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Marlborough LitFest is Back

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TOWER AND TOWN

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Marlborough LitFest is Back

After a challenging 2020, Marlborough LitFest is delighted to be back in 2021 from 30th September to 3rd October to deliver a varied festival programme in a hybrid live/online format to its audience in Marlborough and far beyond. With an exciting mix of events for all ages which includes prizewinning fiction, debut authors and non-fiction, covering such subjects as memoir, history, nature, politics and climate change together with an exclusive finale event featuring our patron, Sir Simon Russell Beale, we hope there'll be something for everyone.

Most of this year's authors are coming in person to Marlborough; a few will be interviewed online. To take into consideration all Covid implications, this year we are livestreaming events from the Town Hall so that they can reach an online audience too. Please check the festival brochure for details.

We are delighted that Sarah Raven, with its headquarters in Marlborough, is taking over as the new lead sponsor for the festival, and we are grateful to Hiscox Insurance who are supporting our livestreamed events this year.

This Marlborough LitFest edition comes with a big thank you to the contributors. Most of the articles relating to the festival have been written by members of the Committee and volunteers. We are also lucky to have reflections from Stephen Skinner, our Methodist minister, and information on Michael and Jane O'Regan's Imagination Project.

We look forward to seeing you in person and online for Marlborough LitFest 2021!

Virginia Reekie, editor, and the LitFest Committee

The LitFest runs from 30 September to 3 October. The programme is available at the White Horse Bookshop and on marlboroughlitfest.org. The Box Office opens on 2 September: buy tickets in the White Horse Bookshop; online and phone booking details on marlboroughlitfest.org.

Front cover by Ben Phillips.

Sarah Porter, a member of the audience on the cover, sadly died in June 2020.
We shall miss her. She was a highly valued volunteer.

The LitFest Golding Speaker – Elif Shafak

Elif Shafak is coming to the Literature Festival as our Golding Speaker. She writes in Turkish and English and has published 19 books, 12 of which are novels with her newest book being *The Island of Missing Trees* which has just been published.

Elif was born in Strasbourg in 1971 but moved with her mother to Ankara to live with her grandmother when her parents separated. She says that living in a matriarchal environment has been a great influence on her. She then had a fairly nomadic life living in Amman, Istanbul and Madrid before teaching in America, finally moving to London in 2013, where she now lives with her Turkish journalist husband and two children.

As well as being a writer and academic, she is an activist for women's rights, minority rights, freedom of speech, mysticism and other issues relating to global politics with a number of these becoming part of her stories.

This is a glimpse into some of her best known novels

The Bastard of Istanbul (2006) takes place in California and Istanbul and addresses the subject of the Armenian Genocide. Elif was prosecuted in Turkey for this but fortunately wasn't convicted.

The Forty Rules of Love (2009) reveals the unfulfilled life of Ella in Massachusetts whose life changes when she reads the manuscript of a book about the 13th century Sufi mystic Rumi and the dervish Shams of Tabriz and his forty rules of love. Many of these provide answers or suggest ways as to how we could perhaps deal with situations in life in the present day.

Honour (2012) focusses on an honour killing in a Kurdish village, opening up a debate about family love, freedom and role of women and men in society.

The Architects Apprentice (2013) is about a boy who travelled to Constantinople with his elephant in 1540 and became the apprentice to Sinan, the Sultan's architect, responsible for many of the most famous buildings in the city.

10 Minutes, 38 Seconds in this Strange World was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2019. It tells the story of a sex worker in Istanbul who is murdered and the five social outcasts who were her cherished friends. It is also full of evocative scenes, the scents and flavours of Turkey and wonderful friendships.

I am now waiting to read her latest book, *The Island of the Missing Trees*, which takes place in 1974 in Cyprus where two teenagers from opposite sides – one Turkish and Muslim and the other Greek and Christian – meet secretly in an inn. A fig tree growing through the tavern roof is witness to their covert meetings. War breaks out and the teenagers are separated. Decades later in north London, 16 year old Ada tries to untangle the secrets and silences of the past. The only concession

she has to the land of her ancestors is the fig tree in their garden.

The Golding Event is sponsored each year by William Golding Limited. This event can be seen on the Big Screen in the Town Hall on Friday 1st October at 7.30pm or on line at home

Virginia Reekie

Colm Tóibín and his new book *The Magician*

Colm Tóibín the acclaimed Irish writer – novelist, short story writer, essayist, playwright, journalist, critic, poet and+ ‘champion of minorities’ can be seen at 8pm Saturday 2 October, on the big screen in Marlborough Town Hall with a glass of wine in your hand! – or on line at home.

Tóibín will be speaking about his new book *The Magician* to be published on 23 September, but more of that later – I would like to tell you a few things about the man and his earlier works first. He was born in 1955 Co. Wexford, the fourth of five children. His grandfather was a member of the IRA and was interned in Wales after the 1916 rebellion. His father was a teacher and died when Colm was twelve. He has described growing up in a home where there was ‘a great deal of silence’. He could not read until he was nine and he developed a stammer.

At seventeen, in 1972, he took a summer job as a barman in Co. Waterford, working from 6pm until 2am. His days were spent on the beach reading *The Essential Hemingway* and he still has that copy ‘stained with seawater’. This was the start of his fascination with all things Spanish. He left for Barcelona as soon as he had finished his degree. In 1990 he wrote two books inspired by this time – his first novel, *The South* and a work of non-fiction *Homage to Barcelona*. In 1978 he returned to Ireland and began a Master’s degree but decided on a career in journalism instead. However, he did not abandon academic life and has been a visiting professor at several US universities. He is currently a professor at Columbia and is chancellor of Liverpool University. He also holds many honorary doctorates.

Tóibín is openly gay but private about his personal life. In 2015, ahead of the Marriage Equality Referendum, he gave a talk called ‘The Embrace of Love: Being Gay in Ireland Now’.

Back to *The Magician*. The early reviews are very exciting and I can’t wait to read it. It’s a fictionalised biography of the German author Thomas Mann.

If you would like a taster of Tóibín’s work before LitFest, *The Testament of Mary* is ‘a miniature masterpiece’ according to Marina Warner and only 112 pages. I would also recommend *Brooklyn*, *Norah Webster* and *The Master*, another fictional biography, this time about Henry James.

Ellen Prockter

The Breath of Sadness: On Love, Grief and Cricket by Ian Ridley

For those of a certain age, the first half of the title of Ian Ridley's moving, poignant and ultimately uplifting book will be familiar. It is taken from the 1989 song *Sit Down* by James: "Those who feel the breath of sadness, sit down next to me." The quotation formed part of a tweet by Ridley on the morning of 6 February 2019 to announce the death from cancer of his wife, Vikki Orvice, aged 56. "Hers was a dashing innings, rather than a ground-out half-century," he writes.

As well as the love of Ridley's life, Vikki had been a pioneering writer: first female sports reporter on the staff of a British tabloid newspaper; vice-chair of the Football Writers' Association; first female chair of the British Athletics Writers' Association.

Shortlisted for the 2020 William Hill Sports Book of the Year, *The Breath of Sadness* recounts with searing candour how Ridley, also a sports journalist, dealt with Orvice's illness and how, after her death, he coped with the mass of raging and, at times, frighteningly dark emotions. Counselling and conversation play their part but it is through watching cricket that Ridley starts to put his wife's death into some kind of perspective.

Not just any cricket – Ridley eschews the bish-bash of T20 cricket and the international glamour of Test matches in favour of the county game, whose unsung heroes perform in front of sparse crowds, as the wind howls across the greensward and crosswords are slowly filled in.

And so the summer of 2019 gradually unfolds: Sussex (Hove, actually), where, on the first day of the season, Ridley encounters "like-minded souls... with time on their hands... and newspapers and thermos flasks in their backpacks"; Hampshire (the Isle of Wight), where "tea and cake in the marquee with fellow cricket lovers... to interrupt my melancholy was a comfort"; Yorkshire ('Scarbados'), where, during a break in play, "Vikki would have loved the three young girls having a game of their own in the middle of the ordered joy".

Watching cricket does not heal Ridley. Part of him will always be broken. But, he writes: "Cricket didn't talk back to me and it didn't offer advice. Like a best friend, it was just there for me."

Ben Tarring

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Flake by Matthew Dooley – A Graphic Novel

Consider this. There are four types of vehicle that play sound as they drive: police cars, fire engines, ambulances... and ice-cream vans. "It's so incongruous," says Matthew Dooley, author and illustrator of *Flake*, the book that won the 2020 Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction, the first time a graphic novel has scooped (pun intended) the prestigious award.

At the heart of this wry, warm, affectionate book is ice cream - or rather, the men who purvey it. Shy Howard is happy with his lot, half-heartedly selling his wares while doing the crossword. Enter brash Tony, intent on expanding his ice-cream empire out from the fictional Dobbiston (loosely based on Dooley's home town of Ormskirk, Lancashire) and across the north-west. Who will enjoy the sweet taste of success?

The language of *Flake* is joyfully playful – who could resist a double 99 from an ice-cream van named Walt Whipman? – and critics have compared his work with that of Alan Bennett. Dooley bats off such comparisons, but said in a recent interview that he was drawn, Bennett-like, to "a mix of the absurd and the mundane".

For absurdity, look no further than Jasper, who has worked in Dobbiston museum for the last 20 years – aside from a six-month stay in French prison for trying to convert continental road signs from metric to imperial. Or the Dobbiston Mountain Rescue Service (of which Jasper is chairman), which is struggling for cash – unsurprisingly, since the one local peak has recently been downgraded to a hill.

As to the mundane, the opening frames of chapter seven are a lesson in bathos: "Howard was Captain Cone. Captain Cone was Howard. Though he'd never been sure...what he was captain of. A ship? A rocket? Ice cream itself? Or just the captain of his own van? The truth was...it had been the first name he had thought of."

The illustrations, meanwhile, are a delight: the slow dunking of a 'soldier' into a boiled egg; a seagull eating chips; the gradual whittling down of the same ice lolly before each new chapter; close-ups of all 18 holes of a crazy-golf course.

Whether you're an aficionado of graphic novels or a newcomer to the genre, *Flake* will make you laugh, wince, rejoice – and head straight for the freezer.

Ben Tarring

Miss Austen by Gill Hornby

Twenty three years after Jane's death and shortly before her own, Cassandra burned a significant part of the correspondence with her sister. Many details about Jane's life and thoughts and the sister's close relationship were lost. Gill Hornby's novel attempts to solve some of the mysteries.

It opens in 1840 with Cassandra making an impulsive journey to the parsonage in Kintbury, ostensibly to pay her respects to a family friend, Isabella Fowle, on the death of her father. But her real purpose is more devious; Isabella's mother, Eliza, was a dear friend of Jane and since Isabella is now to be forced out of the house, Cassandra is worried that Jane's letters to Eliza might fall into unscrupulous hands. She fears that unfavourable characteristics of both Jane and Cassandra might be revealed and Jane's reputation be damaged. She has to find them and prevent the contents becoming public knowledge.

The novel also expands on the lives of all the Austen family, their parents, Cassandra and Jane and their five brothers. You learn of the struggles of so many living on a rector's income and the later struggles of surviving as two spinsters, who were very fond of and dependent on each other.

Virginia Reekie

Gill Hornby is the wife of Robert Harris and the sister of Nick Hornby and now lives in Kintbury.

Chawton and Jane Austen

Did you know that the cottage that Jane Austen spent the last years of her life is an easy car journey of less than 50 miles from Marlborough? And just 400 metres up the road, is Chawton Great House, owned by her brother Edward Austen Knight. More good news, both properties are open to the public and really help to bring one of the nation's favourite authors to life.

Jane's father, George, retired from his living at Steventon Rectory, where Jane had been born and had done much of her early writing. In 1801. Jane's parents, Jane, Cassandra and a friend, Martha Lloyd then moved to Bath where, in 1805 George, unexpectedly, died. The women, with very little money, spent the next years renting various homes or staying with the extended family, until Edward gave them Chawton Cottage in 1809.

This move gave Jane stability and freedom from most domestic duties, enabling her to re-work earlier writing and embark on new works. When tenants left the Great House, Edward decided not to let it again but to use it for his large family when he was in the area. This meant that Jane had plenty of opportunities to use Edward's magnificent library. All her major six novels were either written or revised during her time at Chawton.

Although the cottage was modest, Jane was happy there because it gave her the freedom to write and she wrote this humorous verse in its praise:

*Our Chawton home – how much we find
Already in it to our mind,
And how convinced that when complete
It will all other Houses beat,
That ever have been made or mended,
With rooms concise or rooms distended.*

I urge you to visit Chawton – you won't be disappointed.

Ellen Prockter

The Big Town Read: *Three Hours* by Rosamund Lupton

We have held a Big Town Read since 2014 where we look forward to many of the local book clubs reading and discussing the book before coming to the event in their groups to meet the author and take their questions and discussions further.

Three Hours by Rosamund Lupton is this year's chosen book in which the reader is propelled into a nail-biting three hours during which teachers and students in a rural Somerset school are held hostage by two unidentified gunmen.

There are a multitude of other stories within this drama – of Rafi and his younger brother who have fled from Syria, a wounded headmaster being tended by one of his students, Hannah, both trapped in the library, a teacher with her group of seven year olds stuck in the pottery shed, the families waiting for news in a nearby leisure centre and the myriad of police trying to resolve the situation.

'All have to stand up to evil and save the people they love'

Virginia Reekie

This event can be seen in the Town Hall or online at 4.00 pm on Sunday 3 October.

Marlborough LitFest Children's Events

The children's programme has always been an integral part of the Marlborough LitFest, but the past two years have, according to the Institute of Government & Public Policy, 'been the most disrupted years for children for nearly a century'. Promoting the joy of reading and literature to young people has perhaps never been more important than it is now.

As well as the public events taking place during the festival weekend, the LitFest also gives local primary schools the opportunity to bring pupils along to free author events and the chance to take part in a creative competition is also on offer.

The festival weekend offers two children's author events and a Sixth Form panel discussion which are open to the public.

Emma Carroll. (Saturday 2nd October 2pm, Town Hall)

Budding bookworms can join Emma Carroll, the Queen of Historical Fiction and award-winning author of *Letters from the Lighthouse* and *Secrets of a Sun King*. Emma will share tips for writing and will introduce her enthralling new historical adventure and 12th book, *The Week at World's End* (publication Sept 2nd 2021).

Inspired by her mum's account of living through the terrifying days when the Cuban Missile Crisis became public knowledge, Emma Carroll's new thriller explores life in the 1960's under the threat of war. Set over seven days in World's End Close where nothing much usually happens, a tense, clever and touching thriller unfolds.

Emma Carroll has won numerous awards and according to Waterstones is "the finest practitioner of historical fiction for children writing today".

Eileen Browne. (Saturday 2nd October 10.30am, White Horse Bookshop Gallery Room (under 5's free))

Bring your little ones along for a fun and enjoyable hour with best-selling author and illustrator Eileen Browne. Everyone will hear animal sounds from Eileen's latest book, *Handa's Noisy Night*, find out where Handa lives, do some drawing and take part in music and movement from *Handa's Surprise* and *Handa's Hen*.

Eileen is a local author who champions female representation and diversity in children's picture books. Her books have been translated into over 20 languages.

Sixth Form Debate. (Thursday 30 September 4.00 – 5.30pm, Town Hall)

“ ‘All that glisters is not gold’: Is there still a place for Shakespeare in a 21st-century curriculum?” Sixth formers from St John's Academy battle it out in front of a public audience. Prepare to have your views challenged!

Free events for schools are part of the LitFest Outreach Programme. This year almost 700 local primary school children from Marlborough, Pewsey and surrounding villages are booked in to come along to hear one of two authors:

Tom Palmer, award-winning author of *D-Day Dog* and *After The War*, will be sharing valuable tips for research, planning, writing and editing, as well as introducing his new book *Arctic Star* to children in Marlborough Town Hall.

Natasha Farrant, author of *The Children of Castle Rock*, will be talking to children from Pewsey and the surrounding area about her latest book *The Voyage of the Sparrowhawk* - a thrilling adventure story that follows an epic and perilous voyage from England to France in the aftermath of WW1.

All local primary schools have been asked to let their pupils' imaginations run wild and take part in this year's **Primary Schools Competition**: Create a Mini-Book. Pupils were shown how to create a mini-book using just one A3 piece of paper and invited to fill the book entirely with their own content. So far, we have around 430 entries, so it's going to be a tough job for the judges to choose the six winners who will each receive a £25 book token (courtesy of Haine & Smith Opticians) to spend in The White Horse Bookshop.

Laura Briscall

Imagination Marlborough

Most of us agree that reading and imparting a love of books are amongst the most important things we can do for our children. Hamilton Trust and PEEPLE are educational charities based in Oxford which have helped primary school children and babies for over 25 years; Marlborough children now also benefit as for several years Hamilton has sponsored a children's author session at LitFest. Last November, Hamilton became a sponsor of Dolly Parton's 'Imagination Library' and offer a free book to every baby or child under five living within five miles of Marlborough. Dolly Parton (Yes, the 9 to 5 Dolly!) set up her book-gifting charity as a tribute to her father who never learned to read. Children receive a book every month until they turn five ... especially exciting as the books arrive by post.

The books, by well-known authors such as Eric Hill and Beatrix Potter, are published by Penguin Random House and selected by experts in child literacy. The Dollywood Foundation has supplied a million books worldwide, and so far Imagination Marlborough has over 130 children registered. There is no catch - any parent or carer can enrol their child via the website and we look forward to more children joining the scheme. www.imaginationmarlborough.net

Jane and Michael O'Regan





Marlborough Town Council
In partnership with the
North Wessex Downs
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
and
Marlborough College



ADVANCE NOTICE

Marlborough Dark Skies Fest

Marlborough Town Council and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are hosting the first Marlborough Dark Skies Fest in October.

Marlborough will be the location for a fun festival of events from 25th to 31st October 2021. BBC's The Sky at Night presenter, Prof Chris Lintott, is the guest speaker and there will be an opportunity to visit the Blakett Observatory – the world's oldest computerised telescope at Marlborough College. Events (mostly free) will include:

- Stargazing by night and Solar Astronomy by day
- A tour of the night sky in an immersive Planetarium
- Learn about the solar system and taking photos using your phone, try your hand at sketching the stars, create sand patterns from the sound of a star.
- Family fun includes art workshops, storytelling, become a space detective!
- A wide range of talks from getting started in astronomy, life aboard the International Space Station, to astronomical alignments of Stonehenge, wildlife of the night, and mapping & minimising light pollution.
- Exhibitions throughout the weekend from local astronomy groups, astrophotography, meteorites, protecting dark skies, astro jewellery and more.

Over the past few weeks, Jane, Hannah and I have had a visitor staying with us. His name is Harry and we have loved having him around. I think that he has also enjoyed being with us. He is a very easy guest and eats whatever we give him. He seems very content with all that we have been able to do to make his time with us a pleasant one for him. He has had a real country holiday as Harry's home is in Bath. He seems to have taken great pleasure in our walks together in Savernake Forest, along the old railway line and beside the River Kennet and the Avon and Kennet canal. Harry is always eager to explore our beautiful countryside and whenever he hears the clinking of keys, he comes as fast as he can and stands by the front door, wagging his tail. Harry is a ten year old Jack Russell Terrier and we will miss him when he goes home in a few days time.

When we were walking with Harry the other day, we commented on how he is pleased with everything. Whatever he is doing, he does it with great enthusiasm as though it is his 'favourite thing'! Whether it is jumping to catch a ball, trotting along the canal path, running in the meadow at Stonebridge, sniffing a tree trunk in the Forest or paddling in the river, it is the best thing ever. Watching Harry, I wondered why I wasn't always so content and happy with everything I do. Why isn't everything my 'favourite thing'? Why do some things bring a groan and a sigh, rather than joy and a smile? I suppose that it is part of the human condition. We all enjoy some things more than others and it begins at a young age. In school, children soon let you know whether they 'love' or 'hate' mathematics, English, science, art, craft, PE and so on. We are all different and have various skills and gifts. In our families, work places, churches and communities some folk's gifts make them good at finances, administration, catering, organizing, and looking after buildings. Others' gifts enable them to relate well to people, correspond with, care and visit folks. Yet others' skills lie in teaching, leading worship, playing musical instruments, praying, singing, reading, serving refreshments, sharing faith and preaching. Fortunately, we all have different talents to offer to God to use in the life of the Church for his praise and glory.

Naturally, we feel happiest when we are doing what we enjoy. Jane, Hannah and I do not know whether Harry enjoys running in the field, chasing his ball or watching the garden best. He loves everything. When we are doing things for God, we know that not everything brings us joy. In the Covenant Service, we recognise that "Christ has many services to be done...some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests, others are contrary to both; in some we may please Christ and please ourselves; in others we cannot please Christ except by

denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ, who strengthens us.” (*The Methodist Worship Book*, page 288).

Reflecting on these things I thought of Brother Lawrence. He was a seventeenth century monk, who lived in the Discalced Carmelite monastery in Paris. He was concerned about living a holy life in the everyday, ordinary things of life. In *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence tells the writer of the book, how he believed that he should spend as much time in prayer in his work as in his devotions. So throughout the day, he speaks simply and naturally to God. In this way, he learns to get joy from doing things which he would otherwise find a chore. The book contains a number of conversations with the author and in the second one, Brother Lawrence says that “Although he once had a great dislike for kitchen work, he developed quite a facility for doing it over the fifteen years he was there. He attributed this to his doing everything for the love of God, asking as often as possible for grace to do his work. He said that he was presently in the shoe repair shop and that he liked it very much. He would, however, be willing to work anywhere, always rejoicing at being able to do little things for the love of God.” (*The Practice of the Presence of God*, p. 16, 1982, Whitaker House, ISBN: 0-883668-105-6). Although it needs working at, and prayer throughout the day, we can, as Brother Lawrence says, be “happier than kings” when we are doing even the smallest and most mundane chore, such as “picking up a straw from the ground”, when we remind ourselves that we are doing it for the love of God.

Preparing to go away on our summer holiday, I know that I will get more pleasure from writing this and preparing for Sunday’s worship than dealing with admin.; from visiting people than tidying the study; from loading the car than cleaning it; and from packing the suitcase than cleaning the bathroom. Yet, here is an opportunity to remind myself that even when I do the smallest act, such as picking up a piece of paper or a sock from the floor, I do it all for the love of God. I remember how Jesus said that even when you give someone a drink, you are doing it as though for Jesus himself, (Matthew 25:35-40). No matter how hard such acts may be, we can be encouraged and filled with joy, at the knowledge that we are doing it for Jesus and giving him pleasure. A wonderful hymn, by George Herbert, (1593-1633), begins “Teach me, my God and King in all things thee to see, and what I do in everything, to do it as for thee”, (*Singing the Faith* 668). It continues in the fourth verse “A servant with this clause makes drudgery divine; who sweeps a room, as for thy laws, makes that and the action fine.” I can hear Brother Lawrence saying, “Amen!”

This is going to take some working out and by the time we go on holiday, I may well need it from being so exhausted from trying to put it into practice! On the other hand, remembering that we do everything out of love for God, may bring

encouragement, energy and joy, as we let the Holy Spirit dwell in us, Harry's holiday with us is nearly over, but Jane and I are about to begin ours. Staying with Jane's mother in Jersey, we look forward to taking her to the beach, to seeing the waves, walking on the headlands, swimming in the sea and enjoying the beauty of God's creation. In such moments of rest and relaxation, we can become aware of being in the presence of God. Holidays become holy days. Doing the chores and mundane things which, even on holiday, still need doing, the challenge is to remember that everything is done for the love of God. It will be interesting to see whether I will agree with Brother Lawrence that these things make us 'happier than kings' or with Harry, that they too become my 'favourite thing'! Whatever your circumstances this summer, I hope that you will know the presence of God and his joy from knowing that everything you do is for love of God.

May God bless you richly this summer and give you peace and joy, *Stephen*

Sharing the Books you Love – An Annual Competition

Genevieve Clarke

One of LitFest's aims is to celebrate the power of reading to shift perceptions, to open up opportunities, literally to change lives. As part of this we have been working with the English Literature Department at Bath Spa University on an annual competition to encourage people of all ages to share their passion for a book they love. They can do this either in a piece of text of up to 750 words or in a video up to four minutes in length. The competition is open to anyone across the country in three age groups – 13-16, 17-19 and 20 and above – but we are especially grateful to teachers at local schools for encouraging their classes to take part.

Now in its second year, our Love Books Competition attracted 111 entries in 2021. Bath Spa English lecturer Dr Nicola Presley and her student volunteers have been sifting through these since the deadline of 30 June. A shortlist was then passed to three judges: Jan Williamson, former chair of Marlborough LitFest; Judy Golding, CEO of William Golding Ltd and writer; and Ian Gadd, Professor in English Literature at Bath Spa University.

We will be announcing a winner and runner-up for each age category over the LitFest weekend. They will receive prizes of £300 and £100 respectively and their entries will be published on the LitFest website.

Please consider submitting your own entry for the third year of the competition which should launch in early 2022. Keep an eye on lovebookscompetition.org and marlboroughlitfest.org for more information.



What's On

September calendar

2nd (Thursday)

2pm Mildenhall Village Hall. Marlborough Floral Club, demonstrator Carol Bennet: 'Autumn Textures'. Please call Micky Graham (01672 514301)

4th (Saturday) to 12th (daily)

10.00am - 3.30pm St Peter's Church, Guild of Wiltshire Artists' Annual Exhibition. Local artists display their works. Free entry.

6th (Monday)

Marlborough College: Michaelmas Term starts

8th (Wednesday)

St John's Academy: Term 1 starts

16th (Thursday)

7.30pm St Peter's Church or Zoom. Marlborough History Society Autumn Talk: 'The Wiles of West Woods', by Lynn Amadio. Please see details below.

19th (Sunday)

7.30pm Marlborough College chapel. Marlborough College Concert Series, The Tallis Scholars. Tickets £20.00. To book, see www.marlboroughconcertseries.org

24th (Friday)

Marlborough College: Exeat weekend (to 26th September)

25th (Saturday)

7.30pm St Peter's Church. Devizes Eisteddfod Showcase Concert (to include young musicians and drama students). Free admission with retiring collection in aid of Wiltshire Rural Music.

30th (Thursday) to 3rd October (Sunday)

Marlborough LitFest. Box office opens 2 September. See marlboroughlitfest.org.

MARLBOROUGH HISTORY SOCIETY - September 16, 7:30 pm
'The Wiles of West Woods'

by Lynn Amadio, researcher on the history and archaeology of West Woods, including the Stonehenge connection.

Live in St. Peter's Church or Zoom, to be decided. Guests welcome (£5). Contact saraholden22@mail.com who will keep you informed.

Climate Change: Getting the message across

This is a fantastic opportunity to hear a discussion about the defining issue of our time from two people who care passionately about the future of our planet.

Jonathan Porritt, co-founder of Forum of the Future, campaigner, author, broadcaster and commentator on sustainable development, has been involved for many years at a high level with many NGOs and charities, including being director of Friends of the Earth, chair of the UK Sustainable Development Commission and president of Population Matters.

He tells the truth and nothing but. He is incredibly well informed, articulate and always engaging. His latest book *Hope in Hell; A Decade to Confront the Climate Emergency* describes the greatest problem ever faced by humankind in straightforward terms, spelling out reasons for despair but most importantly, for hope and the imperative need to act.

Alongside seemingly intractable problems, he describes escape routes possible through political action, well directed finance, investment in female education and rights, including vital access to family planning, science and technology. He sees the biggest challenge as the fundamental political and economic transformation to break from the current neo-liberal economic model, at the heart of which lies the fossil fuel industry and the interests of powerful elites, which is accelerating climate and ecological collapse.

Jessie Greengrass brings her message about climate change to her second novel *The High House*. She tackles the subject of global heating together with a future vision of a flooded East Anglia. Young siblings, Caro and Pauly find themselves in a seaside home with villagers Sally and Grandy. The house has been adapted by Caro and Pauly's mother, who is a high flying climate scientist and campaigner, to enable survival in the most extreme climatic conditions.

Despite the bleak message, there is a time of joy and fulfilment as well as a sense of inevitability. Have we left it too late?

Jo Ripley and Virginia Reekie

Jo says that with her criminal record resulting from her non-violent direct actions with Extinction Rebellion (XR), she welcomed Porritt writing how the 'Fridays for the Future' global school strikes and XR have changed the rules in a permanent and significant way. Both place great emphasis on science and despite controversy have helped raise the alarm.

Mick Herron and his latest book *Slough House*

For a while now, authors have been vying to take on the mantle of John le Carré as Britain's finest spy writer. Step forward Mick Herron, whose acclaimed *Slough House* series has cemented the Oxford-based writer as a worthy successor. Dripping with sardonic wit and mordant humour, the books skewer the contemporary world of Brexit Britain and the far right with the same skill that le Carré captured the Cold War.

Herron's greatest achievement is the creation of Slough House, a world-weary office of worn furniture and ancient filing cabinets where MI5 spies are sent when they mess up. Known as 'slow horses', these floundering misfits and failures resolutely cling on to their jobs, despite the menial, humiliating tasks they are given. And they are overseen by one of the funniest creations of modern literature, Jackson Lamb, a Falstaffian figure whose misanthropy is only surpassed by his flatulence. Lamb, though, is also a sharp operator, a former Cold War field officer who is fiercely protective of his beleaguered employees. George Smiley he is not, but he is equally memorable. So too is Herron's own le Carrésque lexicon. There are 'the achievers' (those who break down doors), 'the dogs' (MI5's internal security officers), 'the stoats' (surveillance officers), as well as 'Regents Park', MI5's HQ, where the slow horses dream of one day returning.

The seventh book in the series, the eponymous *Slough House* came out in January, and Herron will be talking about his brilliantly named cast of characters, including River Cartwright and 'Lady Di' Taverner, at this year's Marlborough LitFest. Will he reveal the real-life inspiration for Peter Judd, the MP whom he describes as "a bulky man, not fat, but large [with] the schoolboy looks and fluffy-haired manner that had endeared him to the British public"? Who can he possibly be thinking of? These books might be funny, but they are also thought-provoking, holding a dark mirror up to modern Britain. It will be fascinating to see how Gary Oldman portrays Jackson Lamb in the forthcoming Apple TV series.

John Stock



Reader's Letter

Hello,

I have just read the article by Alan Crook (*Just a Chat, Tower and Town July 2021*) that brought home to me many connections from my earlier years spent in Alexandra Terrace, Marlborough, only a few yards from Alan's home.

Alan's sister Jean was in the same class as me at the Grammar School in 1948, although a year or two older than me. She later married my next door neighbour, Colin Horwood.

My best friend at School was David Spackman whose family managed the Rockley Manor farm and herd of pedigree Guernsey cattle for Lord Hardwicke. Mr Bradbrook, Joan's father, was the butler there and I had a Saturday job at the Manor taking the week's logs up to the nanny's room on the top floor, via the back stairs. Mr Bradbrook and I got on well, and I always had a bottle of wine from him at Christmas.

I remember that the Bradbrooks lived in the first cottage on the left on entering Rockley. Joan's brother Robert was a year or two older than me and had a younger brother. I remember Joan as a rather elegant young lady riding her bike to Marlborough.

All this is about seventy years ago, but my memory is still good.

I would be grateful if you could pass these brief comments on to Alan and hope he keeps up his obvious good health.

Best wishes,

Garth Pearce,

Hythe, Southampton (where I have lived for the past 53 years)

Collectable Book Roadshow

Our local rare book expert Chris Gange will be at Katherine House Gallery (at the bottom of the Parade) to value and discuss your rare and collectable books. Whether you have a first edition or just something out of the ordinary, bring it along to Chris and find out more.

Saturday 2 October from 11.00 am to 1.00pm

Marlborough's Community Fridge

The Marlborough Community Fridge is a joint initiative between Marlborough Town Council and Transition Marlborough, opened in early June it joins a growing number, 150+, operating around the country, offering space for the sharing of surplus food. All food is free and everyone is welcome to bring and/or take.

It is in the Community Room at Coopers Corner in George Lane Car Park (essentially behind the loos!), open from 10.00am to 2.00pm Thursdays and Saturdays, with regular contributions from local stores as well as from individuals.

Millions of tonnes of food are chucked away in the UK – that's a waste of money for many reasons: at the till, waste disposal costs, growing it in the first place (chemicals, water, transport etc) and, perhaps most important as we face the ever greater threats from climate change, the emissions as it rots in landfill, releasing methane, a more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. There is also a high cost to our global biodiversity as land for growing food takes space from nature.

Aside from using the Community Fridge, more volunteers would be very welcome to cover the weekly rota and in time, to extend this. There are already a good number and therefore the demand need not be onerous on any individual; you can help regularly or on an ad hoc basis. If you are interested, contact Clare Harris, Assistant Town Clerk, who compiles a google rota for two weeks ahead. (charris@marlborough-tc.gov.uk)

It is also sociable as, aside from meeting and chatting to fridge users, there are always two people on together, either for a two hour shift or less when collecting from a store.

By supporting the Community Fridge, you are helping tackle the obscenity of food waste, with the national network redistributing over 3000 tonnes of surplus food annually.

Jo Ripley

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Marlborough Concert Orchestra

St Mary's Church 7:30pm on Saturday 4th December

Mozart Overture Der Schauspieldirektor (The Impresario)

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto (soloist Verena Chan)

Beethoven Symphony No 7

Orchard by Benedict Macdonald and Nicholas Gates

Winners of the Richard Jefferies Prize for Nature Writing

To win one Richard Jefferies Prize for Nature Writing (sponsored by the White Horse Bookshop) may be regarded as good fortune, to win two looks like being a writer who delivers the goods. Benedict MacDonald won the prize last year for *Rebirthing*. This year, from an exceptionally strong shortlist, he and fellow author (and photographer) Nicholas Gates have done it again, with *Orchard*.

The traditional orchard is a fertile habitat for an abundance of wildlife, but intensive farming practices mean that there are alarmingly few of them left. The book is the result of six years of visiting one family owned orchard 'somewhere in Hereford'. Originally intended as a photographic record of the biodiversity of the site, it developed into an immensely detailed and engaging book. Covering the history of orchards as 'fruit gardens' and the origin of most of our cultivated species (in the foothills of Kazakhstan; the name of the former capital, Almaty, translates as 'Father of Apples'), it also charts the alarming decline in numbers of British orchards, ruthlessly cut down and dug out with the aid of grant money during the 1970s and 80s.

MacDonald and Gates write alternate chapters, describing month-by-month and in great detail the bird and insect life, plants, fungi and parasites which live, migrate and thrive in an established, chemical free environment. Lack of spraying and rigorous pruning for example encourages flocks of resident and migratory birds onto the site, where they eat harmful insects, which would otherwise threaten the crop and ultimately the trees themselves. With careful management our ancient orchards can remain productive. The decline in orchards – actually, it's gone beyond declining to 'almost extinct' – receives less publicity and discussion than threatened peat bogs or meadowland, but they are no less important.

Politics and the pandemic are forcing us to look at food production and distribution, climate change is showing us that intensive farming methods may ultimately be fruitless (pun intended). However, despite the urgency of the message, this book is not a polemic, but an absorbing and readable account of a small, beautiful and timeless part of an agricultural heritage, where collaboration between humans and the natural world continues to be mutually beneficial.

Debbie Guest

September marks the start of Autumn, the return to school, shorter days and subtle changes in the natural world. As harvesting ceases the outlines of the countryside shrink, there's a chill in the air and the smells of damp leaves and burning garden rubbish waft across our pathway. In the spirit of Richard Mabey's *Food for Free* we like to come back from a country walk with a crop of blackberries in a hat or a handkerchief: some strains are fat and juicy, the location of which we keep quiet about.

My wife forbids me to pick our local mushrooms ever since I brought half a dozen home and had food poisoning as a result: again, there are those fields which neighbours boast about, but never quite direct you to.

There are ripe apples and pears to be picked in the larger gardens, and in the countryside crab apples and so-called 'wilding apples', created when a discarded core has born fruit by the side of the road.

Sloes we are told should always be picked after the first frosts, but many are gathered earlier and put in the freezer to crack the skin: the connoisseur will say the flavour is not as good. Prickly horse chestnuts drop from the trees, especially in windy conditions. In my day we picked them, pressed them underfoot and then polished and hardened them up, before stringing them ready to do battle in playground contests now frowned upon by school authorities.

Ripening nuts are important to a number of birds and animals preparing for the winter months. Acorns, which fall off the parent tree from September to late October, are an important food source for the jay, which spends as much as ten hours a day caching acorns and other nuts, storing as many as 5,000 during a season.

The nuthatch is another hoarder, its name derived from its habit of tucking away nuts into tree-bark and then hacking (thus 'hatching') away at them with its sharp bill.

Squirrels will cache peanuts, hazelnuts and walnuts to eat when food is scarce, whilst a dormouse eats as much as it can in order to build up a fat store: before hibernation it makes a nest deep in a hedge or on the ground, lines it with grass, wool and leaves, and prepares a store of food in case it wakes up during a warm spell.

Dormouse in hibernation by David Chapman

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptisms – *we welcome*

- 25 July – Thanksgiving for Viva Baye Haslam Fox at St John the Baptist
1 August Alexander Nolan at St George's and Amelia Norah Mary
Lonsdale at St John the Baptist
8 August Elena June Crabb at St Mary's

Weddings - *we congratulate*

- 17 July Jessica Mills & Hamish Ritchie at St George's
24 July Pippa Blain & Will Hardwick at St George's
31 July Emma Francis & Thomas Kirkham at St John the Baptist
7 August Danielle Loney & Patrick Rebbeck at St George's

Funerals - *we pray for the families of:*

- 9 July Jacqueline 'Jackie' Ann Dicks (74) of High St, Marlborough
North Wiltshire Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett
27 July Gwendoline 'Gwen' May Wells (89) of Savernake Crescent,
Marlborough
*St Mary's and North Wiltshire Crematorium, Royal Wootton
Bassett*
2 August Diana Mary Hony (96) of Town Mill, Marlborough
*St George's and North Wiltshire Crematorium, Royal Wootton
Bassett*
3 August Peter Geoffrey Oldring (89) of Birch Place, Crowthorne
North Wiltshire Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett
4 August John Gale (82) of Church Farm, Mildenhall
St John the Baptist Church, Minal and Churchyard

Hiscox Debut Authors:

We Are All Birds of Uganda by Hafsa Zayyan *Assembly* by Natasha Brown

As part of the LitFest, we hold a debut authors event to promote fantastic work by new writers, and this event is sponsored by long time LitFest supporters, Hiscox Insurance.

This year the event features Hafsa Zayyan, whose book *We Are All Birds of Uganda* was a winner of Stormzy's #Merky Books New Writers prize, as well as featuring on BBC Radio 4, and being selected for the BBC Radio 2 Book Club. The book simultaneously follows Sameer, a successful young solicitor in contemporary London, and his grandfather, Hasan, in Kampala, Uganda in the 1970s. Uncertainty and family tension plague both individuals as Sameer navigates a demanding work life with a potential move to Singapore, and Hasan is facing the turbulence which came as Idi Amin seized power in Uganda. Both stories explore the racism and fragility of belonging within societies and cultures which are not unconditionally accepting.

The theme of racism and the uglier side of modern professionalism is also present in this year's second debut, *Assembly* by Natasha Brown. In only 100 pages, the book offers a powerful insight into the experience of black British women. We see the unnamed narrator succeeding in her career in finance, and receiving an invite to a garden party at the large country home of her boyfriend's wealthy white family. Interspersed with flashbacks to incidents throughout her life, Natasha Brown gives readers a glimpse at a world in which no aspect of life is untouched by racism, or assumptions based on race. *Assembly* explores how the exhaustion, caused by these relentless prejudices, undermines the successes of the narrator and determines how she chooses to face her latest battle.

Both debuts provide powerful insights into belonging and racism in modern society, but in dramatically different styles and tones; they are sure to generate an engaging and important discussion as part of our LitFest this year.

Alice Padfield

The Debut Authors event can be heard at 4pm on Saturday 2nd October.

Empireland by Sathnam Sanghera

Sathnam Sanghera came to the LitFest in 2014 as the Big Town Read author with his memoir *The Boy with the Topknot*, which reveals his story of growing up in the 1970s and 1980s in Wolverhampton, the son of Punjabi immigrant parents. He started school unable to speak English but after attending Wolverhampton Grammar School got a scholarship to Cambridge where he graduated with a first class degree in English Language and Literature. Since then he has won several prizes as a journalist with *The Times* and *The Financial Times*.

Empireland shows us with astonishing stories, statistics and humour how he thinks that modern Britain has been shaped by the past. ‘Our past is everywhere around us from how we live to how we think’

He says that it is only by stepping back and seeing where we really came from that we begin to understand who we are and what unites us

The British Empire ran for four centuries and at its height it covered a quarter of the world’s land and almost a quarter of its population.

Sanghera gives us both sides of the story recalling how the Empire provided adventure and beneficial opportunities for many through such things as looting and lucrative contracts as well as possibly fostering our thirst for travel but also producing acts of violence and repression. We mustn’t too forget the contributions that those from the Empire have made to Britain – for example, providing a significant part of the NHS workforce and huge manpower in both World Wars.

His research brings us right up to date in current thinking - including the debate on the tearing down of statues and removal of artefacts from museums. He says that there has been a desire to not look too closely at what happened; and feels that it should be talked about more, including as a subject with a more prominent part of history teaching at school.

‘If British people understood colonial history as well as they understood the details of Henry VIII’s wives, Britain would be a different country!’

Virginia Reekie

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(Fridays, 14:30 to 16:30)

Go away, I'm reading





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News from the Churches

Marlborough Anglican Team

www.marlboroughanglicanteam.org.uk/

As you arrive at church hand sanitiser remains available; also, the QR codes if you wish to check in. Social distancing will remain in place for the moment, so please only sit in the designated pews or seats. Please appreciate the bell ringing as it calls people to worship. Church doors and windows will remain open to increase ventilation.



Wearing masks is now optional and a matter of personal choice. At St George's and St John the Baptist we hope people can make this work without any extra intervention. At St Mary's at 10:30am there will be a 'blue zone' reserved near the doors, solely for mask wearers. Of course, those wearing masks may sit anywhere, but the area marked with blue tickets is only for those in masks. This is an opportunity for us as a church to be united in worship and show respect for our differing points of view.

During the services the singing of hymns can be enjoyed while communion will remain in one kind (bread only) for the moment. We also won't be passing round a collection plate but leaving one by the door. After the services refreshments will be available again.

Thank you to everyone who is working hard to enable us to worship God. The pandemic continues to present challenges but let us approach these with prayerful faith. Remember zoom opportunities remain for those who wish to worship from home.

Planned Services for September

8am Holy Communion at St Mary's (2nd & 3rd Sundays of the month) and St George's (1st and 4th Sundays of the month)

9am Weekly Services at Minal

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

5:30pm Weekly Informal Service at St Mary's.

Prayer support is available for individuals or for your loved ones. Please contact the clergy, in confidence; see page 26. Please do be praying for our world and the church at this time.

Bereavement Course – this Autumn

We are planning to run 'The Bereavement Journey' course again in the autumn in Marlborough - hopefully face to face! Dates to be confirmed. The course runs over

5 weekly sessions to ‘gently guide bereaved people through the most common aspects of grief.’. For more information, please contact Mark Whitehead: mjwhi1@gmail.com or Louise Seddon: the_seddons@btopenworld.com

Mustard Seed Book Group

We have a periodic book group meeting in Mustard Seed – all welcome. Our next meeting will be on Monday 13th September at 4pm and we will be discussing Chris Aslan’s latest novel Mosaic. Having spent most of his life in the Middle East and Central Asia he retells incidents from Jesus’ life in a way that puts you right there. Contact: mustardseedmarlborough@yahoo.co.uk (01672 511611)



St Thomas More www.marlboroughandpewseycatholics.org.uk/notice-board/

Mass: Sunday at 11am. Monday, Tues, Wed, Sat at 10am.
Thursday, 6pm.



**MARLBOROUGH
& PEWSEY
CATHOLICS**

Holy Family, Pewsey: Friday 12 noon, Saturday 6pm.

Christchurch

www.christchurchmarlborough.org.uk/

Christchurch as members of the Methodist Connexion ‘Born in Song’ are delighted to be singing again though quieter and generally behind masks. We continue to welcome back our regular groups - Marlborough Choral, Women’s Institute, U3A, Gardening Club; New Road Centre is thriving, and we continue to have Emmanuel worshipping on our premises.



Readers may have heard or read that ‘Methodist Church to allow same sex marriage after ‘historical vote’ ’ - Guardian 30th June 2021. This attention-grabbing headline is not as simple as it would appear. Methodist Conference representing members of the Methodist Church did indeed vote on a resolution contained in ‘Marriage and Relationships’ report after seeking views of congregations over the past few months and agreed same sex marriage should be allowed on Methodist premises, but enables individual churches and ministers to decide on whether it happens on their premises. As an inclusive church, the emphasis is on this year’s Presidential theme of ‘God’s Table, an invitation for all’.

Another important theme of today will be celebrated on September 5th as Christchurch explores ‘Climate Change Sunday’ and how as Christians we can respond to this major world issue.

The Former Women’s Fellowship is proposing to restart on Tuesday 7th September at 2.45, in Christchurch Parlour on alternate weeks.

Marlborough Quakers

Meeting for Worship is at 10.30am on Sundays in person at the Meeting House and on Zoom; details from Barry Mercer on 514144.



We have a new website, the address is <https://marlborough.quakermeeting.org>. There is information on events, meetings for worship and meetings for learning together, discussions and shared reflections on topics of interest to us. In the 'Contact us' page you may send us general enquiries, specific enquiries to the clerk or on hiring the Meeting House.

There are easy links to general information about Quakers, such as our Faith and Practice, Quaker history and Google maps to other Meeting Houses in Britain.

Emmanuel Church Marlborough

www.emmanuelmarlborough.org/

We are grateful to meet for a weekly Sunday service at 4pm at Christchurch, New Road. During the service, we run creche and a range of Sunday School groups. All are welcome to stay afterwards for refreshments and a sandwich tea for children.

EMMANUEL
MARLBOROUGH



Mid-week we are also delighted to offer a variety of activities including Bible studies, toddlers' group, clubs for children and teenagers, and a Christianity Explored course for those who would like to consider the Christian faith.

Real Life: Wednesday 22nd September, 7.45pm

Join us for a two-course meal at Marlborough Town Hall with after-dinner speaker, Roger Carswell, exploring the question, 'Real Life: What difference does Jesus make?'. Tickets £15. For more information or to book tickets, please email meal@emmanuelmarlborough.org. Roger Carswell grew up in Leeds and is married with four children and six grandsons. He speaks at universities and churches and has written numerous pamphlets and books, including 'Where is God in a messed-up world?'

Marlborough Churches Together

The Fraternal meets on 8th September; details from Rachel Rosedale on 512205.



St Non's Retreat

Welsh regulations have changed and we can now go as normal on Sept 14th after a lateral flow test. We are fully booked, and St Non's is not taking bookings next year as they are doing major alterations to the house. We hope that those going will meet up with our leader, Lynne Busfield, for a bring and share supper on Thursday August 26th.

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Contributions and comments from readers are welcome.

Please send articles and letters to the Monthly Editor or the Chairman, other notices or announcements to the compiler. All items for the October issue by Tuesday 7th September please.

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