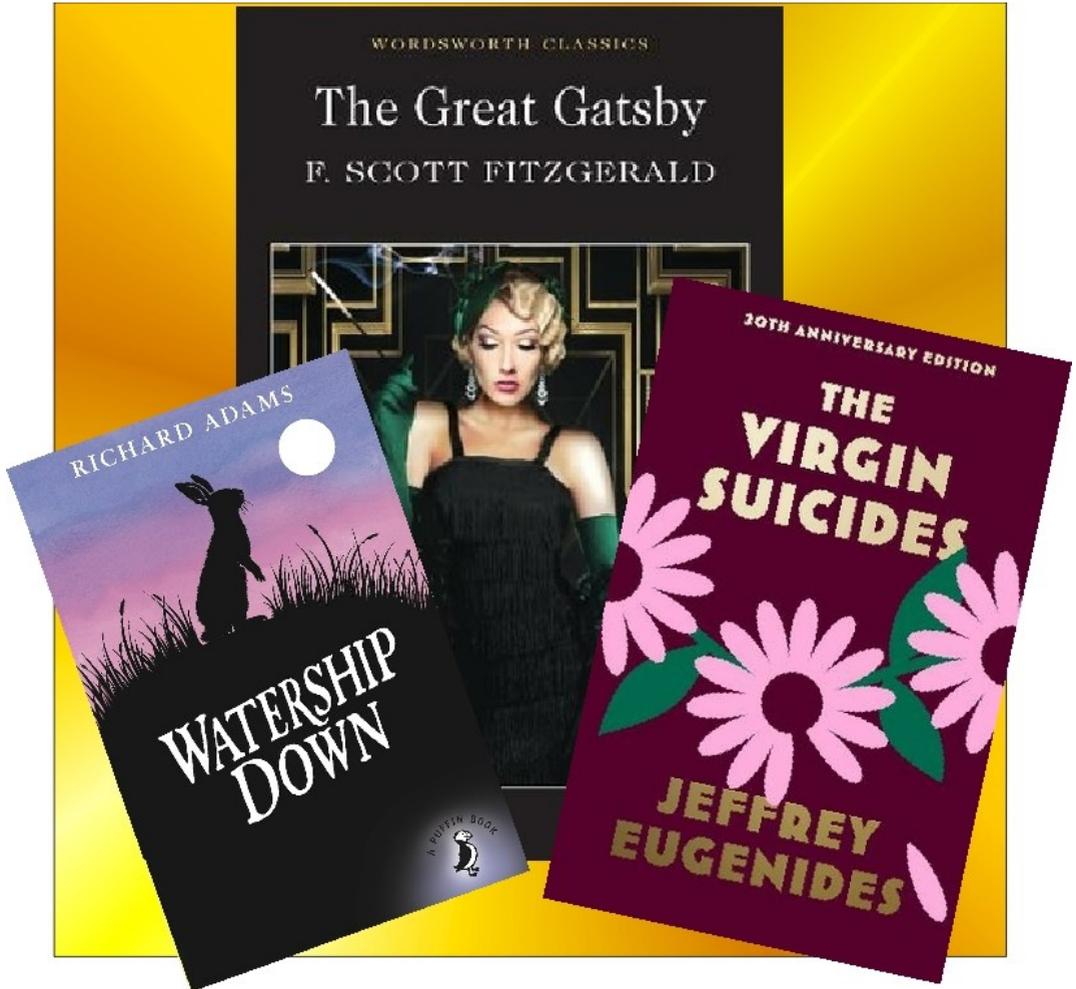

TOWER AND TOWN



**ST JOHN'S SCHOOL
EDITION**

NOVEMBER 2023

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TOWER AND TOWN

THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES

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St John's School Edition

It is flatly unsurprising that a love of reading underpins my career as an English teacher. Might I find myself disheartened then, in a climate of statistics bleakly depicting the notion of teenagers reading for pleasure as the weakly held hope of a bygone utopia? Pessimistic about the chance of finding students nose-down in novels or leaping at the chance to hotly debate the limits of literature? No, not least because, on the pages of this month's *Tower and Town*, you'll find hopeful evidence of all of that.

This month's issue sees another compiled from the writing of St. John's students. Within this, some creatively recount the moment of reading something life-changingly good, some challenge us to read through a different lens, and some philosophise the purpose and parameters of literature. All are a testament to the love of reading thought to be so elusive in students of secondary school age.

My thanks go to *Tower and Town*, for granting us the privilege of showcasing our students' voices again. Also, to Marlborough Literature Festival for creating a buzz about reading in the town and in the minds of our students. And finally, my thanks go to the students whose work is included in these pages – for your voracious enjoyment of reading, for fanning the embers of a hope that teenagers might put down their phones and pick up a book, and – always - for making me love my job.

Lauren Sankey
(Deputy Head of Faculty for English
St. John's Marlborough)

St John's also submitted some fine artwork that can be seen on the Tower and Town website edition of this magazine. A small poignant sample by Ava Mitchell is shown on page 11 to whet your appetite. All are definitely worth seeing.

<https://towerandtown.org.uk>

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Thoughts invoked by Literature

Year 13 student, Caitriona Durcak, shares her thoughts on Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, whilst chewing over the topic of the public debate that opened this year's Marlborough Literature Festival: 'Can male authors write convincingly about women in love?'

When arguing whether men can write accurately about women in love, with focus on *The Great Gatsby*, we must consider that Fitzgerald's opinions and ideas about love didn't solely stem from his mind alone: Fitzgerald was known for taking inspiration from real life people to accurately portray their persona, thoughts and feelings. His biggest influence was his wife, Zelda.

Fitzgerald was often influenced by love letters and diary entries written by his wife. In fact, this subtle plagiarism was so common that, when a famous editor offered to publish Zelda's diaries, Scott dissuaded him saying he needed the material for his own novels.

Indeed, F. Scott Fitzgerald possessed a commendable talent, shared amongst numerous esteemed authors: the knack of transforming real-life expressions of love and sentiment into enthralling narratives and relatable characters. This ability, arguably, contributed significantly to the depth, authenticity, and resonance of his works, consequently enriching the readers' experience, giving them insight into the mind of women.

For example, the famous quote from Daisy Buchanan about her infant daughter "I hope she is a fool, that's the best thing a girl in this world can be, a beautiful little fool" was a direct quote from Zelda's diary. Fitzgerald based Daisy Buchanan's character on Zelda's. Zelda, much like Daisy, was known for her charm and vivacious personality. Zelda's passionate nature was extracted from the love letters she wrote for Fitzgerald and used to mirror Daisy's romanticised love for Gatsby. The essence of Zelda can truly be felt in Fitzgerald's novel.

Year 13 student, Georgina Sleight, offers a rebuttal to Caitriona's argument

When responding to this question, the concept of gender is moot; our focus should remain on the struggle to articulate something independent from our own experience. Every individual has a mental framework through which we interpret our current interactions, and this is cultivated through our experiences. So, when

writing about the abstract concept of love, it is practically impossible to remove this personal cognitive blueprint and properly capture someone else's experience.

In Fitzgerald, we are given the perfect example to a man who has an inability to see beyond his own nose.

There is much proof of this, for instance his friend Sarah Murphy's comment "you haven't the faintest idea what anybody but yourself is like." Alongside, Hemingway who later told Max Perkins, "Scott can't invent characters because he doesn't know anything about people." And finally, Fitzgerald's family physician "he refused to accept any regime which was not to his liking."

One cannot help but understand from these comments from friends and close acquaintances that Fitzgerald's perception is skewed by his own self-centeredness. When writing to his publisher in 1925, he wrote "this book contains no important female characters." Fitzgerald's stories pilfered information and direct events from the people and experiences in his life. Yet, how he did so was questionable. Responding to a reporter Zelda said "I recognised a portion of an old diary of mine which mysteriously disappeared shortly after my marriage. He seems to believe plagiarism begins in the home."

Earlier, we heard from the opposition that, by using the exact words of females in his life, Fitzgerald is accurately portraying their experience. However, the fundamental flaw in this line of argument is that by separating such words from the voice and context in which they were written allows Fitzgerald to fit them into his narrative and remove the meaning and purpose in which they were originally stated. I am sure most individuals here today can relate or imagine a sentence of theirs being plucked from its context and be interpreted in another way.

Fitzgerald can be seen as a case study to demonstrate the difficulty of detaching ourselves from our personal experience; the struggle to create a wholly unbiased piece of work.

Year 10 student, Sophie Richards, recounts her experience of discovering the novel *The Virgin Suicides* by Jeffrey Eugenides and shares her thoughts on the text.

'All wisdom ends in paradox.'

It was late July of 2022 when I first came across this novel. Nostalgia lingered in the air, entrancing me as I wandered down a cobbled lane on the island of St Mary's, Isles of Scilly. Turning down a small alleyway, I found myself greeted by a stand on the left side, displaying an array of different items. Small crystals littered one corner, whilst the other side held homemade bracelets and necklaces, with a stack of five worn and read books next to them. I glanced at the first book, stopping with slight shock at the title. The cover was dark green with a pink box

and five green flowers. The title read 'The Virgin Suicides.' Intrigued and startled by this casual mention of taboo subjects, I rifled through my purse to find a pound coin. I dropped it into the can and made my way to the beach with the novel.

Set in the quiet suburbs of Michigan in the 1970s, it follows the five Lisbon sisters and the events leading up to their deaths. The story is told in first person plural and past tense by a group of boys who claim to have loved the sisters. By using this narration technique, the author creates a sense of unity with the readers and the narrators, however still leaving an air of mystery around the girls.

Eugenides uses symbolism in numerous ways to explore themes of isolation, adolescence, and loss of innocence in a way that brings the reader to feel a deeper connection to the story. For example, the trees outside the sisters' house hold significant symbolism, serving as a visual representation of the decay and rot occurring in the seemingly perfect neighbourhood. The trees witness the girls' lives as they grow and change, capturing the transient nature of youth. As the trees wither, so do the sisters and their mental health.

"The Virgin Suicides" emphasises the elusiveness of understanding others fully. Despite the narrators' intense fascination with the Lisbon sisters and their many attempts to unravel their lives, they ultimately fail to grasp the depth of their experiences and motivations, seeing them not as individuals, but as a collective consciousness. The novel suggests that true understanding of another person's inner workings may remain elusive, demonstrating the limitations of humans' comprehension of one another. However, it is important to note that the novel also critiques the male gaze and the objectification of women; it presents the consequences, highlighting the tragic outcomes that result from the girls' lack of being understood and their repression within a patriarchal society.

These messages intertwine to create a complex exploration of repression, alienation, loss, and the intricacies of human existence. "The Virgin Suicides" prompts readers to reflect on societal pressures, the challenges of adolescence, and the fragility of life, provoking a deeper examination of the human psyche. Jeffrey Eugenides combines important messages still relevant in society with an incredible story, leaving a lasting impact on those who read his work.

Year 13 student, Emma Wing employs the perspective of one of the novel's characters when conveying her experience of reading the same novel: *The Virgin Suicides* by Jeffrey Eugenides.

When Cecilia kills herself, I am observing the boys' mother invited to the party. An odd collection of faces: some rough, others round, spotted with snub noses and pixie ears, but all with the same protruding pupils, boring into the abyss between us

in desperation to draw us near. Mother has dug a chasm in the centre of the room: to protect us from their careless values and soft jaws, aching to turn into stubble and sinew, mocking mother's efforts to stagnate the surging flow of adolescence. But I think it is more for their sake the room remains ruptured. If spotted, the shy threads of hair on Mary's upper lip could unravel whatever story the boys have spun of us.

Might the boys understand my sisters and me? After all, they have come to a party in the Lisbon house – a strange, wounded animal, lying bloody on the street like roadkill. But when we see them through the twitch of their curtains, those same buggish eyes pulsing with reckless excitement at our catching them, or we pass them gathering gossip from their mothers in the street, we know we'll always be unknown to them. We may be wallpaper to our parents, but we are hanging artwork to those boys- pretty pictures that plump the egos of those who think they can infer our meanings, but ultimately walk away when they've looked at our colours a little too long.

I wonder if the world forgets that my sisters and I are real, with our feet planted on the soil and not floating somewhere above. Ghostly to many and cruelly angelic to those boys, I know that my sisters and I are anything but: reality has bound us, our only escape to burrow further into the earth.

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I am thinking about this when Cecilia asks to go upstairs; she keeps tugging at the bracelets on her wrists with eyelids downturned like wilting petals dropping closer to the floor. She was happy this morning when we were all in our room, singing to the record Lux had snuck from under her bed and comparing the feeble muscles in our arms. Is the boys' presence ageing her, trussing her up into a womanly figure instead of the mess of a girl she is? So, in the seconds later, when Cecilia flings herself to her death, part of me knows that she did not jump from that ledge but was pushed by the hands of Time and the restless boys who willed its minutes to tick faster in their greed to turn a young girl into an object of shared fantasies.

Bloody and broken, like an effigy of a biblical sacrifice, our eyes meet the mass of white and red that is now my sister: how can she look so perfectly pure - frozen in a state of girlhood- when God was clearly never on her side? How can our own thirst for violence burn in our throats when we spy her punctured chest? In books, it is always women who suffer the impalement of fence spikes and the sting of society's cold shoulder, yet my sister was more than a battleground but a real, beating heart of frustration and longing, the same as any boy. Yet when herded into a corner, by futile parents and an all-knowing town, the wounded animal has no-one left to bite but itself.

Lux jokes that whilst the boys over the road may feature briefly in our lives as passing thoughts of puzzlement and possibility, they'll likely write novels about us. I wonder whether through their words we will become as hazy and hollow as the women on our shelves- as purely physical as the literature our mother plans to burn - or if something more could be spooned from us: if a girl like myself could pick up the pages and see the honest truth that all had failed to recognise- that no amount of clinical love or prying obsession can ease, or comprehend, the horror of being a teenage girl in a world that does not care. Maybe she could read our story and understand that being a young girl is scary and unrelenting, like a raging fire, yet simultaneously thrumming with sparkling, unadulterated hope.

None of us Lisbon girls were understood as beautiful in the ways that mattered. Yet perhaps the girl who reads our story won't only see us for more than our suffering, but grow to see herself and others through unclouded eyes too.

Year 13 student, Beth Bradbury-Birrell poetically reflects on what can be felt and learned in reading the poem 'If' by Rudyard Kipling.

“If,” it begins...

The boy listens intently to the words as they take flight,
Soaring from the lips of his father which kiss him goodnight.

The words are his and their own, growing greater, taller.
They climb the walls and fill the darkened room,
 thrash against the distant hum of war
and follow him, the fresh-eyed little boy,
 into the frightening world beyond the door.
They bandage up the grazes on his knees,
 and stitch up scrapes and scraps that tear his clothes,
Sew up the tears in dust-caked khaki green that hangs around his ankles
 – but he'll grow.
He'll grow one day, for these words keep him patient,
 they meet with doubt a firm salute of trust.
And hold his wide-eyed head upon his shoulders,
 while others lose theirs, rolling through the dust.
They burst across the twilight sky like shrapnel,
 fill the frightening dark with jewels of light
For him to hang his eager boyhood dreams on,
 to comfort him throughout the looming night.
They lead his earnest mind to wonder why it is that they march on,
 with weapons raised,
And fight the rows on rows of other boys who march,
 and fall, and bleed red just the same.
They reach out from the centre of the Earth and hold him to her
 though there's nothing left of him to hold,
 but heavy heart and eyes that long to shut, to let him find his rest.
So, they sing to him a lullaby. They let him rest and close his weary eyes -
But whisper in his ear that when dawn comes,
 they'll wake him up to watch the red sun rise.
They carry him far from the night to refuge -
 his khakis now stop just short of his shins,
And finally, worlds from his war-torn homeland,
 he basks in peace and, once again, begins.
They sip the sunlight, slipping through the trees like molten gold,
 and bleed into the stream,
who cleans his wounds, and soothes his aching feet,
 and sweeps away the losses he has seen.
His is the Earth and everything within it,
 the peace he chased and conflicts yet to come,
for the words that held at bay the ruthless world sing from the sky:
 “You are a Man, my son.”

The words, unequivocally profound and equally simple, cannot belong solely to Kipling, nor to the boy or to his father – they are greater than him, greater than you or me, for they inevitably become greater. They are what it is to survive, to be human, words to live by. The boy is faceless, for he is anyone and everyone pursuing peace and liberation, humanity. ‘If is the song of freedom.

Year 13 student, Sadie Watts suggests you should read ‘The Tell-Tale Heart’ by Edgar Allan Poe and take a journey that will have you questioning your morality.

“True! Nervous, very, very dreadfully nervous.” Are the opening lines of Poe’s short story The Tell-Tale Heart. From the beginning, the story immerses you in chaos; there is no escape. The narrator’s descent into madness forces the reader to spiral with them. The lack of responsibility and ownership the narrator holds leaves the reader in a difficult place. Although you know you shouldn’t sympathise or attempt to understand, you do. You do understand why the narrator blames the old man’s eye for his insanity. You do understand that despite the narrator loving the old man he has to kill him. You are made to feel as though you are there, holding the lantern into the old man’s room each night.

When I first read this story, I was 14. Over the years and the more times I’ve read it, it’s felt like a new story each time I picked it up. Even though I knew the ending, it never ceased to amaze me. It left me feeling emotions no other story has left me feeling. The detailed description of everything the narrator was going through left you feeling exhausted and relieved by the time “the work” had been done. I didn’t think it was possible to feel that way about an unjustified murder. Poe had twisted the protagonist’s sense of guilt into something negative. Feeling guilty for a crime you have committed is seen as a good thing. It shows that you are a person like everybody else. Not feeling remorse is foreign to many people and a clear sign that you are a terrible person, there is no hope for you. But in this short story it is depicted as the opposite. The narrator is so close to getting away with this crime they even sit with the police officers in the very room it happened in, with them never suspecting a thing. It is their guilt - the heart beating under the floorboards - that ruins their chance of freedom.

For the few pages you are engaged with this story, Poe twists the way you feel about things. He doesn’t allow for you to have thoughts about what you’ll be having for dinner later, or that you’re really looking forward to seeing your friends at the weekend. All you can consider and ask is, why? Why did the protagonist start to feel this way? Why was he looking after this old man in the first place? I think

that's one of the reasons I love it so much. The erratic inner monologue of the protagonist and the cathartic experience of the murder is a journey I think everybody should take.

Year 11 Student, Imogen Granger reviews one of Roald Dahl's lesser-known stories

'The Minpins' is a story written by Roald Dahl, and while it is certainly not his best work, it conveys strong ideas and opinions that people in modern society can still relate to and feel a connection with. Many people haven't heard of 'The Minpins', and when you buy a complete Roald Dahl box set, it is not included. I know the story well, and I found this absence intriguing, so I decided to find out what spurred the decision to place this book in a separate category to the others.

In other Dahl stories, there is most usually a strongly communicated moral. For example, in numerous books - 'James and the Giant Peach', 'George's Marvellous Medicine', 'Matilda', and 'The Twits' - we see a running theme of revenge and well-deserved comeuppance. Most definitely with 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', the message to the younger readers is almost threatening: that those who are selfish, greedy and ignorant will not be excused by society, and we see Dahl's lack of compassion through the character of Willy Wonka, who parted with the tormented children with considerable glee and pride.

We also see certain independence through the young protagonists - who are often surrounded by characters who embody laziness and cruelty, traits that are immediately looked down upon by readers. There is a certain feeling of compassion and admiration felt for these children as they are neglected and thrown into impossibly wicked situations by their elders. These themes contrast greatly from the book 'The Minpins', Dahl's last book, which was written for his daughter, Ophelia. The main character, Billy, is the epitome of everything that we expect from a young child - he is wildly curious, adventurous, and easily swayed. Our first recognition of this difference in character is sparked when Dahl uses a rather dark and brooding metaphor of the Devil 'whispering' in order to personify Billy's disobedient and rebellious thoughts.

Almost immediately after Billy gives into the persuasion of 'The Devil', he is faced with a consequence to his actions: a near-death experience due to the appearance and pursuit of the villainous 'Gruncher', a 'Jabberwocky'-esque creature. During his escape, Billy meets the Minpins - tiny people who have been subjected to living in the trees because of the 'Gruncher'. Billy's accidental involvement with their daily battle with death makes us realise that while Billy is presented as the protagonist, he really lacks any hero status, and is just observing

the persecution of a completely separate entity.

In Dahl's other books, the main characters are said to have been faced with hardship throughout their whole lives. For example, George from 'George's Marvellous Medicine' had been living with his repellent grandmother effectively bullying him for years, and because of this, we relish her disappearance/ possible death, as our sympathy towards George fuels our yearning for his vengeance against his grandmother. The same desire for revenge is not provoked when reading 'The Minpins'. While the 'Gruncher' evidently intends to kill Billy and the Minpins, it seems immoral to class it as 'evil' or even 'villainous', as its actions are purely animalistic, no matter how frightful it is made to sound. In Dahl's other stories, the 'villain' is always human, and it is the constant back and forth conflict between their actions and the protagonist's that causes their retribution to be amusing and satisfactory to the reader.

Contrastingly, when the 'Gruncher' is finally defeated, while we feel relief for both Billy and the Minpins, we don't find humour in the death as we would have in other books. Consequently, the story lacks the certain and confident ending that we are so used to in Dahl's typical stories; the protagonist didn't really experience any loss or gain. This evident contrast in story lines, themes and morals gives us an extra facet of understanding of Roald Dahl's literary spectrum and provides us with an insight into another side of him. Since this was published after his death, it is uncertain as to whether he wrote this when he was unwell, and if that's where the change in tone came about, or if as it was written for his daughter, it was far more personal, heartfelt and honest. In addition, the book did not receive the Quentin Blake illustrations until 2017, and the original book contains far more realistic pictures that lack the slapstick flair that is featured in the other books; perhaps this also contributed to the underlying seriousness.

In conclusion, the messages that are communicated in 'The Minpins' are both intriguing and admirable, leaving it open to criticism. This makes it enticing for all ages, and therefore, I think that it most definitely should be read.

Year 10 student, Rachel Darby, explains how she found a tale of hope and resilience in Richard Adams's *Watership Down*

It seems slightly odd that such a famous, classic book would actually be about rabbits, but then *Watership Down* is surprising in many ways. At first, I was uncertain whether it would be worth reading, but I soon found myself engrossed in the story.

The Sandleford Warren once provided a safe home for the rabbits that lived there, but disaster was inevitable. When Fiver - a young rabbit with a sixth sense -

predicts the danger, he and his brother, Hazel, lead a small group into the vast countryside. With nowhere to go, the rabbits must stick together and fight to survive in a cruel world where small animals are overlooked.

Richard Adams once said that he “simply wrote down a story” that he told to his daughters on long car journeys and that it was “just about rabbits”. This is, to many people’s annoyance, due to the many theories and allegories people are still coming up with for the book. It’s interesting that he chose to write the story about rabbits though, as they are often thought of as cute and cuddly, but are portrayed quite differently in *Watership Down*. Each rabbit has a unique and developed personality, with good and bad qualities, which helps you to relate to them. They display loyalty, intelligence, resilience and hard work, but each one has its own weakness. Since these animals are portrayed to have human-like qualities, it raises questions surrounding animal rights, but it also explores the way humans treat nature and the environment, exposing their lack of respect for it. *Watership Down* encouraged me to think more about these topics, and seeing the world from a rabbit’s perspective made me consider the impacts (intentionally or otherwise) that we humans can have on our beautiful planet. This is particularly relevant considering the increasing rate of development that is destroying our green spaces and animal habitats, leaving us with areas of brick and concrete. After reading *Watership Down*, I found myself truly appreciating the stunning area on my doorstep and enjoying more time outside.

Despite the challenges these animals face, this book focuses a lot on themes of hope and resilience. Throughout the book, some of the characters tell stories about “El-Ahrirah”, who was a legendary rabbit hero. He was also known as the “Prince with a Thousand Enemies”, inspiring the group and proving that, even when the whole world seems against you, there is always hope. The first and last lines of the book continue this theme of hope: even when things seem grim, the first line is “The primroses were over” while the last line is “the first primroses were beginning to bloom” which, in many ways, reflects the spirit of the story.

I laughed, cheered, and cried myself through this book. It was thought-provoking and gratifying, and I hope you will experience it for yourself too. One quotation really stood out to me, and I believe it sums up *Watership Down* perfectly:

“All the world will be your enemy, Prince with a Thousand Enemies, and whenever they catch you, they will kill you. But first they must catch you”.

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MARLBOROUGH CONCERT ORCHESTRA

Saturday 2nd December - 7:30pm

St Mary's Church, Marlborough

Sibelius Finlandia
Philip Singleton Earthrise
Leroy Anderson A Christmas Festival
Sibelius Symphony No. 2



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I realise that for you, dear readers, the LitFest is now a distant, happy memory but as I'm typing this my colleagues are slumped in corners of the shop, gazing at nothing with a 1,000-yard stare, triumphant but exhausted. At this point in the year we're pretty well booked-out, yet still they come – all the big titles are published in the autumn, and we read as fast as we can but it's hard not to fall behind. Which is an elaborate excuse for a November column full of plans and intentions and very little actual reviewing of Things Already Read. Please forgive.

Luke Jennings talked at the festival about his new thriller, *Panic*, which I had on my 'to be read when the paperback comes out' list, but which sounds so good I went mad and bought the hardback. Ten pages in, so not really able to form an opinion yet, but it's looking good so far! (Meeting him has also inspired me to re-read his memoir *Blood Knots* which I've been pressing on people for years). Talking to Simon Mason (*A Killing in November* and *The Broken Afternoon*) was fun and having asked him for his recommendations, I've ordered the crime novels by Peter Temple (*not* Paul Temple, by Francis Durbridge, remember him from the far-distant crime fiction past?)

I obviously took my eye off the ball earlier in the year, because I was delighted and surprised by the arrival of Francis Spufford's new novel *Cabokia Jaxx*, which somehow got published and printed without my noticing. It sounds very different from *Light Perpetual*, which was very different from *Golden Hill*, but if it's as good as either of them it will be a treat which I'm looking forward to. To which I'm looking forward (grammar). I *have* read Rose Tremain's *Absolutely and Forever*, a slim little novel of first love, evocatively detailed, poignant with the knowledge brought by hindsight, gently mortifying, a lovely little book.

Kassia St Clair's *The Race to the Future* sounds absolutely enthralling. It's the story of a motor – sorry 'automobile' - race from Peking to Paris in 1907. Over mountains and deserts, with barely any discernible roads and even less petrol, five cars with the motleyist (?) assortment of drivers hurtled across continents, their progress breathlessly reported in one of the first global news stories. Seventy years earlier, in southern England, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, engineer, architect, designer, maverick entrepreneur and – shall we say 'complex character'? - was transforming transport with his railway network. Tim Bryan, director of the Brunel Institute has written *Iron, Stone and Steam* about the man and his successes and the odd spectacular failure.

What's On in October

Through November to 6th December (*Wednesday*)

Art Workshops at the White Horse Bookshop, 136 High Street, Marlborough.

Extremely popular one day Art workshops throughout the Autumn, held in the Bookshop studio which looks onto the gallery. Workshops include watercolour seascapes, calligraphy, Christmas card scenes, pastels, oil painting and acrylics.

For more details see website:

<https://www.whitehorsebooks.co.uk/art-workshops?sort=created>

5th (Sunday)

Marlborough College Concert Series, Memorial Hall 7.30pm

Violinist Jennifer Pike is joined by Philip Dukes (viola) and Jeremy Pike (piano) with a programme to include: Rebecca Clarke – Dumka; Jeremy Pike – Elegy for Ukraine; Grieg – Sonata No. 1 in F major; Beethoven – ‘Spring’ Sonata and Boulanger – D’un Matin de Printemps. *Ticket price includes free parking & programme.*

Full details from: <https://marlboroughconcertseries.org/concerts/>

7th (Tuesday)

Parade Cinema ‘Event Cinema’ – The Royal Ballet: Don Quixote - 7.15pm

The classic tale of the adventures of eccentric nobleman Don Quixote and his faithful squire Sancho Panza as they help to bring a vivacious young couple, Kitri and Basilio, together. Teeming with wit and an abundance of bravura choreography, this energetic 19th century ballet is enlivened by Ludwig Minkus’ spirited score, and is a wonderful showcase for the virtuosity of The Royal Ballet’s principal dancers.

Full details: <https://www.theparadecinema.com/movie/the-royal-ballet-don-quixote>

8th (Wednesday)

Marlborough Gardening Association, Marlborough Town Hall – 7pm for 7.30pm.

This month’s subject is Tales from the Potting Shed by Nicola Hope, and the Display Table is Evergreen foliage for a vase.

Further details: <http://www.marlbga.org.uk/index.htm>

12th (Sunday)

St Peter’s Trust presents Brilliant International Musicians – 7pm to 9.30pm.

St Peter’s Church Marlborough proudly presents a wonderful evening featuring Steinway Artist and one of the most notable British pianists of his generation Harry Fox and Alisa Liubarskaya who is 2nd principal cellist at the Royal Ballet Sinfonia and the winner of first prizes at the Barbirolli Memorial Prize for

Cellists and the Vivian Joseph Concerto Competition. Together they have performed concerts in the UK, Greece, Valetta, Paris and Rome. *Tickets £10 Members/£15 Non-members.*

Full details <https://stpetersmarlborough.org.uk>

16th (Thursday)

St Peter's Church Marlborough: History Society – Non Conformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in Wiltshire – 7.30 to 9.00pm.

James Holden is a researcher and writer on historic buildings for the Wiltshire Building Record. Come and find out why Wiltshire is particularly lucky in the variety and quality of its quaint chapels and country meeting houses.

Free Event. Full details from <https://www.stpetersmarlborough.org.uk/events-programme/>

18th November (Saturday) at 7pm

St George's Church, Preshute – *Harmony in Autumn.*

A splendid evening of music and readings celebrating the beauty of autumn in the church's atmospheric setting. *Tickets £15, including wine and canapes*, available from David Beacom – dbeacom@aol.com. In aid of the ongoing work of St George's.

18th November (Saturday) at 8pm

Marlborough Folk-Roots: Martin Simpson - St Mary's Church Hall, Marlborough

Widely acknowledged as one of the finest acoustic and slide guitar players in the world, Martin Simpson's interpretations of traditional songs are masterpieces of storytelling. Intense, eclectic, spellbinding and deeply moving.

“One of the virtuoso instrumentalists of the English music scene” – The Guardian.

For Booking Information see website: <https://www.marlboroughfolk-roots.co.uk>

For Christmas 'Early Birds':

From 18th November (Saturday) throughout December - 11am to 4pm

Christmas at Avebury: The Twelve Days of Christmas – Avebury Manor

Avebury Manor has become well-known for the stunning hand-made Christmas decorations and ornaments created by the talented volunteer team. This year, each element of the classic carol will be turned into a Christmas spectacle for all to enjoy. There will also be family rooms dedicated to children's crafts and Christmas stories as well as Christmas activities across the site. Enjoy a delicious mince pie in the café, and visit the National Trust gift shop where you can begin your Christmas shopping in style! *Booking not needed. Free event.*

Full details: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/wiltshire/avebury/events/5ae2528d-db89-40df-b0a2-e4e77d6c1f30>

I grew up in Wootton, just South of Oxford, where my Dad was the Vicar of St Peter's. In that pretty, ancient church I learnt to hand out the hymn books and smile at people as they came in. We had a special slim mower to cut between the graves. It had a wind up start and I loved using it.

Every Sunday Dad would walk down the aisle in the service, turn to face East, and lead the intercessions. Without fail we would pray 'for the troubles in Northern Ireland and for justice and peace in South Africa'. The prayers must have been so regular that at one Sunday lunch I blurted out: 'Why do we keep praying for the same old stuff? Nothing changes anyway.'

Dad patiently explained that we prayed for these two countries as they had serious problems, and also simply because the Bishop had asked every parish to do so. For years afterwards I felt I had the upper hand – boring old St Peter's with its monotonous prayers. Then came the 1990s and the situation in Northern Ireland and South Africa improved dramatically. The transition away from apartheid became known as 'the Anglican miracle'. Who couldn't but be impressed by the grace shown by Nelson Mandela?

I felt chastened and a little more circumspect about the power of prayer (Matthew 18). Groups of people, even in very traditional churches (and none), had prayed persistently and consistently over decades. Jesus commended the persistence of a widow for 'banging on' at a judge to gain the justice she sought (Luke 18). To St Peter's credit the miracles did eventually come.

As we look at the hidden war in Yemen, the drawn-out war in Ukraine and the new war in Israel it's very easy to lose heart. How can human beings who are made in the image of God kill and maim each other? I don't know the answer to this question, but I do know where to take the problem. Jesus said at his ascension that, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (Matthew 28). These problems look impossible for our authorities, but as the angel said to Mary, 'Nothing is impossible with God' (Luke 1). Situations that look totally hopeless can be turned around through prayer. Can we follow the example set by St Peter's in the 1970s and 80s and consistently, persistently pray for peace? I hope and pray that together we can; our world certainly needs us to.

'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem' Psalm 122 v.6

Rev Chris Smith, Team Rector of Marlborough.

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Christine Davies died in August aged 73, just 4 weeks after her diagnosis with lung cancer. She moved to Marlborough from Scotland in October 2020 to be near her family after the death of her much-loved husband Jeremy. They married in Hong Kong where Christine grew up, and travelled the world with his job with HSBC.

A geography teacher, she taught in Hong Kong and Thailand, inspiring many students with her passion for the subject. She was also a talented artist (it's hoped some of her work will be on show locally in the future), an art teacher and art lover. A keen member of the Arts Society Swindon and Kennet, she had arranged the speakers for 2024 as Programme Organiser.

She was a Friend of The Merchant's House, a member of the History Society and of the Marlborough Theatre Club. Christine was also a member of the Golf Club and was hoping to renew her love of golf.

She attended St Mary's Church and helped with the 8am service on occasions. She was enthusiastic, eager and generous with her time and support for many sections of our Marlborough community. Christine was a Director of the Residents' Association at Clarendon Court where she lived, and will be much missed by her friends and neighbours there.

Her children Alexandra, James and Jacqueline miss her greatly as do her five grandchildren who adored her - her two granddaughters attend St John's. Christine was with us for too short a time.

Transition Marlborough **Windfalls and Wildings**

Sunday 29th October

2.30pm at St Peter's Church, Marlborough

Come and celebrate the apples' journey from the Heavenly Mountains to the Pewsey Vale - a tale told through music, spoken word, pictures and original songs by the wonderful Paul Darby and friends.

"truly calming and refreshing for the soul"

A fund and awareness-raising event for Marlborough Community Orchard. Tickets £10 in advance / £12.50 on the door to include tea, cake and cider tasting. Under 12s free. Available from White Horse Bookshop and Sound Knowledge or call 07876 230 540.



St Mary's is delighted to invite you to Energize Children's Church alongside the 5pm Informal Worship service.

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Marlborough History Society

Thursday 16 November. 7:30
pm

St. Peter's Church

"Non-Conformist chapels
and meeting houses
in Wiltshire"

By James Holden

Buildings historian and author
of the comprehensive study of
non-conformist chapels for the
Wiltshire Buildings Record.

Guests welcome £5 entry.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Departed - we pray for the families of

7 Sep	Malcolm Lucas (101)	Betjeman Road, Marlborough, North Wilts Crematorium
14 Sep	Alan Chandler (68)	Five Stiles Road, Marlborough, St Mary's Marlborough
17 Sep	Donna Witcher (44)	Rabley Wood View, Marlborough St Mary's Marlborough
2 Oct	Ivy Amor (94)	Summerhouse Road, Wroughton. St George's Preshute

David White: A force for nature

The idea that farmers aren't interested in their local wildlife is a thing of the past: programmes such as 'Countryfile' amply demonstrate this and our Wiltshire farmers have recently got together to give nature a helping hand.

David White farms at Berwick Bassett, where his great grandfather Fred White settled in 1909, converted from managing livestock into growing corn. In an almost unbroken tradition, David took over the farm in 1968 at the tender age of 20 and now that his active involvement in wildlife preservation has taken wing he is busier than ever.

David was one of the 45 farmers who got together and formed the Marlborough Downs Nature Improvement Area in 2012. Since then it has gone from strength to strength and the conservation initiatives have continued and diversified: Butterfly and Bat walks, David's annual Dawn Chorus walk, an 'Owl Prowl' from a tractor trailer and much more. He tends to get up with the sun (4.00 a.m. in the summer months) and has usually taken a few striking pictures of the Avebury stones or a pair of boxing hares before most of us have had breakfast.

Back in 2007 his land appeared to be fairly devoid of wildlife so he decided it was time to start creating better habitats. Set-aside, field margins, game strips, management of grazing land on and below the Ridgeway, including bare patches created for nesting lapwings.. the list goes on.

Fifteen dewponds were made or refurbished and hedge and tree planting drew in volunteers from the public. Highland cattle were introduced to create a clumpy sward, providing good habitat for nesting voles and mice, and this in turn began to attract his favourite avian species: birds of prey. Buzzards, kites, kestrels and sparrowhawks are now regularly seen along the skyline, and short-eared owls and harriers are occasional visitors. For tree sparrows (down to two pairs in 2012) nest boxes were installed and giant bird feeders loaded with millet seeds alongside wild bird strips. Now an overwintering flock of 300+ birds constitutes one of the largest colonies in the U.K.

The acquisition of a camera with a zoom lens alerted David to the variety and beauty of his local landscape and wildlife, and it started him on a secondary career as a photographer, which has won him awards and often takes him abroad. A recent exhibition of his work in Avebury featured a foray into Astro photography and landscaping images using a drone.

No doubting it, David White is 'a force for nature'.

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David White's photo of Short-eared Owls in the snow.



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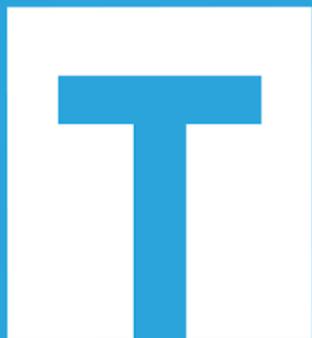
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News from the Churches

All Souls Service: 4pm Sunday 5th November at St Mary's Marlborough

Our town wide All Souls Service will be held at St Mary's on Sunday 5th November at 4pm. If you have been bereaved in the past year this is a poignant moment where we remember before God by name our loved ones and light candles in their memory.

There will be no 5pm Evening service in St Mary's on that day.

Remembrance: Sunday 12th November

St John the Baptist, Minal at 9am;

St George's, Preshute at 10.30am ;

and St Mary's, Marlborough at 11.15am (N.B. Later start to allow joining in with the short act of Remembrance and the Parade at The War Memorial at 11am.



Marlborough Churches Together: Fraternal

The next Fraternal will be held at 4.30pm at The Rectory on **Tuesday 7th November**.

Quaker Values

Peace and Pacifism, the final talk in the series to explain the basis of Quaker values takes place in the Meeting House on **Wednesday 1st November** .7.30 to 9pm



Friendship café:

Open on **Saturdays 4th & 18th November** at St Mary's Church Hall from 10.30 to 1pm. (Poster page 27)

Welcome Wednesdays

continues to meet weekly at 10.30am in St Mary's church. (Poster page 27)

Energize

Children's church meets at 5pm on Sundays, alongside the Informal service in St Mary's. (Poster page 21)

Messy Church:

Saturday 25th November, 2pm at St George's, Preshute

Please do join us for this informal afternoon service with worship songs, lots of Bible-based craft activities and afternoon tea too!



Harmony in Autumn

Saturday 18 November, 7pm in St George's, Preshute

You are warmly invited to an evening of seasonal music and readings to suit all tastes, in the beautiful setting of St George's. Tickets £15 to include wine and canapés, available from David Beacom dbeacom@aol.com Proceeds to the ongoing work of St George's. (Poster opposite)

Marlborough Area Poverty Action Group (MAPAG)

Please contact Rachel (rachelrosed1@gmail.com) for details of the next open meeting if you would like to join us.



Lighting up Marlborough for Christmas

The Christmas Lights Switch-on Event and Christmas Market is due to take place on **Friday 24th November**. The Christmas Market in the High Street trades between 10am and 7.30pm; the Christmas lights go on at 6.30pm.

Emmanuel Marlborough

Join us every Sunday at 4 pm for our weekly church service located on New Road in Marlborough, SN8 1AH. Our service includes crèche and Sunday School groups, followed by refreshments (for adults) and a sandwich tea for the children.



We also offer various activities throughout the week. For more information and updates on our events, please visit our website at emmanuelmarlborough.org.

Ladies Bible Study

10 am- 11.30 am on Friday, 3 November and 17 November. Friends discovering God's truth in the Bible (All ladies welcome - onsite crèche available). For more details, email ladies@emmanuelmarlborough.org

Monday Lunch

13 November, (every 2nd Monday of the month), 12.30 pm – Pop in briefly if you're busy – Stay & chat if you can. Light lunch + short Bible talk, meeting in the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough.

Sunday Morning Service

19 November, (every 3rd Sunday morning), 10-11 am – Main Church Hall, New Road, Marlborough, SN8 1AH. Join us for refreshments afterwards.

Sparklers

Monday, 20 November, 2.30-3.45 pm. A kids' club for School Years Reception to Year 2. Games, snacks and Bible stories. Meeting in the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough.

Little Friends Toddler Group

Thursdays during term time, 10-11.30 am at the Marlborough Community and Youth Centre. Come and enjoy free play, singing and story time, snacks for children and refreshments for carers.

Explorers

Fridays during term time, 6-7.15 pm Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough. Our kids' club for school years 3-6. Fun, games, tuck (50p) and a short Bible talk,

Friday Nights

Fridays during term time, 7.30-9 pm. Our youth club for school years 7-11 at the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough. Friends, fun & faith – everyone is welcome!

Homegroups

Thursdays during term time, Pewsey – 7.30 pm, Marlborough – 8 pm, Ogbourne St George – 8 pm. Bible study, prayer and fellowship. For more details, email

office@emmanuelmarlborough.org

Hope Explored

A 3-session short introduction to Christianity, from Luke's Gospel. All are welcome to come and ask any questions or just listen! For more details, email office@emmanuelmarlborough.org

Harmony in Autumn

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

All items for the December /January issue by Tuesday 14 November 2023 please.

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