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TOWER^{AND}TOWN

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CARE OF OUR HISTORIC BUILDINGS

You may have noticed a lot of scaffolding in the High Street recently, specifically on the Merchant's House and the Town Hall. It is rather unsightly and can be inconvenient when it partially obstructs the pavement. It is also a necessary part of the ongoing process of maintaining Marlborough's plentiful stock of historic buildings.

I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling very lucky to live in such a beautiful town with so many characterful old buildings. However, modern life has different requirements from its buildings from those of previous centuries and for the historic buildings to last they have to be maintained and have purpose. Preserving old buildings for current and future use, while maintaining their character, is not easy; it requires the skill, imagination and sensitivity of many different people.

In this edition I have had more than a little help from my husband Andrew, an architect, in gathering a series of articles that focus on people who work with expertise, care and enthusiasm to maintain and update our historic buildings. Builder Jason Franklin and trustee Alison Galvin-Wright describe their roles in the upkeep and development of the Merchant's House. Simon Mills and Andrew Bumphrey relate the distant and recent history of St Mary's church and their roles in its ongoing care. Pippa Card speaks eloquently of her love of historic buildings and her often misunderstood role as conservation officer. We also get an insight into how Mike and Lesley Fernley have transformed part of the Ropeworks into housing and how Erlestoke Church was also developed into a community centre. I hope you enjoy this look behind the scenes of Marlborough's historic buildings.

Sarah Bumphrey

Front cover: Merchant's House gable

Pippa Card – Conservation Officer

My interest in historic buildings started as a child. I grew up in Germany in the 1980s and we would spend summers in Venice, travelling through historic Bavarian and Alpine villages to get there. I visited Berlin and climbed the leaning tower in Pisa before I had even visited London. Back in England there were many visits to National Trust properties.

Having obtained BA in History of Art and Architecture I worked for the National Trust at Chirk Castle. One day we had to go up to the servants' quarters hidden behind the parapet, climb through a small door within the wall panelling and scramble over the roof trusses of one of the 13th century castle's towers simply to find the winch to lower the chandelier over the main staircase for cleaning! That really opened my eyes to the structure of a building.

I left the National Trust and after a while working within the History Faculty at Oxford University, I started my career in local Government. So, for nearly 13 years I have been a conservation officer covering the Marlborough area advising on the upkeep, repair and alteration of listed buildings. I like helping people and am here to give impartial advice. It saddens and frustrates me when people have been misled and given the wrong advice. Many people are wary of coming to the Council for advice, but I do receive positive feedback and it makes it worthwhile when you know you have helped someone.

Marlborough itself is quite a wonder and a big plus of my job is getting to go inside many of its wonderful buildings, often parts that the public will never see. The discovery of that hidden gem, be it a fantastic 16th century staircase or a small rabbit carved into a stone wall, just captures my imagination. Unpicking the past is part of the job and the mysteries these buildings can give rise to satisfies my curiosity.

The common misconception about conservation officers is that we always say no! Actually, most of the time I will say yes! It might have to be a reconsidered scheme, but the majority of applications I deal with will have a positive decision. It is hard to tell people no, but a lot of the time there is a solution, and collaboration and creative thinking can actually achieve a more successful outcome than initially proposed. We are not here to mothball the past, but to manage change, and that can be approached in different ways – there is never one right answer, although there may be one more appropriate or sympathetic. What I really relish are the projects that have scope to do something a little different. That is not to take away from the traditionally designed, sympathetic extension to a building, but I love the juxtaposition of traditional and modern and when designed and executed well, it

can really bring dynamism to the historic building's core and add another dimension to the history and story of a building.

The frustrating thing about my job is not getting to see the final result because many are within private homes. Marlborough is a wonderful town to work in, as there is always something going on in the public realm where I can see the results of projects I have been involved in. The Bridge Garage will be a big change and visual improvement, so I long for the day that that project is completed, but there are many examples within Marlborough I could list – how the ‘new’ steps to the Town Hall have mellowed over the last 10 years so naturally they appear part of the original building; the modern extension to the rear of the White Horse Bookshop; the eagerly anticipated cinema on The Parade within the former United Reform Chapel, all of which are projects that support the town and its people whilst sustaining the future of the building. If I had to pick my favourite building in Marlborough, it would be the Chapel at Marlborough College, simply because it contains Morris & Co stained glass, another interest of mine.



The modern extension at the rear of the White Horse Bookshop an example of the juxtaposition of traditional and modern designed and executed well.

Jason Franklin - Builder

Can you tell me a bit about your firm Bond Construction?

We are a family firm with 18 employed full time. Some of our men I have known since I was a child and have worked with me all my working life. Everyone is willing to help each other out and do different things. Although I spend most of my time meeting clients and in management I am extremely happy to pick up the tools and help out on site if ever I get the chance.

We are general builders and work on projects big and small but are fortunate to work on many very significant historic buildings, for example we have just finished work on the Merchant's House in Marlborough.

When did you first become interested in building?

I am a fourth generation builder. My great grandfather and father ran a firm in Newbury and so I was around building from a child. As soon as I could hold a brick I would practise building walls. I still have and use many of my grandfather Bond's woodworking tools. So it's in my blood. I had a place at university to study fine art but decided to join the family firm instead as I knew I would enjoy it more.

How did you learn your trade and profession?

I did an apprenticeship in carpentry and also learnt bricklaying, roofing, groundwork etc. working alongside very experienced tradesmen. Later I went to college to learn surveying and estimating so I had a very broad education in building.

What do you enjoy about working on historic buildings?

The feeling that you are working on something that was maybe constructed 200 or 300 years ago and making a contribution that could be revealed by someone in the future, who might say 'they did a good job'.

What is the most satisfying thing about your job?

For me it's about the people, so when we finish a job with a happy client who then goes on to recommend us to friends and family then that gives me great satisfaction. As such almost all our work comes through word of mouth.

What do you think could be done to ensure traditional craft skills are not lost?

I do think traditional trades are undervalued possibly because they are not understood by those outside the industry. We always have at least one apprentice and the majority of them stay with us when they finish their training, which helps to prevent traditional skills from being lost.

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Looking After The Merchant's House

Alison Galvin-Wright

The 17th century silk Merchant's House in Marlborough is undergoing a much-needed programme of building work. After 30 years of conserving the inside of this Grade 2* building, the Merchant's House Trust commissioned a report during lockdown to find out the state of the building

The result is a **£150,000** Appeal, launched on 26 April to ensure the building is conserved for future generations. Work is needed on the roof and other aspects of the building, including replacing the top right-hand window on the front of the House, to bring symmetry to the façade.

Bond Construction of Burbage were commissioned to carry out the work and their eye for detail and care of such an old and special building will ensure it is in good shape in the future. Roof work is only seen by a few, but there are photographs on the MH website www.themerchantshouse.co.uk to show the scale of the project and the fine workmanship that is being carried out.

Built in 1653 after the Great Fire of Marlborough, it was the home of Thomas Bayly and his family for many years. A variety of people have occupied the Merchant's House over the years. In 1990 W.H. Smith put it up for sale and Marlborough Town Council bought it and saved it for the local community. The Merchant's House Trust was formed in 1991 and leases the property for a Peppercorn Rent.



During the past 30 years the Trust has raised funds to conserve and restore this unique building. Thanks to the vision of the original founders of the Trust, Sir John Sykes, Victor Chinnery, Dr Richard Clapp and Michael Gray, the work carried out revealed rare wall paintings and many other treasures.

The much-loved Shop was opened, guided Tours began, the 17th century-style garden was created and built using authentic hard-landscaping and plants appropriate to the period. The Educational Project started to introduce primary school children in Marlborough and the wider community to the 17C. The Marlborough Museum was opened in 2018. The support of dedicated volunteers has been vital and now the House re-emerges from the pandemic lockdown to serve the community again

Andrew Bumphrey – Church Architect

The Church of England has a system of quinquennial (5 yearly) inspections of all its churches. This is a prudent measure to ensure that problems with the buildings are spotted, monitored and addressed in good time on the basis that ‘a stitch in time saves nine’. These are carried out by suitably experienced architects who are asked to highlight any problems that they find in order of importance. I am privileged to have been appointed inspecting architect for 12 churches, one of which is St Mary’s in Marlborough.

The quinquennial inspection is often viewed with some trepidation by church wardens worried about what problems might be discovered and repair costs incurred. I try to be sensitive to the circumstances of a particular church which may have a small congregation and very limited funds.

There are always a few simple things that can be undertaken to keep damp and rot at bay including replacing broken tiles, keeping gutter and downpipes unblocked and drainage gulleys clear. However, most church buildings have damp in the walls (particularly those which face west) and their often intermittent use makes this almost impossible to remove. Often the best that can be done is to use paint materials internally that “breathe” and do not trap the damp and accept that there will be some staining internally.

Undertaking inspections can be nerve-racking, requiring climbing into roof spaces or bell towers. The roof structure of St Mary’s is concealed from view by a flat ceiling some 7 metres above the floor. Inspections are made via a small trap-door in the ceiling. The first time I did this Henry Pearson was rector. He persuaded his contacts in the fire brigade to bring a very long and large ladder to enable us to enter the hatch. Although we were well supervised by the fireman I found climbing the ladder very scary. Some years later when we inspected again we used a scaffold tower.

Soon after I became the church architect in the early 1990s there was a dramatic event when one of the pinnacles on the tower was struck by lightning which caused a section of stone at its base to explode (where it was secured with an iron pin). The piece of stone landed on the roof of the south porch. This left the pinnacle teetering on the brink of collapse. They may not look very big from the ground but the pinnacles are over 3 metres high. The late Stan Radnedge called in steeplejacks from Salisbury to erect a protective scaffold around the pinnacle to stop it falling. When I inspected I was able to gently move the massive stone pinnacle with my hand! It was a miracle it didn’t fall. The stone at the base was repaired and lightning conductors installed to avoid it happening again.



In 1999 reordering was undertaken which was designed to give the church building more flexibility in its use. The south door was closed and the old Norman door at the west end was opened to make it the main way into the church. The internal wooden screen was adapted and raised to make it suitable for incoming coffins. A vestry was formed in the south-west corner. A small kitchen and accessible loo were discreetly included together with a room above the entrance in the tower. The most controversial element was the removal of the Victorian pews and inclusion of chairs. We endeavoured to find the best and most comfortable church chair on the market at the time. I sat on the Kusch chair that was chosen for two months in my office to test it out.

A few years later the pew platforms were removed to enable the floor to be levelled. Under the old floor we found evidence of burials and some partial brick vaults. These were bridged over with concrete beams to avoid causing any damage to the old structure below.

As church architect I have always tried to tread the line between accepting that buildings have to change to meet modern needs but need to retain their historic significance and 'tell their story'. They are buildings which embody a lot of memories for individuals and the community.

As a church community we want to share the Christian story of love, to grow as disciples and help point people towards leading a rich, fulfilling life, whilst at the same time navigating the many challenges life throws at us. The emphasis is on building Christ-centred community and growing supportive relationships. People have been doing this in Marlborough for a thousand years and the evidence of this is captured in the building of St Mary's church.

The current church dates from the Norman period and, while little evidence of this church remains, the main entrance is under a striking round dog-tooth arch. A single Norman column is to be found inside the church, giving a hint of what the church could have looked like with a row of solid Norman pillars encompassing the nave. There is also a small collection of Norman stone heads embedded in the walls ... I wonder who they represent, the local lord of the manor or vicar perhaps? These are not the oldest parts of the church; in the 17th century a defaced statue of the Roman goddess Fortuna was built into the west wall of the nave. I can only wonder what people were thinking when they did this; if only the walls could talk!



Norman figure ... the vicar perhaps?



Roman goddess Fortuna

During the English Civil War in 1642 the Parliamentary commander took refuge in the church and the north side of the tower still bears the marks of shot from Royalist guns. The fire that destroyed much of the town in 1653 also caused great damage to the nave and the Norman arcades had to be taken down. The church was then rebuilt along Puritan lines and this has largely remained to the present day.

When coming into the church today, the asymmetry jars; the south aisle pillars interrupt the arch to the chancel. However, if you remove the chancel – a later addition – and then re-orientate the church 90 degrees and add the pulpit to the north

wall a harmonious layout is achieved. Some of the recent history is inscribed in the clear glass windows, including details of the last major development of the church to make it fit for purpose in the 21st century.



Henry from Ramsbury, a plumber, did some glazing work in 1823

As a churchwarden my role is to support the rector in the running of the church, in particular looking after the operations of the church and this includes maintaining the church building. Understandably, St Mary's is a grade 1 listed building and any changes to the building need to be approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) through the submission and approval of a faculty. This is a process that requires considerable patience and dedication from churchwardens as we wrestle to make changes to the building. Thankfully St Mary's is in an excellent state of repair and is a credit to the many people who have laboured over the centuries maintaining it.

In recent years we owe a huge debt to Martin Selby and Pam Tulloch who have, with others, quietly dedicated their time and skills in maintaining the building. The lighting was replaced recently and our current focus is to install a new audio-visual system in the church. When completed, St Mary's will not only be a building fit for the worship God and communicating the message of Jesus but it will also be a wonderful flexible space, in the centre of our town to host concerts, talks, exhibitions and conferences.



Details of the last major changes made to St Mary's Church in 1999/2000



The Ropeworks before and after

Conversion of the Ropeworks -

Mike and Lesley Fernley

Can you tell me a bit about the history of the Ropeworks?

The Ropeworks was originally in the grounds of Katharine House which fronts on to the Parade. Rope and tarpaulin manufacture date back here to at least 1865 which is on the datestone of the oldest building. After this finished the industrial buildings then had a number of uses (including the Louanne ‘Knicker Factory’) and were bought by us in 1997 to provide storage space for our furniture business.

What were the buildings like when you bought them?

They were watertight but otherwise quite dilapidated. We used them as storage for our furniture business and had two tenants, one of whom was a cabinet maker. We had no intention of changing the uses when we first bought them but decided many years later to move from Clatford into Marlborough having received planning permission to refurbish two of the buildings and build a new house for ourselves.

What are the buildings used for now?

Over the past four years we have converted the two main brick buildings into houses and almost finished building a new house for ourselves by the river. There is still an antiques workshop and showroom and the old cabinet makers has become Krumbz café by the river.

What have been the biggest challenges of your project?

Obtaining planning permission and listed building consent was quite a complex process and dealing with services providers for electricity and gas was very time consuming.

What have you enjoyed most about the project?

Doing much of the work ourselves and directly employing tradesmen has meant that it has been a slow process but it has given us time to carefully consider all the details and source the right materials. For example we have used Portland stone copings on the garden walls and reused wrought iron gates as screens between the houses. We have always tried to do the right thing by the buildings using techniques and materials which respect their history but conform to modern standards. It is very gratifying to get such positive comments from people who come and see what we have done; many of them remember the buildings in their former dilapidated state.

Before and after pictures opposite

Church and Village Hall – Erlestoke

Andrew Bumphrey

Traditional church buildings are large expensive buildings to maintain and for many years there has been a call to make them more usable for a wide range of community uses. In 2009 Erlestoke village hall was in a parlous state requiring re-building or very significant work that would cost hundreds of thousands of pounds. With great vision the PCC proposed that, with a few modifications, the church could take on the additional role of village hall and become the centre of village activities such as the playgroup.



New doorway

The Victorian church building with its stepped entrance and pews did not immediately lend itself to multi use. However, with support from the Salisbury Diocesan Advisory Committee and after consultation with Victorian Society and English Heritage, kitchen and toilet facilities were discreetly installed in the north aisle of the building. In addition a new doorway and ramped entrance for disabled access was added on the north side of the church. The organ was moved to the rear of the building and the font repositioned to create more space for activities.

Great care was taken to use traditional materials including matching stone and pine joinery to maintain the character of the building. Pine from three redundant pews was used to construct the kitchen cabinets. A special intermittent-use septic tank was installed in the church grounds away from any burial locations because there was no access to mains drainage.

So at a fraction of the cost of rebuilding the village hall a multi-functioning building was created; it retained its character as a place of worship but became usable for meetings, concerts, children's groups and a wide range of village events putting the church building at the heart of the community. This is an exemplary example of a wider trend also seen with works at St Mary's Marlborough. The re-ordered building has been very successful and won a Salisbury Diocesan Award in 2010.

So, we've gathered round the wireless and heard the latest announcement: more sectors of society are set to re-open/resume from the 17th May 2021. For the arts industry especially, this is welcome news. Like many, you've probably bookmarked so many things from the web, weekend supplements and virtual newsletters and as a result, slightly lost track of all things planned to go ahead this summer.

Sadly there is not quite enough time or room for me to list all the extremely exciting things booked to go ahead this year, but listed below are a few events that caught my special attention. Note also the website links for tickets and visitor information etc:

Raymond Briggs: A Retrospective at The Gallery, Winchester Discovery Centre from 17th May – 18th August 2021.

Raymond Briggs: A Retrospective, on tour from House of Illustration, is the first ever exhibition dedicated to the author-illustrator behind some of the most popular and influential children's books and graphic novels ever published. Hampshire Cultural Trust is delighted to be the inaugural venue of the tour.

This long-awaited retrospective will show never-before-seen material from Briggs' personal archive, revealing the origins of titles that have become household favourites, literary classics and international phenomena.'

<https://www.hampshireculture.org.uk/event/raymond-briggs-retrospective>

Shoephoria! At Fashion Museum Bath from 18th May 2021 until 2022.

'Showcasing 350 pairs of boots and shoes, many drawn from the Fashion Museum's world-class collection, alongside 'star' shoes borrowed for the exhibition, *Shoephoria!* will trace the evolution of shoe style over the last 300 years. From the oldest shoes in the collection – a pair of red velvet mules from the 1690s – to sneakers and trainers from the 2000s; from shoes belonging to Queen Mary and Queen Victoria to designer shoes by Vivienne Westwood, Manolo Blahnik and Jimmy Choo, *Shoephoria!* offers a close-up look at the various styles that make up the history of footwear.'

Shoephoria! will run into 2022.

<https://www.fashionmuseum.co.uk/events/shoephoria>

continued page 21

How does that old nursery rhyme go? “In May I sing all day, in June I change my tune.....”

The characteristic two-note call of the male cuckoo has been regularly heard since late April this year in locations along the Kennet valley and in the Cotswold Water Park, despite the national decline in numbers of this iconic summer visitor.

The call is a descending one, often registered as a minor third (D to B), sometimes (as in Beethoven’s “Pastoral” Symphony) a major third (D to B flat on the clarinet) and there does seem to be some credence to the fact that the interval changes as the season progresses, from minor third towards a fourth.

Less well-known is the call of the female, a rich and scary bubbling chuckle, a signal that she is looking for somewhere to lay her eggs: this serves to remind us that the cuckoo is a parasite, whose habits are less attractive than the male’s beguiling notes.

Of the summer visitors the quail is one of the latest to arrive, from its winter quarters in North Africa. Seldom seen, it betrays its presence with its curious triple-note “wet-me-lips” call, from a field of barley or winter wheat on warm June evenings. Quails are ventriloquists, for the song seems to come now from one part of the field, then another.

And while the quail is bleating away on the Marlborough Downs many other birds have fallen silent. For species such as the blackcap the male needs to maintain silence while the browncap is sitting on eggs or rearing her young, before starting up again for a shorter period, in anticipation of a second brood.

Many young birds are stretching their wings by this time and amongst other things learning to sing. A study carried out on a family of blue tits compared the adult’s song with that of a junior apprentice. At normal speed they sounded identical, but when slowed down and raised to normal pitch it was obvious the young bird’s pattern of notes was staccato and amateurish.

Birdwatchers go out on June evenings to special locations, hoping to hear the strange “churring” of the nightjar or the weird “roding” calls of the woodcock. An even rarer species, the long-eared owl, can be detected by the sound of its young, begging for food with sharp squeaking whistles, reminiscent of a squeaky gate.

Reading, which is pretty well universally accepted in modern Western society as a 'Good Thing', can be quite divisive. This strikingly unoriginal thought came to me while reading **The Outlaws Scarlett and Browne** by Jonathan Stroud. There are various schools of thought about adults reading 'children's books'. Some (Martin Amis) think that only brain-damaged adults could or would enjoy 'kidlit', while Katherine Rundell, who writes excellently for younger readers has also penned a defence of children's books. If you haven't read **Why You Should Read Children's Books Even Though You Are So Old and Wise** I do recommend it; if you think you agree with Amis, it might change your mind. I would certainly look askance at any grown-up who *only* read books for younger readers, but I'd be just as bothered by anyone who dismissed a book because they felt they were too old for it, or the book too young for them. Some young adult or 'crossover' fiction can, and the best of it does, tackle issues and develop character in narratives every bit as sophisticated as anything found on the 'adult' fiction shelves. Sometimes I think the 'adult' books are only defined by the fact that the sex, drugs and whatever are depicted more overtly.

Anyway, clambering back down from my soapbox, and remembering the point of my being here, I thoroughly enjoyed the aforementioned **Scarlett and Brown**, officially for readers of 12+ (which I am). Set in a recognisable but dystopian England, following an unspecified catastrophic event, or events, it's a suspenseful adventure story, with a Wild West feeling, brilliant comic description and enjoyably advanced vocabulary. A 'kick-ass' bank-robbing heroine encounters a naïve boy who's escaping an institution run by a sinister and controlling organisation. Yes, it has echoes of Philip Pullman, but I thought it was (and don't tell anyone) a bit more fun.

A definitely (well, usually) adult interest is gardening, and gardening books are many and various. Not new, but recently recommended to me is Charlotte Mendelson's **Rhapsody in Green**, a volume about her obsessive efforts to grow her own food in entirely unsuitable surroundings. A small, sooty, slug infested London garden plot is the arena for a passionate failure to grow a variety of fruit and vegetables, mostly in pots. Self-deprecatingly comic writing disguises a wealth of knowledge and interest, and botanical Latin. I'm not sure what serious gardeners might make of it, but it made me laugh.

Charlie Corbett, who lives in Stanton St Bernard, has written **12 Birds To Save Your Life**, about how dislocation from the natural world has damaged humans as a species, and, of course, damaged the environment. It's well written, personal and heartfelt.

It's with great sadness that the family of **Jean Lightowler** (nee Stokes) announce her death at the age of 94.

Jean was born in the Three Arrows public house in Bell Vue, Manchester, on March the 11th, 1927 where her parents were the landlords.

As a very young child she displayed a clear talent for dancing and, aged 8, won a scholarship to the Loreto ballet school in Southport. After 6 years of boarding at the Loreto, she was offered a scholarship to the Sadler's Wells Ballet School in London, which subsequently became the Royal Ballet School. While still only 14, Jean moved to London where she attended ballet school during the day and worked as a seamstress in the wardrobe department of the full Ballet Company during the evenings. The year was 1942, the height of the Second World War.

After leaving ballet school Jean joined the Ballet Rambert for 3 years, before becoming a member of the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company in 1946, which had just moved its base to the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden and would later become the Royal Ballet Company. Jean loved her dancing career during the post-war years,



which is considered by many as ballet's 'golden era', with Frederick Ashton as choreographer, and Margot Fonteyn, Robert Helpmann and Michael Soames as the company's main dancers. Robert Helpmann was a particularly good friend of Jean's. Following dance tours of Europe and the US, Jean left the ballet and began family life.

Jean became a loving mother to four children before embarking on a successful career as a fashion shop proprietor in Cheshire. She was also very active for many years as a choreographer for amateur youth productions. During her retirement, she resumed her seamstress skills to make highly sought-after ladies' fabric bags, most of the proceeds from which she donated to East Cheshire hospice, near Manchester. Jean moved to Marlborough, a town that she loved, during 2014 to be near family. She was fully active and independent until she passed away. She also took full advantage of social media and other technologies to keep in close touch with her widely dispersed friends and large family. Jean leaves 4 children, 13 grand-

children and 16 great-grandchildren.

Patricia Doreen “Pat” Munson died on 10th April 2021.

Her wholehearted involvement in Marlborough life included organizing the Cards for Good Causes in St. Peter’s Church. Over the many years that she did this over one million pounds was raised. She was an active member of Preshute Evening Group and Marlborough Floral Club of which she was Chairman in 1997. Additionally she was involved with the Marlborough Lions and supported her husband’s work with the club. Pat was the much loved wife of Ken and mother of sons, David and Steve. She had three grandchildren, Aimee, Hannah and Samuel.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptisms – we welcome

25 April Iris Pearl Hall at St Mary’s, Marlborough

Funerals - we pray for the families of:

10 April Patricia ‘Pat’ Doreen Munson (87) of Hughes Close, Marlborough
St George’s, Preshute and Marlborough Cemetery

12 April Joseph ‘Joe’ Frederick Biggs (86) of Manton Close, Marlborough
St Mary’s, Marlborough and Marlborough Cemetery

Brilliant Young International Musicians at St Peter’s

Sunday 6 June

Altea Narici (cello) Gianluca Papale (piano)
programme of Beethoven, Bach and Schumann

Sunday 20 June

Judith Choi Castro (violin) John Paul Ekins (piano)
programme of Beethoven and Saint-Saëns

Sunday 4 July

The Corran Quartet
Joana Ly (violin) Kirsty Macleod (violin)
Edward Keenan (viola) Molly McWhirter (cello)
programme of Hugo Wolf, Mozart and Beethoven

Please contact Nick Maurice on drnickmaurice@gmail.com for details re tickets for any or all of the recitals you may be interested in attending.

‘God has gone up with a shout.’ Psalm 47:5

Thursday, 13 May was the Feast of the Ascension and my words in this Clergy Letter reflect that often-forgotten occasion. At Marlborough College we produced a video of a Compline service marking the day, and this is available to be enjoyed on our website <https://www.marlboroughcollege.org/compline-service/>

It must have been heart-breaking for Jesus to have had to leave the disciples for a second time after his 40 days of resurrected presence after Easter – dining with them, talking with them, continuing to teach them, sharing laughs no doubt about the ‘old times’ around Galilee.

And yet 40 days later, ‘out as far as Bethany’, Jesus lifts up his hands, blesses them for a final time, and is ‘carried up into heaven.’

What can we say about the Ascension that might be of practical use in our daily and spiritual lives?

The Ascension is the Apotheosis of Jesus. Apotheosis means, ‘making divine’. The ‘culmination or climax’. The ‘ideal example’. It is the ‘highest point in the development of something.’ So, 40 days after his resurrection, the human personhood of Jesus reaches its final and most glorious realisation. Jesus is most what he always has been at the Ascension – the Son of God, now fully realised and accomplished, having defeated death itself.

The Good News about the word Apotheosis is that we can have one too! We look forward to that time when we are revealed to the world at the top of our game, as our very best selves, full of the life and purpose that God has offered, now fully realised and accomplished. Who you are meant to be ultimately may be revealed to you and to others slowly, over time, but there will be a time when your identity and special purpose is most obvious in whatever will be your greatest accomplishment. And there will be something for us all.

We are all bound for Higher Glory. Mark Twain wrote: ‘The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.’

The Ascension reminds us to seek higher values, to pursue more noble truths, to raise our arms to the skies even as our feet remain planted on the ground. To anticipate our 15 minutes of fame.

The German Philosopher, Schleiermacher, wrote of ‘God Consciousness’, or ‘Universal Consciousnesses’ as something that we collectively share, and that consciousness is the chief pursuit of all religion. For Jesus, his ‘God Consciousness’, his awareness of the Father, was most profound at his Ascension, but we can and do sense God all the time.

The point is we are conscious of the Universe we inhabit, and at our Apotheosis we know most fully the part we play in the Cosmic Drama. Celebrate your birthday by all means, but never forget the day ‘you found out why’.

Compiler’s apology: Last month’s article on page 3. Last sentence truncated and should read ‘But in the 21st century BC the Sumerians rose again under the third dynasty of Ur.’

Arts Review continued from p.15....

Also not to be missed:

A Midsummer Night’s Dream at Shakespeare’s Globe, London. Performances from 19th May – 30th October 2021.

‘Get ready for a fiesta like no other as our 2019 production of Shakespeare’s **A Midsummer Night’s Dream** returns with piñatas, streamers, glitter and a cacophony of brass for our Summer 2021 season.’

<https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/whats-on/a-midsummer-nights-dream-2021/#details>

Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience at 106 Commercial Street, London from October 2021. (Tickets for September do also seem to be available, so be sure to check the website for further information). <https://vangoghexpo.com/london/>

Bach & Sons starring Sir Simon Russell Beale at The Bridge Theatre, London from 23rd June – 11th September 2021. <https://bridgetheatre.co.uk/whats-on/bach-and-sons/>

Bags: Inside Out at the V&A Museum, London currently on show until 16th January 2022. <https://www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/bags>

Glastonbury is apparently doing a Livestream event (!) with performances from, you guessed it, Coldplay... For the real rock n’ rollers out there who want their fix of mud, glitter and illegal substances, I suggest watching the Stone’s performance from 2013. Outstanding.

Enjoy

Gabriella Venus



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What's On in June

6th (Sunday)

7.30pm St Peter's Church, 'Brilliant Young International Musicians' concert, Altea Narici (cello), Gianluca Papale (piano). Contact drnickmaurice@gmail.com for details re tickets

Marlborough College Half Term ends

7th (Monday)

St John's Academy: start of Term 6 (to Friday 23rd July)

20th (Sunday)

7.30pm St Peter's Church, 'Brilliant Young International Musicians' concert, Judith Choi Castro (violin), John Paul Ekins (piano).

Contact drnickmaurice@gmail.com for details re tickets

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The question asked of a religious person seems simple enough but the answer will depend not just on their religion but on which word is stressed.

WHAT do you believe? usually means what is the doctrine or creed of your religion? The answer can be easy and unchallenging. It is a safe answer and won't raise eyebrows in one's own religious community and won't surprise the questioner.

What do YOU believe? is more tricky for it asks how we, as individuals, interpret the faith we publicly declare. It asks how we visualise our God. For the Christian it asks if we regard bible accounts as historical facts, allegorical truths or political spin. It asks what we personally understand by eternal life, prayer, worship and, quite importantly, it asks what Jesus asked: "Who do you say that I am?"

This may sound threatening but it is healthy to examine one's understanding of difficult concepts, and to either convert them into meaningful principles or replace them with a firmer foundation of one's faith. Whichever way, one can't lose!

What do you BELIEVE? is the most challenging for it tests our individuality, our soul perhaps. We may *verbalise* the spiritual in human or divine terms, but *believing* is different. One believes because there is no acceptable alternative. One cannot *believe* what one sees as a mere possibility. Crucially however, one cannot believe and do nothing. For the Christian, if one really believes Jesus' message and example, one has to react - one *has* to love one's neighbour(s) (all of them) and one's enemy also. Not to do so means distrusting Jesus and what then of faith?

So we return to the big question, and suddenly faith in God and in Jesus can become very simple, far simpler than any formal religion permits. There are many writings on faith both within and without the bible that can be stumbling blocks to would-be believers. For the Christian... no let's not theorise... for you, what are the truly life-defining things about Jesus? What are the things that directly affect how you choose to live? His divinity? His conception? His birth? His baptism? His temptation? His teaching? His healing? His life example? His sacrifice? His resurrection? Alternatively ask yourself, 'if any of the above were myths, would your life, values and expectations change?'

Jesus' teaching tells us life's how and why; his healing shows the authority and power; his example is something to try to emulate; his sacrifice says how supremely important the message. The rest may be crucial for some people but for many they complicate a simple powerful message of love & humility. But, there is a difficulty: as faith gets simpler it becomes more demanding. We cannot hide behind church attendance, religious doctrine, social protocols and Sunday best; we have to live our faith... every waking hour of every day that we live.

News from the Churches

As this article was prepared before May 17th when Step 3 of the Covid road map took place we trust that church services and activity groups are slowly getting back to how they were two years ago ! Please continue to check the church websites for up to date information.

We are blessed in this town and country to have a successful roll out of the vaccination programme and a NHS. You may like to think of countries where the future is not so positive and to pray for them.

*I will say of the Lord,
'You are my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust'.
God of power and might we lift our brothers and sisters in other countries to you.
We pray for your protection,
We pray for your provision,
We pray for the nations of earth to have compassion.
When people are in need, you are our refuge.
When people are scared, you are our refuge.
When people are mourning, you are our refuge.
Compassionate God, draw close to those who seek your refuge today. Amen.*

Christchurch

<http://christchurchmarlborough.org.uk/>

Is currently open for worship on a Sunday morning with full social distancing and use of masks. All are welcome to join us at 10:30.

Christchurch celebrate its Church Anniversary on 6th June, with a service led by Chris Smith at 10.30am.

It will be participating in Bible month during June <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/the-bible/bible-month/>

looking at St Mark's gospel.



Marlborough Quakers

<http://www.marlboroughquakers.org.uk/>

Continue to hold Meetings for Worship using Zoom. Please contact Rachel Rosedale (512205) for more details.



St Thomas More

<https://marlboroughandpewseycatholics.org.uk/notice-board/>

Worship services continue at St Thomas More with live services.



Emmanuel Marlborough <https://www.emmanuelmarlborough.org/>

Emmanuel continues to run regular Sunday afternoon services, with children's activities, and midweek groups for children and adults, either in person or online as the regulations allow. We are also planning a Christianity Explored course for enquirers to discover the person of Jesus in Mark's gospel (online or in person, as the regulations allow).

For more information, contact office@emmanuelmarlborough.org

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Marlborough Anglican Team www.marlboroughanglicanteam.org.uk/

Services at time of going to press are :-

9am Weekly Zoom Service

9am Fortnightly Service at Minal (1st and 3rd Sunday of the month)

10:30am Weekly Services at St Mary's and St George's

5:30pm Fortnightly Informal Service at St Mary's (2nd and 4th Sunday of the month)

All three churches remain open for private prayer daily:

St Mary's 9am-5pm

St George's 9am-6pm

St John the Baptist 9am-5.30pm

along with Prayer meetings on Wednesdays at 8am in St Mary's Church and in the afternoon via a zoom meeting at 5pm.

Prayer support is available for individuals or for your loved ones. Please contact the clergy, in confidence, see page 22. Please do be praying for our world and the church at this time.



Marlborough Churches Together Fraternal

This will be on Wednesday 30th June at 12.20. We hope to meet in the Rosedales' garden but if the weather is not good enough then it will be on Zoom. Rachel Rosedale 512205



MAPAG

There will be an Open Meeting on Monday 5th July.

The venue still to be decided and could be a Zoom session. More details from Rachel Rosedale 512205



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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 July issue by Tuesday 8th June please.

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