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# TOWER AND TOWN

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**CHRISTMAS**

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DEC 2023 & JAN 2024

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# TOWER<sup>AND</sup>TOWN

THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES

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## Editorial

It's hard to approach December without looking towards the 25<sup>th</sup>. In early November there is a Christmas tree in one of our coffee shops and the Christmas lights on the High Street are already in place, waiting to be lit up later in the month. So why fight it?

This issue has a lot of Christmas, with a Marlborough focus.

I hope readers will enjoy being reminded of how those lights came to be – it's a story of the community coming together, led by our High Street traders, to ensure that lack of finance would not prevent our usual display.

Our very own local historian, Nick Baxter, has written about Marlborough Castle in its heyday. It was the location for two important events in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and it's rather amazing to think such an imposing and important structure has totally vanished .

Gill Mortimer, Musical Director of the Marlborough Choral Society, tells us how the popular Christmas concert is planned and put together.

Our Ukrainian guest, Yulia, tells us how to celebrate the holiday the Ukrainian way.

And a few of us thought hard about which Christmas carols we loved the most.

Our cover is the work of Marlborough resident Rosie Hill, talented artist, and a good friend to many of us.

Sara Holden

Cover picture of Marlborough by Rosie Hill

# How our Christmas lights were saved

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By the time T&T readers get this issue, the High Street will be ablaze after dark with our spectacular, now familiar, blue lights. But do we remember that this almost didn't happen?

In May 2006 it had been recognised that the existing stock of Christmas lights and the system of erecting them was no longer suitable. There were no funds available to replace and erect them and, to the dismay of local traders, a decision was made that there would be no Christmas lights that year.

As Martin Cook, who became Chairman of the soon to be formed "Marlborough Christmas Lights Association" said in a Tower and Town Article of 2006:

"A mix of local traders and other organisations and individuals decided that this would just not do! Christmas without sparkle? Marlborough without its wonderfully famous, wide High Street not lit up? Not if Tim Smith, the Greengrocer, and his enthusiastic and energetic band of supporters have anything to do with it! Local support was rallied and the decision was very definitely taken to bring Christmas back to Marlborough!"

At the end of the day 125 local businesses contributed to the project, many not located on the High Street at all, including local taxi firms.

Again, wrote Martin, "The result? A Christmas Lights display to rival many larger Wiltshire towns and one that has instantly brought smiles of happiness to all who live, work and visit Marlborough!"

Today, responsibility for the Christmas lights has returned to Marlborough Town Council.

Sara Holden

## Christmas at Marlborough Castle in 1164

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Marlborough Castle is most famously associated with King John, who granted Marlborough its first charter in 1204. John's son, King Henry III, brought peace to England in the great hall, where the Statutes of Marlborough were sealed in 1267, ending conflict with the barons.

The hall and all of the castle's buildings are gone, their footprints now in Marlborough College. Only the Mound, once the Castle Motte on which a circular keep once stood, has survived.

In the Middle Ages Christmas began shortly before dawn on the 25<sup>th</sup> December

with a dedicated Mass – hence “Christ Mass”. The festival lasted for twelve days and consisted of eating and drinking and making merry. Twelfth Night was the culmination of the festivities.

Medieval kings held their courts at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun – the most important times in the Christian calendar. In 1110 King Henry I spent Christmas at Westminster, Easter at Marlborough, and Whitsun at the New Windsor.

Henry’s grandson, King Henry II, spent Christmas at Marlborough Castle in 1164. Writs dispatched in December were sent to the bishops and sheriffs. They were far from merry. To his bishops Henry wrote,

“You know with what malice Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, has acted towards me and my kingdom, and how basely he has fled. I therefore command you that his clerks, who were with him after his flight, and the other clerks, who have disparaged my honour and the honour of the realm, shall not receive any of the revenues which they have within your bishopric except by my order.”



Becket sticking his finger up to Henry and Louis

The writ was witnessed by Richard of Luce at Marlborough.

Henry ordered his sheriffs to place in custody anyone who had appealed to the court of Rome on Thomas’s behalf.

Henry had quarrelled with Thomas Becket, who had defended the Church against his King. John the Marshal, former castellan of

Marlborough Castle, had fuelled the quarrel by accusing Becket of expropriating lands to the Canterbury archiepiscopacy. Becket had foolishly ignored the charge, resulting in a furious Henry arraigning Becket for trial at Northampton. In fear of his life, Becket fled to France.

Six years later, during the Twelve Days of Christmas, Becket, having returned to England, was brutally murdered by four of Henry’s knights in Canterbury Cathedral after Henry famously angrily exclaimed, “Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?”

The writs from Marlborough paved the way to Becket’s martyrdom.

**Nick Baxter**

Every single Christmas Eve reminds us about raising a new light, a new life, a new hope; but what can be even more important is reminding ourselves about the strong link between past and future.

Christmas time is the best time to be with the people you love, to feel their warm hearts and caring hands. But what if you are far from your family, what if families are separated from each other, what if you can't give a hug to your parents or siblings? What if there is a war?

Preserving and transmitting traditions is the best way to stay connected with your family, even though we are far from them. This year lots of Ukrainian families are still not with their beloved people. But cooking traditional meals and celebrating Christmas in a traditional way might help them to feel the spirit of a family holiday.

Visiting almost every Ukrainian family on Christmas Eve you will see lots of treats; we are really fond of cooking! But the first and the main one is "kutia". Made of boiled wheat, poppy seeds, honey, nuts and raisins, it is a very symbolic meal for our people. We take three spoons of this dish and then we start our Christmas Dinner. Wheat and seeds symbolize immortal life and rebirth. Like a little seed that can wait for the first warm rays of the sun and germinate in spring, our souls are reborn in a new body after death. Only after kutia can we start Christmas Dinner. As a rule, it consists of twelve meat-free dishes. They represent the twelve apostles – the followers of Jesus Christ. It is the happiest part of the day; every house is filled with the hustle and bustle of big families and the smells of delicious dishes.

But what we all love the most are Christmas carols! Noisy and cheerful groups of children and adults wearing homemade costumes go from one house to another to congratulate the families, to wish them good health, wealth and prosperity. In gratitude for this the owner of the house treats them and gives some money. Shepherds, angels, devils - whoever you see among them! These traditional Ukrainian Christmas Carols are called 'Colyadky'.

Yuliia Martynova is a guest in Marlborough

# How We Plan Our Christmas Concert

Gill Mortimer Musical Director of the Marlborough Choral Society

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Concert preparation starts surprisingly early; almost the second the Spring concert is finished, the music goes back to the library and Christmas planning begins.

Like any Christmas party, there will be a mixture of guests and regulars, customs and traditions, and then a sprinkle of challenge for the choir and sparkle for the audience.

Our venue of choice is traditionally St Mary's, Marlborough's own beautiful Parish Church, which glitters in candlelight. Our guest list is easy – our own local community and the choir, but soloists and musicians need to be found and booked!

Then the main event for the programme – just like a Christmas dinner, we need something to look forward to! Is there a composer with a special anniversary? A new composer with a work that just shouts Christmas to be tried out? This year we are revisiting a well-loved classic, Vivaldi's joyous Gloria.

And then the trimmings – something for the audience to sing and feel involved in. Which audience carols have we sung over the last few years, and what is new this time? Making sure we have covered all the old favourites that we only hear

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once a year with a few new pieces to stretch the mind or feel warmed by.

And a highlight, a bit like the flaming Christmas pudding, something to raise the rafters and fill our hearts with Christmas cheer!!

Once the main structure is down on paper the planning really begins. Will the



various music libraries be able to find music copies? How many weeks rehearsals will we need? Do we have enough people in the choir to sing every part? How much will the concert cost to put on and can we afford it? Can we produce a

programme in time? Where shall we advertise?

One of our most important decisions is which charity to support. We always try to support something local, groups like Hope for Homes, Prospect Hospice, the Jubilee centre, Swindon Filling station. But occasionally the world situation feels more pressing, and we join a larger initiative. Over the years we have raised thousands of pounds for charities.

And all of this is before we really start organising the night, who will welcome our guests, who will light all the candles, run the bar and open and close the venue!

So if you wish to add a little bit of Christmas magic to your festivities this year, come and join us at St Mary's church on the 9<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm. We'd love to see you and we're sure you'll find something to make your Christmas a little bit special.

Perhaps you would like to join us – we welcome singers of all voices and don't require an audition. Do visit our website for more information.

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

### **Marlborough Choral Society Christmas Concert**

9th December at 7.30pm St Mary's Church

Vivaldi Gloria, Pergolesi Magnificat, Holst Christmas Day plus carols

Tickets £12, students £4, under 16 free  
from Sound Knowledge, choir members or on the door.



# What is your favourite Christmas carol?

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Singing Christmas carols is often one of our earliest musical memories and most of us have at least one which is a particular favourite.

For our Mayor Nick Fogg -- “It's 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel' - because it hails the coming of Christ into a world torn apart by conflict and suffering - a message for today. It represents the Victorian revival of interest in medieval settings and it was set to music by a man from my hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon, the Victorian composer Thomas Helmore.

“What more could you ask?”

From your editor -- “‘O Come All Ye Faithful’ in the Latin version – the lovely Latin vowels of ‘Adeste Fideles’ were my first introduction to the Latin language and seemed to give added importance to the exhortation to “come and adore him”.”

From the Tower & Town chair -- Sarah Bumphrey, why she loves ‘Gabriel’s Message’ - “I first heard this carol in 1969 at my high school’s Advent Carol Service, ‘our gift to the town’ in the words of our music teacher, Miss Drake (her nickname was Dracula and she was formidable). Indeed the church was packed with pupils, teachers, parents and townspeople and a palpable air of excitement.



The Annunciation – Fra Angelico

“As first year pupils, we were delighted to be missing double Biology (we called it Bilge); there was the added frisson of the presence of the boys of the grammar school, whom we rarely saw except when they were sitting morosely on the school bus. We were also in awe of the beautiful sound of the school choirs and aspired to the honour of passing the audition and being allowed to sing with them. The appeal of this carol goes beyond personal

recollections. My carol book tells me that ‘Gabriel’s Message’ is an old Basque carol, translated loosely into English by Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924). He gives the carol a medieval flavour with mention of a ‘lowly maiden’ and a ‘most highly favoured lady’ (transformed with glee by many a young choir member to ‘most highly flavoured gravy’). Gould also beautifully captures the alleviation of the darkness in the snowy white of Gabriel’s wings and the candlelight in the ‘eyes as flame’”.

# A letter from Stephen Skinner Methodist minister

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I am writing on behalf of Marlborough Churches Together to express our concern for all the people, who are suffering from the terrible acts of violence and warfare in the Holy Land and living in fear. We see and hear what is happening and feel so helpless. Yet we can help by making a donation to a charity, such as Christian Aid, to help provide life-giving food, shelter and medical supplies to those in desperate need. We hope that it will become easier than it has been for such aid to reach those whose lives depend upon it. Secondly, we can pray for peace and justice. The message coming out from Israel and Palestine is “Pray for us. Please pray for us. Pray, pray, pray for peace and justice”. So, I invite you to pray using your own words, these from the Methodist Church or others found on the denominational church websites.

## **A prayer from the Methodist Conference**

God of peace and compassion, we pray for all impacted by the escalation in conflict in Israel-Palestine. For all who are mourning. For all who are fearful, today, and for what may lie ahead. For all traumatised and re-traumatised by what they have experienced. Enable us to stand in solidarity with people of peace. May your Spirit bring peace and healing to your troubled world

**Amen**

I also warmly invite you to the **Weekly Update and Prayer Meeting** organized by the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem. Join Christians from around the world to pray together for Justice and Peace in the Holy Land. Every Wednesday from 6pm (UK time) for 40 minutes. Each week there will be updates and theological reflections from local voices and Methodist Liaison Office staff members followed by the opportunity to pray together. To join please email [office@mlojerusalem.org](mailto:office@mlojerusalem.org) and you will be sent joining instructions.

Marlborough Folk-Roots presents

## **St Agnes Fountain**

Thursday 7th December 8.00pm at Marlborough Town Hall Assembly Room

Tickets £22 available from Sound Knowledge or the website

[www.marlboroughfolk-roots.co.uk](http://www.marlboroughfolk-roots.co.uk)

A little amuse-bouche to see us through the cold (wet and windy) nights.

Autumn is gold and coppery, chilling and wistful. Autumn can be sad, lonely and perhaps even daunting, as the knowingness of winter creeps in. The seasons are changing and with it, we find ourselves embroiled in all sorts of different emotions. There are things to help and aid with this, such as having something fun and entertaining to look forward to, and re-watch, on the television.

I always find phrases such as, ‘Sunday night viewing’ rather nostalgic. It sounds reassuring, familiar. It’s the phrase that draws the weekend to a grand finale. Of course, with catch up services such as IPlayer and ITVX for example, this weekend routine can be accessed any time, and therefore broken. (In a good way!) We have *Strictly Come Dancing* for our fix of glitter, entertainment, incredible professional dancing and Claudia Winkelman’s fringe. BUT, the programme that, I would argue, is exactly what we all need, during the long winter nights, is ***Ghosts***.

*Ghosts* is a BBC drama written, starring and created by the immensely popular and recognisable cast of *Horrible Histories*. (Mathew Baynton, Simon Farnaby, Martha Howe-Douglas, Jim Howick, Laurence Rickard and Ben Willbond). It is, as Debby and I have discussed many times, a kid’s programme for adults. Without giving too much away, (because if you haven’t seen it, stop reading this article and watch series 1 episode 1), *Ghosts* follows the life of a young, modern day married couple called Alison and Mike (Charlotte Ritchie and Kiell Smith-Bynoe). Alison has been left by her recently deceased relative, an (almost) derelict stately home called Button House. Button House is haunted by a troop of ghosts who, in some way or other, also met their fate in this rather grand setting. They range from a caveman called Robin, a 1980s Scout instructor called Pat, and a disgraced Tory politician who wears a jacket, shirt and tie, shoes and sock suspenders, but no trousers...

Following a near-fatal accident, it is only Alison who can see, hear and interact with the ghosts. This, accurately described ‘smash-hit comedy,’ is devilishly funny, immensely sweet and totally bonkers. AND, even though death is a central theme, it’s not actually all about mortality! It is about life and living, friendship, togetherness, being present, making the most of everything and believing in love. *Ghosts* is a stylised melting pot of historical costumes, characterisations and, above all, humour and humility. It has just entered its fifth and final series, and if last year’s Christmas Special was anything to go by, this year’s should also be a joyous weepy too.

So, if you don’t know what to watch this autumn/winter, give *Ghosts* a go. It’s a real gem.

# Kennet and Avon Medical Practice News

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Thank you to all of you who came to this year's KAMP flu clinics. You came in your thousands to get your flu vaccines at clinics in Pewsey Bouverie Hall and St Mary's School, Marlborough. We vaccinated 4 patients per minute for 6 hours – some very tired staff but a job very well done! Thank you to our staff for giving up precious weekend days and making the clinics run so smoothly.

KAMP staff also visited the housebound and those in care homes to administer flu and Covid vaccinations and we ran Covid vaccination clinics for the most vulnerable of our eligible patients.

This season, we will have administered a staggering 3721 flu vaccines and 1002 Covid vaccines.

KAMP is currently trying to raise awareness of the increasing number of specialists working with our GPs to provide your care. This issue, we look at paramedics whose experience in the ambulance service make them invaluable in assessing and treating acutely unwell people of all ages, both in the surgery and in home visits. Paramedic Practitioners are highly qualified and can prescribe medications, refer patients and arrange tests and investigations. KAMP has 3 paramedic practitioners – together with triage nurses and GPs they are key members of our Medically Urgent team.

## When an Elm became an Oak

Peter Noble

Wandering in Savernake one winter some 15 years ago I came upon a beautiful tree. Its bark was 'oakish' but its many branches were 'all wrong' for an oak.

Some ten years earlier, tree researchers, Jack Oliver and the late Joan Davies noted the same tree in their survey of the forest, and for their personal convenience, they had allocated a relevant reference name.

Earlier this year I was privy to Jack and Joan's report to the Forestry Commission and recognised their description of 'my' tree and the location, saying its overall shape was reminiscent of a particular species of elm - but it was an oak. Intrigued, I checked last summer and found it suitably clad in oak leaves. Sadly however sycamore 'weeds' were now hiding our oak, but forester Greg Kerr agreed to take his team of volunteers to 'halo' it, ie. get rid of those saplings. This lovely tree is now clearly visible from Salisbury Road, opposite the turn to Savernake Park Farm.

And the name? The Forestry Commission, reading Jack's handwritten report noted his scribbled 'Elm' associated name, approved it and said it needed a sign; hence we now have the rediscovered Zelkova Oak (but it still awaits its sign).



“

I'm happy to stay in my home

”

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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



**TICKETS: £12 ADULTS / £2 STUDENTS**

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## Marlborough College Concert Series

### The Cory Band



Sunday 14th January 2024 at 3.00pm

Marlborough College Memorial Hall

tickets from [mccstickets@marlboroughcollege.org](mailto:mccstickets@marlboroughcollege.org)

Students £10, Regular £22.50

Free parking

I'm sure I'm not the only person who'd like ten minutes alone in a room with the Grim Reaper to let him/her know my feelings about the apparently indiscriminate Scything Policy. My current strong feelings about his over-enthusiastic 'Gathering' are nothing to do with personal losses, but stem from reading *A Memoir of My Former Self: A Life in Writing*, a collection of the late Hilary Mantel's essays, reviews and Reith Lectures. I confess to being a touch agnostic about 'that' trilogy. I mean, I can see it's a masterly work of near-genius, but I read *Wolf Hall* and rather felt I was done. After all, I knew the plot (History A-Level, and Keith Michell as Henry VIII on TV in the 70s), and Mantel's (wonderful) writing was going to carry on in parts 2&3, so I perhaps philistine-ly thought ...meh.

This posthumous volume is an absolute treat though, ranging through the recurring themes in her writing and her life, the personal and political. She writes about writing itself, about history and power. She is clever, subtle, intellectual and very funny. Her work in progress when she died a year ago was a take on Jane Austen, a novel from the point of view of Mary Bennett, Mr Darcy's unimpressed sister-in-law. The knowledge that it will never be completed has me seething with resentment that she's gone so very much too soon.

Lindsey Davis's stories of Ancient Rome's villainy, tragedy, crime and political shenanigans are favourites of mine, so *Voices of Rome* is on my Christmas list. It's four novellas, perfect for the time of year, when even if you aren't 'cooking for a crowd' as the women's magazines always put it, you might be busy, distracted or just too damn tired to concentrate on anything too long! (Or is that just me?) Three more that should hit the spot are the new Sharpe novel from Bernard Cornwell, *Sharpe's Command*, just the thing for Boxing Day afternoon. Angus is enthusiastic about *Rick Stein's Simple Suppers*, apparently genuinely simple and delicious, so one for the 'busy cook' (apologies for the cliché, it's the season!) in your life. Or of course, buy it and cook for yourself! The second collection of *Lunch with the FT* columns, interviews with well-known people is an entertaining, occasionally infuriating, sometimes enlightening compendium, the kind of book I'd buy as a present, then keep for myself.

And finally, the one we've all been waiting for – *The Day of the Locust* by Terry 'I am Pilgrim' Hayes. I'm off now to hang up my 'Don't Disturb' notice. Merry Christmas, one and all.

# What's On in December and January

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## To 6<sup>th</sup> December (*Wednesday*)

[Art Workshops at the White Horse Bookshop, 136 High Street, Marlborough.](#)

Extremely popular one day Art workshops throughout the Winter, held in the Bookshop studio which looks onto the gallery. Workshops include Christmas card scenes, life drawing and 'Going Wild in Watercolour'!

For more details see website: <https://www.whitehorsebooks.co.uk/art-workshops?sort=created>

## 1<sup>st</sup> December (Friday) to 1<sup>st</sup> January (Monday) - 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 but admission applies.*

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

## 2<sup>nd</sup> December (*Saturday*)

[St Peter's Church, Marlborough – Christmas Fair – 10am to 3pm.](#)

Join St Peter's for their annual Christmas fair, full of Festive gifts and ideas.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> December (*Saturday*)

[Marlborough Concert Orchestra – St Mary's Church Marlborough – 7.30pm](#)

Conductor Philip Singleton and Leader Karen Sancto present a wonderful programme of music to include Sibelius Symphony No. 2 and Finlandia; Philip Singleton's Earthrise (inspired by the Artemis I moon mission), and A Christmas Festival by Leroy Anderson. *Tickets £12 adults/ £2 students from Sound Knowledge, on the door or via <https://bit.ly/48EnfMI> Further Details: [www.mco.org.uk](http://www.mco.org.uk)*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> December (*Saturday*) 7.45pm and 3<sup>rd</sup> December (*Sunday*) 3pm

[Parade Cinema 'Event Cinema' – Andre Rieu's White Christmas](#)

Join Andre Rieu and his Johann Strauss Orchestra, and immerse yourself in the incomparable Christmas atmosphere of a spectacular Winter Wonderland. Marvel at the magnificently decorated Christmas palace, gorgeous winter scenes, with singing and dancing to timeless Christmas carols, romantic waltzes and beautiful songs from all over the world. An unforgettable Festive treat for all the family!

*Full details: <https://www.theparadecinema.com/movie/andr-rieus-white-christmas>*

## **7<sup>th</sup> December (Thursday)**

Marlborough Floral Club, Mildenhall Village Hall, 2pm.

Annual General Meeting and Entertainment. Treat yourselves to an enjoyable afternoon out on the first Thursday of each month!

*For more information, please call Micky Graham on 01672 514301.*

## **7<sup>th</sup> December (Thursday) at 8pm**

Marlborough Folk-Roots: St Agnes Fountain – Marlborough Town Hall.

Since their eponymous St Agnes Fountain album in 2001, the quartet David Hughes, Fairport Convention's Chris Leslie and multi award-winning duo Chris While and Julie Matthews, have brought musical invention and laughter to the star-dust atmosphere of the season. David sadly died in April this year, lending the show a particular poignancy. Chris, Chris and Julie have kept the Christmas Aggie spirit alive celebrating 23 years together this year. The show will undoubtedly feature a tribute to David. Magical and uplifting.

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

## **10<sup>th</sup> December (Sunday)**

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

This month features Sydney-born pianist Daisy Ou: a “deft” pianist with “exceptional talent” – The Telegraph. *Tickets £10 Members/£15 Non-members.*

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

## **13<sup>th</sup> December (Wednesday) and 10<sup>th</sup> January (Wednesday)**

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

For the December meeting there will be a Quiz and Pot Luck Supper, and January's meeting kicks off with Off the Beaten Track, 'Hidden Gems' with Andrew Tolman. *Further details: <http://www.marlbga.org.uk/index.htm>*

## **16<sup>th</sup> December (Saturday)**

St Peter's Marlborough: Art of Jaipur Festive Block Printing 2pm – 4.30pm

Learn this ancient craft and print your own beautiful festive designs using a wide range of hand carved blocks. Please wear old clothes/bring an apron! There is also a lovely café where you can enjoy a wide selection of drinks and cakes.

*Full details: <https://www.stpetersmarlborough.org.uk/events/>*

## **School Dates – please see school websites for updated information.**

St John's School and Marlborough St Mary's: Term 2 ends Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> December; Term 3 begins Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Preshute Primary: Term 2 ends Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> December; Term 3 begins Friday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> January is a TD day, no school).

Marlborough College: Michaelmas Term ends 12 noon Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December; Lent term begins 6-9pm Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

The period covered by this edition of "Tower and Town" includes Advent, Christmas and Epiphany (The New Year) as does this "Clergy Letter".

ADVENT. In life we go through many processes of preparation. Our schooling prepares us for adult life. Special training prepares us for jobs and professions. At this time of the year much of our preparation is making sure that we have all that we need for what we are to do. No wonder our minds can be overloaded. Have we remembered the presents, the cards, the tree, the food, the drink, the crackers, the invitations, and then what about the poor, the lonely and the homeless of our community? As Christians we are called to become signs of hope to our world, to go out to one another in love, peace and forgiveness. Just as we prepare our homes with decorations and gifts, we must prepare ourselves spiritually by silence, wonder and prayer so that our faith and hope in God may be renewed. It is too easy to lose the central meaning of Advent (The Coming) which leads us to Christmas amidst the tinsel and commercialism. Advent is a short but precious time of looking forward.

CHRISTMAS. The Celebration of the Birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. All babies are demanding; this is especially true of the Christ child in the manger at Bethlehem. By sharing his divine life with us, he challenges us to imitate him, "to be full of grace and truth". Despite the complexity and troubles of our lives, we can be transformed too, to act and speak justly and creatively. Like Christ we can speak words of peace and mercy, we can pray for those who persecute. We can become living words which make the presence of the Eternal Word visible to the world as we celebrate the peace, joy and hope of Christmas.

EPIPHANY (NEW YEAR) Of all Christmas gifts the most remembered are those given by the Wise Men. Gold, for the one who is acclaimed King of kings and Lord of lords. Frankincense, the sign of the priest offering up the prayers of the people for whom Christ eternally intercedes. Myrrh, the embalming spice, a sombre reminder that his mission would be accomplished through his death and resurrection. The Wise Men, in their presence and presents, recognised Jesus for who he is. May we learn, like the Wise Men, to pray that we may grow in our ability to know Jesus Christ and to love and forgive as He loves and forgives us, setting aside the surface differences, accepting all whom we meet now, this week and this New Year as our equals in Christ and as people for whom God's giving is available.

Father John Blacker - Parish Priest Saint Thomas More RC Church

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# Christmas Services 2023

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All the churches of Marlborough wish you every blessing for a peaceful and happy Christmas.

## Sunday 17th December

- 10am All Age carols (Emmanuel, New Road)  
4.00pm Carols by Candlelight (Emmanuel, New Road)  
5.00pm Carols by Candlelight (St Mary's)  
6.00pm Carols by Candlelight (St George's)

## **Wednesday 20th December**

- 6.00pm Beer and Carols (St Mary's church)

## **Thursday 21st December**

- 5.45pm Community Carols, Barton Park

## **Friday 22nd December**

- 3.00pm Singalong Nativity (St George's church)

## Christmas Eve – Sunday 24th December

- 9.00am Team Holy Communion, (St John the Baptist, Minal)  
10.30am Quaker meeting for Worship  
11.00am Mass (St Thomas More)  
3.00pm Crib Service (St George's, Preshute)  
" Family Carols and Chocolate (St Mary's, Marlborough)  
4.00pm Christmas Family Mass (St Thomas More)  
5.00pm Minal Village Nativity (start at the Horseshoe Pub)  
9.00pm Christmas Vigil Mass - Carol singing from 8.30pm (St Thomas More)  
10.00pm First Communion of Christmas (St George's, Preshute)  
11:15pm Midnight Communion (St Mary's, Marlborough)

continued....

## Christmas Day

- 8.00am Holy Communion,(St Mary's, Marlborough)  
9.00am Family Communion, (St John the Baptist, Minal)  
10.00 am Family Service (Emmanuel, New Road)  
10.30am Quaker Meeting for worship  
" Family Communion (St George's, Preshute)  
" Family Communion (St Mary's, Marlborough)  
11.00am Mass (St Thomas More)

## **Sunday 31st December**

- 10:30am Team Holy Communion, (St Mary's, Marlborough)

## **Family News**

**Naomi Painter**

---

**Michael Hart CBE**

1.5.1928 – 30.10.2023

Michael died peacefully in Marlborough on 30<sup>th</sup> October aged 95. Graduating from Keble College, Oxford, he devoted his life to teaching. He held three Headships: Mill Hill, then at European Schools, Mol, Antwerp and later in Luxemburg before becoming an HMI and adviser to the British Government on education. He was known for his talent helping students to find their path in life and his enthusiasm for a greater emphasis on technical education in the UK.

Michael moved to St. Luke's in 2006 from Eastbourne. A dog-lover, courteous and kindly, selecting books in the White Horse bookshop, enjoying concerts at St. Peter's and the College or Shakespeare plays at Stratford-on-Avon, he made many friends in the town. Michael was well-known and respected for his talks at the Merchant's House and St. Peter's and taught u3a courses in History, Current Affairs and German until shortly before his death. He ran high-demand courses at Marlborough College Summer School until 2022. Michael's intellectual curiosity endured, he was researching AI and Chat CPT shortly before he died.

Born in Putney in 1928, Michael's mother was English, his father German, seconded from Berlin as an adviser to the GWR. They returned to Berlin in 1931 with Michael speaking English and possessing an English passport, later to save his life. He attended the French Lycée in Berlin. As the Nazis gained power, his elder brother left Germany and Michael went to a Bavarian gymnasium 'to avoid attention' due to his English passport.

continued p.23

“These are a few of my favourite things”

Sometime in December, as the first ‘robin in the snow’ Christmas cards drop through the letter-box, I thumb through the diary and recollect the special creatures I have seen over the year and cherish in my mind.

The **robin** is not a bad one to start with. It has a song for every season, and with that red breast, restless manner and confiding behaviour it’s no surprise that it is the nation’s favourite bird.

Amongst our wintering birds is a rather special finch that lingers on till March - the **brambling**. I heard its distinctive, nasal ‘chüp’ calls in an area of beeches on a morning walk. After a few minutes it perched on a bare tree with a few similar-looking chaffinches, a male, with dark head, orange belly and shoulder stripe.

In March, searching for partridges on the approach to Windmill Hill all I could see on a bare field was a clod of earth. But then it came to life, a lovely **brown hare** with big ears and a lolloping gait.

Spring is the time for the endless singing of the skylarks and the arrival of our summer visitors. On April 14<sup>th</sup> a cock **redstart** appeared on a barbed-wire fence in a local meadow, en route no doubt for some distant welsh location. The name ‘redstart’ refers to its red tail, which shivers and trembles, especially when it’s trying to attract a mate.

One of my favourites amongst the many early flowers is the **kingcup**, which I usually find in damp river margins alongside clusters of cowslips.

I see that in May and June I went searching for butterflies in various locations: the list included marsh fritillaries, Duke of Burgundy, and best of all the gorgeous **adonis blue**, the bright blue wings brilliant alongside the duller common blue.

Spring turned into summer and more memories flood the brain: nesting swallows in the church porch, a hedgehog in a neighbour’s drive, nightjars ‘churring’ at dusk in a woodland clearing, and then a special moment, as a **kingfisher** darted over the water while I plied my rusty angling skills on the River Avon near Amesbury.

It brought back another memory from way back when I was a coarse fisherman, trying my luck with a ledger line on the River Thames in Oxfordshire. I was waiting for the line to twitch, and when it did and I looked up a kingfisher was perched on the tip of my rod looking keenly into the water. After that moment I gave up fishing and became a birder.

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Michael Hart obituary continued,,,

He avoided conscription, escaping to the advancing Americans shortly before his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. He crossed their lines at night calling in English that he had an English passport. Until the end of WWII Michael worked as a translator for the United Nations and later at the Nuremberg Trials.

He will be much missed by his beloved family. His younger sister pre-deceased him, leaving two nephews and a niece and their children.

It was a privilege to have known him. His many students feel the richer for it.

Submitted by Sue Sykes

Congratulations to Eileen and Eric Gilbert who celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary with a lunch for family and friends in October. Their son Rev Howard Gilbert, who is Rector at Holy Trinity Minchinhampton, was there along with his wife and daughters. Howard went to school at St Johns Marlborough and grew up within the Methodist Christchurch fellowship. Although not native to Marlborough Eileen and Eric have lived in the same house since 1965, were both teachers locally and held various offices in the local Methodist Circuit, a testament to Christian Faith and a long and happy marriage.

# Dianne Mackinder Funeral Service



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# News from the Churches

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The Christmas service times and dates (17<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> Dec) can be found on p.21. Please contact the clergy, p.19, if you are in need of prayer support.

## The Gift

Come and see 1000 Gifts in St Mary's church, Marlborough and discover the greatest gift of all. Open every day from 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 2pm to 6pm. More information from [thegiftstmarys@gmail.com](mailto:thegiftstmarys@gmail.com)



## MAPAG (Marlborough Area Poverty Action Group)

We invite you to give a 'Gift at Christmas' for MAPAG activities, which include giving food vouchers and organising outings. MAPAG supports vulnerable families in Marlborough and surrounding areas.



Contact Rachel Rosedale ([rachelrosed1@gmail.com](mailto:rachelrosed1@gmail.com); 512205) for bank details, also for details of the next open meeting if you would like to join us.

## Christingle

### Saturday 9th December

10.00am St Mary's Church Hall Christingle making party.

Make a Christingle to celebrate at the service on Saturday afternoon or Sunday.

4.00 pm Christingle Family Service, (St George's Preshute)

### Sunday 10th December

10.30am Christingle Family Service, (St Mary's, Marlborough)



## Carol Services

### Sunday 10th December

4.00pm Carols by Candlelight (St John the Baptist, Minal)

### Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December

6.00pm Mencap Carol Service, St Mary's Church. All welcome to attend this friendly service.

### Sunday 17th December

10.00am All Age Carols at Emmanuel, New Road, A fun service, ideal for families, followed by refreshments.

**Carols by Candlelight** - A traditional Christmas Carol service

4.00pm at Emmanuel, with crèche and children's groups for under 8's

5.00pm at St Mary's and 6.00pm at St George's.

**Church Christmas Carol Challenge** – How many carols can you sing in church services between 10<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> December? Don't forget the services on Christmas Eve.

### **December Midweek Activities**

**Ladies Bible Study** - Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> December, 10 am- 11.30 am.

For more details, email ladies@emmanuelmarlborough.org

**Bible Lunch Time** - Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December, 12.30pm, Wesley Hall.

**Sparklers** - Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2.30-3.45 pm. Meeting in the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street,

**Friendship Café** - Saturdays 2<sup>nd</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> . See advert opposite

More information from Louise Seddon (07917 248339) or Mark Whitehead (07814 895127)

**Welcome Wednesdays** - 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> December. 10.30am, St Mary's Church.  
A thought for the day followed by coffee and doughnuts.

### **January Midweek Activities**

**Bible Lunch Time** - Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January, 12.30pm Wesley Hall, Oxford Street.

**Welcome Wednesdays** restarts on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024. See note above.

**Friendship Café** – See advert opposite.

**Sunday Morning Service** 21<sup>st</sup> January 10 – 11am at Emmanuel, New Road

**Sparklers** - Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2.30-3.45 pm. Meeting in the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street.

### **Marlborough Churches Together: Fraternal**

The next Fraternal will be held at 12.30pm at The Rectory on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January.



### **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 18 – 25<sup>th</sup> January**

*You shall love the Lord your God ...and your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10:27)*

Burkina Faso is located in West Africa and has 21 million inhabitants of about sixty ethnicities. In religious terms, approximately 64% of the population is Muslim, 9% adheres to traditional African religions and 26% is Christian (20% Catholic, 6% Protestant). These three religious groups are present in every region of the country, and in virtually every family.

The materials for the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were prepared by an ecumenical team from Burkina Faso facilitated by the local Chemin Neuf Community (CCN). Burkina Faso is currently experiencing a serious security crisis, which affects all the communities of faith. The invitation to work together on the texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 challenges the different churches in Burkina Faso to walk, pray and work together in mutual love during this difficult period for their country. The love of Christ that unites all Christians is

stronger than their divisions and the Christians of Burkina Faso commit themselves to walking the path of love of God and love of neighbour. They are confident that God's love will overcome the violence that currently afflicts their country.

More information and prayer suggestions on :-

<https://ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2024/>

## Term Time Activities

**Little Friends Toddler Group**, Thursdays, 10-11.30 am at the Marlborough Community and Youth Centre. **Explorers**, Fridays, 6-7.15 pm at the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street. School Years 3 - 6,

**Friday Nights**, Fridays, 7.30-9 pm. Our youth club for school years 7-11 at the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street,

**Homegroups**, Thursdays during term time, Pewsey – 7.30 pm, Marlborough – 7.45 pm, Ogbourne St George – 7.45 pm. For more details, email [office@emmanuelmarlborough.org](mailto: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](mailto:office@emmanuelmarlborough.org)

## Church registers

There are no new records this month.



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### **Contributions and comments** from readers are welcome.

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All items for the February issue by Tuesday 9 January 2024 please.

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