ukraine. We are Orthodox.

For us, New Year's Eve has always been a more significant celebration. For about half a day before the New Year, we used to cook food, usually baked potatoes, probably 3 salads, baked chicken or duck, canapes, and only fruit for dessert. At 11pm on 31 December, we would set our festive table and bid farewell to the old year with wishes that all the bad things would stay in the past year. And at midnight, with a glass of champagne, we would celebrate the New Year and start eating, a lot of eating.



Usually, on 6 January, we would go to my parents' house, it's a tradition, and my mum used to cook 12 dishes. The children

would prepare carols but not sing them, they would tell them expressively, and my parents would give them money and sweets. The eldest son could still go to the neighbours and recite festive poems and earn pocket money from them. Then, during the week, we would go to our friends', who are our children's godparents, enjoy dinner and celebrate Christmas. A year ago, our president passed a law to celebrate Christmas on 25 December, along with the rest of Europe and Britain. Recently, *we* have started celebrating Christmas as well.



Hello my name is Natalia .

My region is really multicultural we have Catholic people, Greek Catholic people and Orthodox people.

I'm from a small town on the west of Ukraine not far from Poland. We used to go to the Greek Catholic Church. Before 2022 we used to celebrate Christmas on 7th of January, however after a law was passed in 2022 we now celebrate on the 25th of December.



In Ukraine Christmas Eve is very important. The whole family comes together. We cook 12 dishes but all dishes are lean. The main dish is Kurtis. The main ingredients used to make traditional kutia are wheat berries, poppy seeds and honey. At times, walnuts, dried fruit and raisins are added as well.

We also have fish, some salads and dumplings with different fillings: potatoes, cabbage, mushrooms etc.

We light a candle and when the first star rises, everyone sits down to dinner, it's a family evening.

Christmas Day is a day to meet friends. People go from home to home and sing carols. Children receive money for singing carols.



Behind the Collar: Father John Blacker

In 1963, after a warm family upbringing in Bristol, clutching his first passport, John Blacker caught the boat train to Paris to enter the international seminary. The first person from his family to join the church and with a minimum pass in O Level French it was a moment of trepidation. Five years in the seminary rigorously prepared him for the priesthood and the demands of parish life. Since 1968 Father John has served in eight parishes across his home diocese of Clifton.

After 5 years in the close community of the seminary how did you find life as part of a team in a presbytery? Did you encounter Mrs Doyle characters? { Father Ted's housekeeper}

We were well looked after, and I was lucky to encounter much kinder characters than Mrs Doyle. The head priest set the tone and food was variable. My overriding memory of every presbytery was they all had a terrible, unmatched collection of furniture- harlequin sets of tables and chairs.

Like most priests today, you now live alone. How do you find that, have you become adept at housekeeping?

Definitely not! I have some very valuable help in the house and I can use a microwave. I always say "God called me to be a priest, not a hermit" and my favourite place is in the company of other people. I never turn down an invitation.

Your love of trains is well known. Can you tell us about your favourite journeys?

In 2018 I celebrated my Golden Jubilee as a priest and as part of the celebration I was able to travel on the Jacobite Steam train from Fort William to Mallaig on the west coast of Scotland- also known as the Hogwarts Express. In America I enjoyed the Texas Eagle which has the longest route in the country and goes through Springfield, Illinois. Another memorable journey was on the California Zephyr from Chicago into San Fransisco. It is one of the most beautiful routes because it travels through both the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada.

Quickfire Questions

Favourite Sports : NFL American football

Favourite Team: Kansas City Chiefs

Favourite Player: Patrick Mahomes quarterback for Kansas City Chiefs

Favourite Fillms: "Field of Dreams" "Ben Hur" and "Day of the Jackal".

Favourite food and drink: pizza and red wine

Favourite Music: Pink Floyd

Favourite way to spend a day off: drive up to the Aviator Café at Staverton for a fried breakfast. Then watch the planes taking off and landing and then have lunch. Lovely!



Father John



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Light Up a Life Remembrance Service: A Time to Reflect and Remember

Prospect Hospice invites the community to join its annual Light Up a Life remembrance service, honouring and celebrating the lives of loved ones who are no longer with us.

Last December, Pippa's husband, Tom, passed away after a battle with bowel cancer. Reflecting on the care provided by Prospect Hospice, Pippa shared, "The team from Prospect Hospice were like a light in the darkness. Tom wanted us to spend our last precious moments together as a family, and thanks to Prospect Hospice, we could."

This year's service will be held on Sunday 8 December at 4pm at the hospice in Wroughton. It offers a special opportunity for families like Pippa's to gather, share memories, and light a candle in remembrance. The event will feature heartfelt readings, musical performances, a candle-lighting ceremony, and a remembrance tree for personal dedications. Attendees will also have time for reflection and connection over refreshments.



As the festive season approaches, this service provides a comforting space for those feeling the absence of a loved one. By dedicating a light, you can help support families facing similar journeys this Christmas.

For more information or to donate, please visit

www.prospect-hospice.net/lightupalife

What would you like for Christmas? What do you really hope for, for yourself, your family and for the world?

I believe that amongst our wishes for the latest phone, a new book, or a wonderful experience, there is also a spiritual yearning deeply within each of us; a longing for something deeper and Christmas is a good time to notice this and to respond.

At Christmas, we celebrate one of the most profound and uplifting moments in Christian faith: the birth of Jesus Christ. The story of his birth is one of humility, hope, and love—a promise fulfilled by God for the redemption of humanity. God chose to reveal himself to the world through his son, ‘born in a stable so bare’. This speaks deeply to the simplicity and purity of God’s love for his people.

This year, I encourage you to look beyond the traditions of gift-giving, decorations, and festivities. Instead, do reflect on the message Jesus brought to the world: to love one another as we love ourselves, to forgive as we would want to be forgiven, and to serve others with humility and grace. Through the birth and life of Christ, God showed us a way of living that challenges injustice and holds kindness, selflessness, and understanding. The shepherds and wise men who travelled to see the infant Jesus brought their gifts and, more importantly, their devotion. Their journeys remind us that the path to peace, both personally and in the world, often begins with seeking and trusting in God’s purpose.

Jesus came into our world to share our lives, he experienced pain and suffering as we do, but he also encouraged those around him to reflect on their lives and clear away those things that prevent us coming closer to God. He came to offer us hope, through his life and teaching, and his death and resurrection.

Could this be the year that you allow yourself the chance to find out more about what Christianity really means and what it might mean in your life? Could you look at the figures around the crib and recognise that they represent a real baby who came into this world full of real people struggling with enormous challenges and supporting each other through their difficulties - in some ways, a world similar to our own.

So, what *do you want* and hope for this Christmas – for yourself and for others?

If we want to make this Christmas one to remember, we could keep the spirit of Christ always in our hearts. We could make it our life’s aim to refocus on Jesus, and to do acts of love and generosity every day of our life.

May I wish you joy, peace and hope this Christmas.

The poem on page 13 accompanies this letter.

Friday, mid August, beans ripe for picking and my copy of The Tablet arrived in the post.

The Tablet is a weekly Catholic journal currently edited by Brendan Walsh.

It covers wide ranging topics on religion, social issues, catholic and international news providing a channel for analysis and debate, it can challenge stereotypes in church thinking. The content is varied and the writing is excellent. This week's edition features an article on Vatican bureaucracy explaining the role of the Curia. There is a moving tribute by Mary Kenny to Edna O'Brien the author who died recently.

During Lent, priest and art historian Patrick van der Vorst gave a series of reflections using different paintings to act as catalyst for contemplation.

I like the Arts section with its reviews- theatre, film, music, books ,radio, and the Letters page is interesting, eloquent, sometimes expressing disagreement but with respect.

In this August issue Rose Prince, cookery writer gives her adaptation of a Lebanese recipe for beans. It is easy to prepare and delicious warm or cold.

I used 1lb of beans,2 onions finely chopped, 5 tomatoes skinned and chopped,2 garlic cloves ,half teaspoon cinnamon,1 tbsp .tomato puree.

Soften the onions and garlic in olive oil, add the sliced beans followed by tomatoes, puree and spice. cook gently for about 5 minutes before adding 200ml water, bring to the boil then simmer for around 30 minutes adding more water if necessary.

I look forward each week to my Tablet, grateful for my husband's birthday gift of the annual subscription. It is a joy to read.

Marlborough Choral Society

St Mary's Church. Saturday, 14th December at 7.30pm

MCS will be performing

Haydn's lovely 'Missa Brevis Sancti Joannes De Deo'

Chilcott's joyful 'On Christmas Night'

(a setting of 8 carols following the Christmas story)

Other delights include music by Rheinberger and Stanford.

Tickets are available from Sound Knowledge, choir members or on the door.

£12 (£4 for students, Under 16s free) Refreshments available during the interval.

Lines Composed Above Marlborough and “In Paradisum” on the Downs

Sue Kieran {and the Lab}

Since retiring to Marlborough in 2016 it has seemed increasingly that walking the dog can have much the same effect as the antiphon, “in Paradisum” can have as the body leaves the church for the graveyard, possibly lifting thoughts to higher things.

How so? We arrived here in Paradise {Marlborough} with a rather elderly labrador who took to her newfound country walks with the gusto of a younger dog, shaking off the near indifference she had come to display in London. However, “In Paradisum” of another order awaited her and she was duly laid to rest under the shade of a leafy Whitebeam. Six months or so later a very small black male lab became the newest member of our household

The Downs became his private playground whilst we watched the seasons change. Winter would not end when the first primrose blossomed nor when April came and the bluebells flowered. The skylarks seemed to trill their yearly visit even before the winter sowing had begun this year’s green growth spurt. Their alarm would give away our now grown dog’s approach. He was no longer a pup wanting to chase the deer; now he would stand his ground and stare.

As summer peaks and autumn draws near the sound of the harvest dominates as the now ripe grain is gathered and the golden fields take on the appearance of an unshaved chin, leaving a new smell of cut straw and dust that lingers until the next rain. Not that the dog minds. The whole cut field is now *accessible*.

Soon it will be all change, wet weather clothing for us and towelling down for him. Again, not that he minds. Towelling means more attention. It seems for him it is having us on his walks that matters most, more than the opportunity given to us to wonder how Wordsworth could put so much more insight into so few words:

“well pleased to recognise

In nature and the language of the sense

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse

The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul

Of all my moral being.”

Tintern Abbey William Wordsworth.

There is a saying “What a person goes through in a lifetime, a priest can go through in a day” and it is true that priests accompany people in some of the most meaningful moments of their lives- both joyful and sorrowful. Catholic priests face unique challenges, selflessly giving up families of their own to care for the spiritual needs of others: baptising scores of babies, listening to confessions, celebrating countless Masses, weddings and funerals and visiting the sick and dying. A lifetime commitment to long hours and celibacy. As well as performing sacramental duties a priest faces a multitude of pastoral duties whilst in effect also running a small business. In the past a priest often shared a community life in a presbytery with close fraternal support and spiritual guidance provided by the fellowship of other priests. Now, with a greatly reduced number of vocations, many priests live alone. They are ordinary men with extraordinary vocations, dedicated to serving others, providing solace to parishioners but often going back to a lonely house. Loneliness can lead to a sense of isolation. Like all of us, priests need solid, authentic friendships but sometimes are not seen beyond the public role of “Father”.

Priests were allowed to marry in the first millennium of the Church’s history and the universal requirement to celibacy was imposed upon the clergy with force in 1123. The most common explanation given is that Rome was worried that clerics children would inherit church property and create dynasties. However, there had long been a tradition of self-imposed ascetism including poverty and abstinence and opponents of a married priesthood say celibacy allows a priest to dedicate himself entirely to the Church.

Many priests flourish in their vocation, not all priests are lonely and overburdened and the crisis of vocation cannot be attributed solely to rules on celibacy. Catholic families are smaller, and sociologists note that vocations decline when families have fewer children. In a family with only one or two children, the parents might prefer grandchildren to a son who is a priest. Priesthood no longer carries its former high esteem and indeed celibacy is seen as a counter- cultural way of life in today’s society. The moral authority of the Church has been rocked by scandal, ordinations have plummeted and the average age of Catholic priests in England and Wales is 70.

Because the rule of celibacy is an ecclesiastical law and not a doctrine it can, in principle, be changed at any time by the Pope. However, research from The Catholic Project 2019 revealed rules on celibacy affected the recruitment and retention of priests.

continued page 13....

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A poem for Advent

Maggie Roberts

Words of Advent

dark	finding.
cool cave	Inner glow
waiting	illuminate
silence	glowing
lumen	growing
warm	clarity
womb	spreading
enfolding	light
promise	breaks out and bursts to freedom
luminous	bright
O distant glow	like sunlight
horizon	dazzling
city	brilliant
luminosity	tongues of spirit flame
travellers	fire
journey	Messiah!
seeking	birth of Light
	the Word is with us.



The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled
When the star in the sky is gone
When the kings and princes are home
When the shepherds are back with their flocks
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost
To heal the broken
To feed the hungry
To release the prisoner
To rebuild the nations
To bring peace among the people
To make music in the heart

Howard Thurman

African American philosopher and theologian

submitted by Sarah Musgrave to follow her Clergy Letter

Wanted: More Priests... continued

Rev. Charles Scicluna, Archbishop of Malta, recently asked “Why should we lose a young man, who would have made a fine priest, just because he wanted to get married?” However, in 2021, Pope Francis dismissed a proposal by bishops to allow the ordination of married men to ease a severe shortage of priests in remote areas of the Amazon.

Married priests are allowed in the Eastern Rite churches and of course one in every ten parishes in England already has a married priest- former Anglican priests with wives and families who objected to the ordination of women in the Church of England. In a time of global vocation shortage, when half of the population is ruled out of the potential priest pool because of their gender surely is it time to end mandatory celibacy?

Making celibacy optional would indeed change the unique character of Catholic priesthood and easing rules would inevitably throw up questions about the treatment of gay priests. It is not a proven way to recruit and retain new priests but allowing marriage could provide companionship, intimacy and emotional support to sustain a priest through his ministry. Unfortunately, the recent Synod in Rome finished without any concrete proposals for celibacy let alone the ordination of women. The Church faces a stark choice, allow for married priests or face a situation with no priests.

What's On in December & January Linda Illsley

Events at St Peter's Church, High Street, Marlborough

1st (Sunday) 7.00pm

Wind quintet **Ensemble Renard** at St Peter's Church. Chosen as Britten-Pears Young Artists for the second year running, they are sure to give you a musical treat.

6th (Friday) 7.30pm

A Christmas Cabaret – An evening of carols and Christmas songs in aid of the Prospect Hospice and the Jubilee Centre. Licensed bar. Tickets £10.

7th (Saturday) 12.00pm – 4.00pm

St Peter's Christmas Fundraiser and Santa's Grotto – A day of children's activities including Gingerbread decorating, Christmas ornaments, Christmas games, Face painting and story time with the elves. Tickets £10 and £15.

15th (Sunday) 4.00pm – 6.00pm

Marlborough Community Choir Christmas Concert – support for Ukraine. Ukrainian families staying in our local community will be joining MCC.

22nd (Sunday) 4.00pm and 7.30pm

Carols and Music By Candlelight – Sing your favourite Christmas carols and songs; Kim Emery on the piano. Solos and readings by guest artists, Charity raffle for Cancer Research, free sweet bag for every child, bar available.

31st (Tuesday) 8.00pm – 1.00am

The Great Gatsby, New Year's Eve Party – live music by the Gershwin Gang, free drink on arrival, Champagne to toast the New Year, licensed bar, dance floor.

Details for all events from www.stpetersmarlborough.org.uk

Events at other venues

5th (Thursday) 2.00pm

Marlborough Floral Club – AGM tea and a few Christmas stalls plus a presentation by The Wiltshire Liqueur Company at Mildenhall Village Hall. £6 to attend and no pre booking is necessary.

6th (Friday - and subsequent Fridays)

Discover The Healing Power of Gardening

Wiltshire Mind Wellbeing Team are offering two hourly, fortnightly gardening sessions, on Fridays at Greatwood Charity, Marlborough. Experienced gardeners or complete beginners, all welcome. If you are struggling with mental health challenges contact supportgroups@wiltshiremind.co.uk for more information and to register.

7th (*Saturday*) 7.30pm

Marlborough Concert Orchestra Winter Concert - see advert page 16.

11th (*Wednesday*) 6.45pm for 7.30pm

Marlborough Gardening Association – Christmas Wreath Demonstration by Sara Willman at Marlborough Town Hall. Further information at marlbga.org.uk

14th (*Saturday*) 7.30pm

Marlborough Choral Society Christmas Concert - see advert page 8.

Until 24th (*Tuesday*)

‘The Night Before Christmas’ at The Merchant’s House. Visitors will be able to enjoy this glorious 17th Century house and Father Christmas will be appearing too. Historical re-enactors, The Deveraux Regiment, will be here on 7th December. Throughout the season there are many special events. For more information visit www.themerchantshouse.co.uk

17th (*Tuesday*) 8.00pm

St Agnes Fountain – Chris Leslie, Chris While and Julie Matthews bring musical invention and laughter to the Town Hall. Tickets £22.50 from Sound Knowledge or marlboroughfolk-roots.co.uk

January 2025

8th (*Wednesday*) – 6.45pm for 7.00pm

Marlborough Gardening Association – Architectural Planting with John Tucker at Marlborough Town Hall. Display Table will be Best Garden Tool.

12th (*Sunday*) – 3.00pm

Marlborough College Concert Series – Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at Marlborough College Memorial Hall. To book see marlboroughconcertseries.org

19th (*Sunday*) – 3.30pm

Feria Orchestra new Year’s Concert at St Peter’s Church, High Street, Marlborough. Conductor: Stefan Hofkes. Programme to include Beethoven – Piano Concerto No 1 (Soloist You-Chiung Lin), Morricone – Gabriel’s Oboe, J Strauss – Blue Danube waltz and more. To book see stpetersmarlborough.org.uk

School Dates - please see school websites for any updated information.

St John’s School and Preschute Primary School Term ends Friday 20th December. Reopens Monday 6th January

Marlborough St Mary’s Primary School Term ends Thursday 19th December. Reopens Monday 6th January.

Marlborough College Term ends 12 noon Wednesday 11th December.

Marlborough Area Poverty Action Group

Last Christmas we were able to give the equivalent of 50 x £40 food vouchers to vulnerable families in the Marlborough Area, thanks to your generous donations. We hope to be able to do the same again this year. To donate via the MAPAG bank account please contact Rachel Rosedale (rachelrosed1@gmail.com) or at the Paddock, Kingsbury Street SN8 1 HZ.

Emanuel Church

The Ark Parent/Carer and Toddler Group
Sparklers Little Friends Toddler Group
Explorers Youth Groups
Bible study, prayer and fellowship Homegroups
Ladies Bible Study Hope Explored

For full information about these many events and activities please see the website emmanuelmarlborough.org.

Marlborough Concert Orchestra

Saturday 7th December- 7:30pm
St Mary's Church, Marlborough

Humperdinck

- Hänsel and Gretel Overture

Richard Strauss

Three songs:

- Morgen!
- Winterweihe
- Die heiligen drei Königen aus Morgenland

Soloist: Emma Pooley (soprano)

Mahler

- Symphony No. 4



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Heavens above

When I'm spotting butterflies and orchids I'm looking down, when it's birds I'm staring at fence-posts or scanning above the tree line. On my late-night walk round the block with the dog I should be star-gazing, but I usually forget to do so or the weather has obliterated the heavenly constellation. That's a pity because there has been quite a lot going on in the sky recently and I've missed most of it. Take full moons for example:



Star trails at
Wilton Windmill
with aurora
by David White

A full moon is the phase when the moon appears to be fully illuminated from Earth's perspective, occurring when the Sun, Earth and Moon are all in alignment, forming a straight line. The Moon and the Sun are on exact opposite sides of the Earth. From this position the Sun's light shines directly onto the portion of the Moon that is visible to us and creates a full, bright circle of light.

The Farmer's Almanac publish a schedule of full moons, with names mostly sourced from Native American traditions. Thus the name Wolf Moon is for January, inspired by the cries of hungry wolves, and Pink Moon for April, in honour of the blossoming of flowers. June's Strawberry Moon, which coincided with the Solstice this year, marks the prime strawberry harvest season, while Corn Moon signifies the harvesting season in September.

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continued from previous page

This October's Hunter's Moon was a special one: appearing on Thursday 17th it was the biggest of the year so far. The third consecutive full "Supermoon" of 2024, it was also the closest full moon of the year. And there's still another full moon to come in December, dubbed Cold Moon, in recognition of winter's chill.

Aurora borealis is a natural light display in Earth's sky, predominantly seen in high-latitude regions around the Arctic and Antarctic. Auroras display dynamic patterns of brilliant lights that appear as curtains, rays, spirals, or dynamic flickers covering the entire sky. More commonly seen in northern parts of the U.K. the bands of pink and green light were seen across the country around 10.30 p.m. on Friday 10th of May after an "extreme" geomagnetic storm caused them to be more visible than usual. For some it was a dream come true: one observer commenting "It was truly spectacular, probably a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

There were meteor showers in January and comets zooming about in March, April and August and I missed them all! So I, for one, will have to spend more time looking up to the Heavens above.

September and October saw the deaths of several Marlborough locals.

On September the 7th Cyril Ford died at the age of 90. He was the husband of Sue and spent 6 decades in the choir at St Mary's church in the town. Cyril was born and died in Marlborough and was an accomplished artist and at one time illustrated for this publication. Cyril is missed by Sue and his many friends and members of his family.

October 7th Michael Bevan passed peacefully away at home after a short illness. Mick was a, hardworking, well respected gardener with many loyal customers. . He moved from London to Wiltshire in his early teens. Met his wife Lynne and they had just celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary. He lived life to the full and had a busy social life as well as playing bowls in the town. He will be sadly missed by his wife, sons, granddaughters and well as his many friends and customers.

Dorothy Blythe also died at the beginning of October She was a former Theatre sister at Savernake hospital who in her spare time was the St Mary's Bell Tower captain. She leaves a husband Peter, children Louise and John and grandchildren Laura and Robert

Rita Kimber lived for most of her time in Marlborough in London Road and subscribed to Tower and Town regularly. She has various parttime jobs memorably working in the London Road Post Office where she served customers old and young. She Rita brought up four children and leaves nine grandchildren and nine great grandchildren some of whom live locally.

Nicola Allen. Many of you will have known Nicola as the warm red-head behind the counter in Mustard Seed. She always had a smile and warm welcome for everyone who came in. She worked in Mustard Seed for over 20 years. She has been living with cancer for the past 3 years and died in October. She leaves a husband and two children. Nicola was an advocate for those with special needs and fought tirelessly to get the best provision for her daughter who has special needs. She will be remembered for her kindness, COMPASSION and patience.

Patricia 'Trish' Cavill's life was celebrated by her son William and daughter Jane and her grandchildren as well as many friends in October. Tricia was a former Mayoress of Marlborough when her husband Bill was Mayor. She was a keen quilter and made many intricate quilts for family and friends.

We remember these local people along with their families and friends

Dear Father Christmas, All right, you've got me bang to rights, I have not been altogether good. I have left undone all sorts of things (November column for T&T, reading Trollope), I have been greedy (yes, I ate all the HobNobs) and I have harboured uncharitable thoughts about customers (not T&T readers, *obviously*) who don't know what they want but blame me for not supplying it. *However*, if despite all this I am found deserving of a little something under the tree, I'd like to suggest any of the following – and I will be giving them to others. Not really books to read, just to browse over. Stocking fillers. Loo books.

Flavour of Flight by Al Bridger is a brief history of airline food from the earliest days of commercial aviation. Fully illustrated with advertising and promotional pictures we have an overview of each decade, and menus in case we should feel the need to reproduce the (First Class) experience at home. (Though how to recreate that strange fetid steam that was released as one peeled off the foil lid? And that lukewarm beige liquid, offered as tea or coffee, tasting of neither?) I can think of half-a-dozen people to give this to, and I'll slip a little foil-wrapped moist towelette into the parcel.

A British Country House Alphabet is one of the prettiest books on the shop's Christmas table this year. It's a small, beautifully illustrated compilation of historical beauties and oddities, commissioned by the New England Historic Genealogical Society to highlight the 'famous historical events and cultural innovations that occurred at British Country Houses'. The first of three volumes, this covers the letters A-H, offering ghosts, golden retrievers, Agatha Christie, Dickens and Roman Emperors. Very dip-into-able.

Another American book, very different - *Forces of Nature* by Ed Steed. It's collection of cartoons from the *New Yorker*, definitely adult, slightly surreal, rather macabre humour. They made me snigger, I loved them. At this time of year all the political cartoon books are published, simultaneously funny and depressing, and out-of-date in six months. However, these will last – give them to your hard-to-buy-for, festive-refusenik friends and relations.

But let's embrace the season. *A Poem for Every Day of Christmas*, edited by Allie Esiri is a little gem of an anthology, mostly familiar verses mixed with newer, less traditional poems. It's another one to keep close to hand so you can sample the humour, nostalgia, the mysticism and the faint melancholy of Christmas. Keep it by your chair, or on the guest room bedside table.

Merry Christmas one and all, and I hope you have something good to read over the season.

Garden makeover programmes that totally transform a space in a few short days are a tv staple but in reality many gardens develop incrementally and even haphazardly reflecting inherited plants, time and cash available and their owner's needs from play equipment to low maintenance. Whatever stage your garden is at, it will benefit from periodic review and winter is a good time for observation when it's stripped back to the bare bones of boundaries, paths, shrubs, trees, outbuildings and furnishings with few flowers and less foliage to distract the eye.

Sometimes all that's needed is a tweak for example to a border colour scheme or to improve productivity such as adding extra plants for cut flowers – Cosmos are great for this and come in all colours. It's worth thinking back over the year – what worked well and what didn't? If a plant disappointed a key question is was it "*the right plant in the right place*," a term coined by garden doyen Beth Chatto in the 1960's who was famous for creating a vibrant garden despite the dry Essex landscape, that is probably even more relevant today. Soil type, moisture retention, wind exposure and the sun/shade ratio are all considerations before purchasing or planting. A good tip for plotting sun/ shade ratio is to photograph the garden from an upstairs window at the same time every month for a year. Remember that many local gardens are on poor free draining chalk which is great for wildflowers and those liking low fertility but heavy feeders such as vegetable and roses will need the soil improving.

Creating a mood board and photographing plants and planting that you like can help with creativity. There's much inspiration online too and websites offer comfortable gardening when the weather is bad. Some I've used include www.bethchatto.co.uk which offers plant collections such as Drought Resistant, Sun Loving Urban and Shade Loving and so demonstrates what grows well where. The RSH design hub rths.org.uk/garden-design has examples of how to use garden lighting, wildlife gardens, formal and cottage schemes etc; and for vegetable growers www.charlesdowding.co.uk is packed with ideas.

WANTED - Tower and Town September 2012

All copies of Tower and Town since its inception are archived and available for reference at The Merchant's House - all except one that is, for the above date.

If you have your own archive that includes Sep 2012 would you kindly lend it to us to be copied and complete the set.

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Marlborough Churches Together

Usual Sunday Services Times

Society of Friends, Friends Meeting House, The Parade

10.30am Meeting for worship

St George's Preshute (Anglican)

8.00am Holy Communion (1st & 3rd Sundays)

10.30am Worship

St Mary's with Christchurch Methodist Fellowship (behind the Town Hall)

8.00am Holy Communion (2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays)

10.30am Worship

5.00pm Informal Worship (with Energize Children's Church)

4:30pm (1st Sunday of the month) All-age worship with Children's tea

St John the Baptist, Minal (Anglican)

9.00 am Worship

St Thomas More, George Lane (Roman Catholic)

11.00 am Mass

Emmanuel, New Road (Free Evangelical)

10.00am Worship (every 3rd Sunday)

4.00pm Worship (every Sunday)

Marlborough College Services are shown at the college chapel

For more information and updates please check the individual church websites.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Departed - We pray for the families of

08/10/24 Tricia Cavill (86) Barrow Close, Marlborough

St Mary's, Marlborough

07/10/24 Dorothy Blythe (86) Ducks Meadow, Marlborough

St Mary's, Marlborough

07/10/24 Michael Bevan (77) Cold Harbour Lane, Marlborough

North Wiltshire Crematorium

23/10/24 Michael Courney (84) Priorsfield, Marlborough

North Wiltshire Crematorium

News from the Churches

Advent and Christmas services

Emmanuel Church Marlborough

Family Christmas Trail

Sunday 15 December 2024 – 10.30 am

Join us at Priory Gardens to walk through the Christmas story with carols and a treasure hunt, ending at Emmanuel Church for refreshments and children's crafts.

Carol Service

Sunday 15th December – 4.00pm

A carol service with groups for children, followed by refreshments.

Carols at the Roebuck

Tuesday 17th December – 8.00pm

Informal carol singing and a joyful Christmas message, in the pub, SN8 2AJ.

Carols by Candlelight

Sunday 22nd December – 4.00pm

A traditional celebration of Christmas with groups for children followed by festive refreshments.

Christmas Day Service

Wednesday 25th December – 10.00am

A short all-age carol service to rejoice in Christ's birth.

Saint Thomas More Catholic Church, Marlborough and Holy Family Catholic Church, Pewsey

Christmas Eve (Tuesday 24th December)

4.00pm (Family Mass)

9.00pm (Christmas Carol Singing from 8.30pm) at Saint Thomas More Church

Christmas Day (Wednesday 25th December)

9.00am at Holy Family Church

11.00am at Saint Thomas More Church.

Thursday 26th December

10.00am Saint Thomas More Church

Friday 27th December

12noon Holy Family Church

Saturday 28th December

10.00am Saint Thomas More Church

Marlborough Anglican Team & Christchurch Methodist Fellowship

Sunday 1st December

4:30pm Christingle Making & All age service at St Mary's, Marlborough

Thursday 5th December

7:30pm Reflective Advent Service at St Mary's, Marlborough

Sunday 8th December

10:30am All-age Christingle Service at St George's, Preshute

Tuesday 10th December

5.00pm A Reflective Christmas I at St Mary's, Marlborough

Sunday 15th December

4pm Carols by Candlelight at St John the Baptist, Minal

6pm Carols by Candlelight at St George's, Preshute

Tuesday 17th December

5pm A Reflective Christmas II at St Mary's, Marlborough

Wednesday 18th December

6pm Beer and Carols at St Mary's, Marlborough

Thursday 19th December

6pm Community Carols at Barton Park,

Sunday 22nd December

3pm Sing-a-long Nativity at St George's, Preshute

5pm Community Carol Service at St Mary's, Marlborough,

Christmas Eve

3pm St George's, Preshute, Crib Service

3pm St Mary's, Marlborough, Family Carols with Chocolate

5pm Minal – beginning at the Horseshoe Pub, Village Nativity

10pm St George's, Preshute, First Communion of Christmas

11:15pm St Mary's, Marlborough, Midnight Communion

Christmas Day

8am Holy Communion at St Mary's, Marlborough,

9am Family Communion at St John the Baptist, Minal,

10:30am Family Communion at St George's, Preshute

10:30am Family Communion at St Mary's, Marlborough.

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Contributions and comments from readers are welcome.

Please send articles and letters to the monthly editor or the chairman,
other notices or announcements to the compiler.

All items for the February issue by Tuesday 8th January please.

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